

## Kangaroo Island – an important source of seed

Kangaroo Island farmers, Peter and Anne MacGill, have backed the future of the certified seed industry in their region.

After starting from scratch in the industry five years ago, they are now reaping the rewards as Kangaroo Island emerges as South Australia's leading region for seed potato production.

Peter and Anne farm about 25 hectares of seed potatoes on their 2,000 hectare merino sheep, beef cattle and cereal cropping property near Parndana.

Peter hopes to expand their seed potato operation as they boost production levels each year for supply to growers on the mainland in the Northern Adelaide Plains, Riverland, Murray Mallee and the Bordertown region.

Kangaroo Island has six certified seed potato growers, including Peter and Anne's business.

### Good potential

A recent study carried out by Rural Solutions SA recognised Kangaroo Island as having the potential to produce very high quality seed potatoes. This is due to the island's quarantine status, the region being relatively disease free and having a mild climate ideal for potato production.

Skin blemishing diseases such as black dot, silver scurf and black scurf have a devastating effect on market appeal and saleability of washed product, and unfortunately these diseases are now common in most traditional seed production areas.

However, observations made to date have not located black dot or silver scurf diseases on potato

tubers produced on Kangaroo Island. Black scurf does occur there but possibly as a more benign strain. These may well be significant advantages for Kangaroo Island.

### Disease free zone

To protect the seed industry, Kangaroo Island has been declared a quarantine area which means the only potatoes allowed to enter the island have disease-free nucleus stock and washed, and bagged product for retail sale. Unwashed potatoes have been banned.

*Based on an article from Rural Solutions SA's Open Gate newsletter.*



Peter MacGill with Lyn Dohle, advisor from Rural Solutions SA

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Today and Beyond



## Potato 2005 - National Potato Conference

Phillip Island, Victoria  
19 - 21 September 2005

More information at  
[www.spv.org.au](http://www.spv.org.au)



See Program on page 10

# Changes afoot

As a result of the Australian Potato Industry Council being wound up (See page 12 for more information) the industry's Communications program, which includes the publications, will now come under AUSVEG and Potato Processors Association of Australia.

Eyes on Potatoes and Potato Australia will now be published by AUSVEG and Potato Processors Association of Australia and the change reflected in the new logos on the publications. Copyright still rests with HAL to facilitate electronic archiving.

Cathy Sage  
Editor

# AUSVEG Report

**The China Free Trade Agreement, supermarket power, chemical residues on imported food, country of origin labeling, ammonium nitrate regulations and the horticulture business code are just some of the major issues AUSVEG has been representing vegetable and potato growers on in recent months.**

**For more information on AUSVEG's activities go to our internet site at – [www.ausveg.com.au](http://www.ausveg.com.au).**

## Changes in R&D arrangements

Previously the Australian Potato Industry Council (APIC) was a member of HAL representing both potato growers and processors. With APIC winding up, the Potato Processors Association of Australia (PPAA) has applied to become an A – Class member of HAL (ie. Industries with statutory levies) and has been accepted. This now means there are two strong voices as members of HAL - AUSVEG representing growers and PPAA representing processors.

HAL announced at their May forum that they were seeking to increase the HAL management fee to be taken from the R&D levy receipts paid by growers and processors to cover their operating costs. AUSVEG and PPAA are strongly contesting this change.

## Vegetables Australia

AUSVEG will launch the first edition of the new bimonthly Vegetables Australia magazine in July. This 52 page full colour magazine is funded by the vegetable levy and is focused on providing R&D information and industry news primarily for vegetable growers. For those potato growers who also pay the vegetable levy, this will be an added bonus which will further support Eyes on Potatoes and Potato Australia. Anybody who does not receive the Vegetables Australia magazine can contact the AUSVEG office on the number below to be put on the mailing list.

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Eyes on Potatoes is produced by SageWords on behalf of AUSVEG and the Potato Processors' Association of Australia

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Potato Processing Association Australia

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The advisory group provides editorial support in identifying issues, organising content and ensuring the newsletter meets grower needs.

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# Consumers *attitudes & behaviour* when buying potatoes

This is the second part of an edited extract from market research commissioned by HAL on behalf of the industry. Part one was in the March edition of *Eyes on Potatoes*.

The market research, carried out by Market Equity in January 2005, sought to provide insights into current consumer attitudes and behaviour. This meant getting an understanding of the motivations and barriers to buying and eating fresh potatoes.

## Shopping for fresh produce

Fresh fruit and vegetables plays an important part in consumers' total grocery shop. Shoppers believe:

- they currently buy more fresh produce than they have in the past
- vegetables play a big part in keeping people healthy and are an important part of the diet
- they take more time to select fresh produce than other items in the supermarket, as it is more important to determine its quality than other grocery items
- fresh produce sits in the first section of the supermarket and so seems more important; and eating vegetables is an everyday part of life.



## Produce is purchased in several places

Consumers buy fresh produce from a variety of sources, though supermarkets are the most common place of purchase.

Shoppers will often go to more than one place to buy fresh produce. This is more common of families who are price conscious. Shopping for the family is more likely to involve price comparisons to get the best deal.

There is a perceived difference in the quality of fresh produce sold in the supermarket and green grocers. Green groceries are seen as old school, selling produce of slightly better quality.

## Considerations in the decision of what to buy

Many factors impact on the fresh produce buying decision and is more complex than buying other groceries.

The first stage of the decision process is an assessment of food needs for the household. Where an individual has a low involvement with food and shopping, this stage may be realisation of a need to buy food. Various factors impact on needs assessment from basic likes and dislikes to household demographics.

After a needs assessment, the shopper may or may not plan the actual foods they need to buy depending on their shopping mindset. Some write a list, others go to the supermarket with an idea about what they need or feel like.

Unlike many other grocery items, sticking to a pre-planned list when buying groceries is more difficult. Price, availability and quality of available fresh produce affects the shopper's ability to stick to a

pre-planned list. Most shoppers are conscious of choosing produce as fresh and blemish free as possible. Some consumers will even shop around to find a particular item or fresh produce that is fresher. Price, availability and quality are less likely to impact on in-store decisions for other grocery items (for example, a can of baked beans).

Some produce varieties are less likely to be affected by in-store consideration factors. These are what purchasers perceive to be standard vegetables or staples – vegetables that will always be on hand in the household and replaced during most shops. Shoppers are less likely to vary whether or not they buy and how much. They perceive prices of these vegetables are less likely to vary greatly and so many do not consider purchase price. Staples vary according to cultural background. Potatoes are more likely to be a staple for Anglo-Saxon Australians.

Staples include potatoes, carrots and onions.

*Continued page 4*

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## Consumers attitudes & behaviour when buying potatoes Continued...

### Children

Children play an increasingly important role in the buying decision for food .

- Children generally have unsophisticated tastes and do not have as broad a repertoire as their parents. Bland food often has more appeal and potatoes are a vegetable readily enjoyed.



- Emergence of the 'pester power' phenomenon. Children have a greater influence in choosing foods for the family than 20-30 years ago. Parents often buy foods that children will eat, rather than telling them what they will eat. Children often demand certain foods (pester their parents) and this may dictate what is bought for the family. In some families, children are cooked different meals from parents.

### Shopping for potatoes

The two main issues shoppers had with potatoes were packaging (loose or in bags) and green potatoes. Shoppers also noted that sometimes potatoes have too many eyes. This sometimes stops consumers from buying.

(i) Buying potatoes loose versus in bags

- Choice of buying loose or in bags depends on:
  - the quantity required between shopping occasions
  - household size
  - whether price is a consideration.
- Bags are more popular among family shoppers in search for the most cost effective way to feed the family. These shoppers buy in volume, seeking out best quality at the cheapest price.
- The main gripe with pre-bagged potatoes is that the bag often contains bad potatoes. Many family shoppers think it is OK if a bag contains a few bad ones if the cost of the bag is less than the same quantity of loose.
- Shoppers would like to be able to check the quality of potatoes sold in bags. During purchase, some consumers pick up the bag of potatoes and jiggle them around to try and determine quality. (This does not always show up bad ones however.)
- Shoppers believe that exposure of potatoes to light through the plastic bag is bad. The perception is that exposure to light makes potatoes go green. Some suggested potatoes should be sold in an opaque bag.

- Shoppers like potatoes sold in bags which have information printed on them, such as the potato variety and best uses for that variety.

(ii) Green potatoes

- Most shoppers think green potatoes are bad for you. Some consumers will not use a potato if it has any green on it at all (for example they would not peel off green parts), as they believe the green is poisonous and is linked with cancer.
- There is a perception that when potatoes presented for sale are very dirty (for example brushed potatoes) they can not always tell if the potato is green underneath.

### Knowledge of potato varieties

Most consumers are aware that different potato varieties can be used in different ways, however sometimes this does not influence the actual variety bought. Some shoppers are only aware of two choices – washed and dirty/brushed potatoes.

Shoppers determine the potato variety by reading the information printed on the bag of potatoes, or the sign at point of purchase. However, information at point of purchase is not always available.

Some varieties named by consumers included: Brushed, *Pontiac*, *Desiree*, *Colliban*, *Sebago* and *Chat*.

Knowledge about uses for each variety was not as widespread. Overall, consumers like to know the best uses for each variety.

### Cooking inspiration comes from many sources

The foods consumers prepare for meals often reflect what they were brought up eating. Many consumers prepare standard meals each week.

In addition, recipes are used by most participants but not frequently. Some estimate that they may use recipes up to around 20 percent of the time.



Many use recipes for inspiration on what to cook, rather than following every step using every ingredient. Following every step of the recipe is more likely carried out on a special occasion or when having visitors over.

Recipe ideas come from different sources including magazines, cookbooks, cooking programs (not watched by big proportion), friends and family and favourite restaurants.



# Go for 2&5™ goes national

**The Australian Government's \$5 million national Healthy Eating program, aimed at increasing consumption of fruit and vegetables, is underway.**

**The approach, based on the successful Western Australian Go for 2&5™ campaign, runs from 28 April to 30 June. The Go for 2&5™ campaign reflects the Australian nutrition guidelines recommendation of two servings of fruit and five of vegetables for adults every day.**

While many Australians eat less fruit and vegetables as they grow up, our needs increase as we grow. Children aged 8-11 should have at least one serve of fruit and three serves of vegetables each day.

The campaign includes three television commercials, two print advertisements and internet and radio advertisements. A consumer booklet will also be distributed with support from state and territory health departments. At retail level, advertising will be seen on supermarket trolleys and shopping centre display boards.

The campaign will be supplemented by recipe cards in Coles and Woolworths. Thousands of independent retail outlets will also be supplied with campaign material through an arrangement with the Central Markets in each state.

At the heart of the campaign is Vegie Man, an animated media character with a composite fruit and vegetable face. The campaign extends this character into the national arena, providing encouragement and meal solutions for Australian families.

The nationally coordinated campaign is part of the Australian Government's wider four-year *Building a healthy, active Australia* package designed to promote healthy eating and increased physical activity among children.

The campaign provides families with reliable, practical and consumer-friendly information on the vital importance of fruit and vegetables in the diet. Its aim is to make parents and children aged under 17 aware of the importance of healthy eating to achieve a healthy lifestyle.

Public relation activities will be conducted at a national and state level to extend the advertising messages.

Campaign materials can be seen at the ***Building a Healthy, Active Australia*** website at [www.healthyactive.gov.au/2and5](http://www.healthyactive.gov.au/2and5)

The national adaptation of the WA Health Department's successful Go for 2&5™ campaign has occurred through granting of licences, development of new resources and inclusion of local initiatives.

Licensing arrangements have been extended to other state and territory Health Departments to allow them to access the Go for 2&5™ campaign materials. Further consideration is being given to ways of incorporating the Go for 2&5™ approach into existing activities.



Go for 2&5  
FRUIT VEG

## Industry Licensing

As part of the licensing arrangements provided through WA Health, it is proposed that HAL be given the power to sub licence the Go for 2&5™ program.

Using this approach, individual industries or businesses would be licensed through HAL to access campaign materials. This licensing process would provide investors with access to millions of dollars of tested products developed by WA Health. The products include television advertisements, print advertisements, Healthy Fast Food Cookbook, point of sale materials, outdoor / ambient materials (taxi tops, display systems), brochures / publications, recipe cards, posters and merchandise.

Funds gathered through this sub licensing process will in turn be used to provide support to a long term national campaign.

The terms and conditions of the licensing arrangement are expected to be finalised shortly. To register an expression of interest and be sent further information when it becomes available, please contact the AFVC Health Initiative Coordinator Chris Rowley on Phone: (02) 8901 0329 or e-mail: [afvc@horticulture.com.au](mailto:afvc@horticulture.com.au)

## What does it mean for industry?

HAL will undertake detailed research around the launch of the national campaign. The research will look at a range of issues including price and availability of fruit and vegetables to assess the likely benefit and return on investment to industry from implementation of a long-term national campaign. Results will be made available to HAL member industries to help them determine their future involvement in the campaign.

Chris Rowley

Australian Fruit & Vegetable coalition

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# Fresh

## National Evaluation and Commercialisation Committee (FNECC)

**The Committee met after the Potato IAC meeting in Sydney in March to discuss the fresh evaluation program. At the beginning of the meeting I was elected Chairman. The Committee consists of nine representatives and advisors; six state, two Victorian DPI and one from HAL.**

Since the changes in 2003 to breeding and evaluation, the fresh industry has managed its own evaluation and commercialisation program. This has been done in conjunction with Department of Primary Industries, Victoria who is carrying out the breeding and administering the commercialisation components on behalf of industry.

Changing from the old system to the new has not been without its problems. One difficulty has been the process of establishing state evaluation trials. In the past, the levy covered evaluations whereas with the new arrangement, states need to put up money which is then matched by the Commonwealth Government through a HAL VC project.

This and other issues are being worked through by the committee to ensure we have the best program possible.

### Breeding review

The review of the breeding program for fresh and processing is continuing, and is due for completion in March 2006 or possibly earlier. The last major issue to resolve is whether having an Australian breeding program is our best option or whether we import varieties to evaluate from overseas.

It is an important issue as our breeding program is small and our industry expectations high. This is not to say we do not do a very good job at breeding, but we cannot be complacent about the size of the challenge and the need to get the most cost effective solution for our industry.

### IAC report

Due to the difficulty in attracting funding for the fresh evaluation VC trials, \$10,000 has been put aside as seed funding for each state in the next financial year. The state industry organisations will need to apply for this funding by December as per other levy projects. If the money is not used, it will go back in the pool to be used for future projects.

Not all states may decide to run programs.

### Plant Breeders' report

Tony Slater provided the committee with an update on the breeding program. John Brown from Vic DPI also answered questions.

The following is a summary of key points from Tony's presentation:

- We are getting varieties out to industry for evaluation after four years – this is at least four years faster than other breeding programs around the world.
- Disease screening is being carried out at the third field generation (G3) instead of G4 so people have the information when they take the varieties away for evaluation.
- Disease screening support is provided by Vic DPI and the HAL processing potato R&D program, managed by TIAR. Some previous screening work which was done at Frankston will be transferred to Knoxfield.



*Farmers and other industry people looking at the potatoes from the Thorpdale evaluation trial – April 2005*

- Taste testing has been introduced for flavour and texture.
- We are working on establishing a strong two way communication with industry.

Tony then briefed the committee on the process for establishing criteria to select the varieties we want produced. It was agreed commercial players need to be brought into the discussion at the start and that past market research be revisited to ensure we take notice of consumer needs. These criteria will provide targets for material to be developed for the state evaluation programs.

At the end of the meeting, I believe the industry representatives felt quite comfortable and positive about where we were heading. It has been a long haul but we are now seeing the light at the end of the tunnel.

### Where to from here

This is our program and we need to support it. Without strong state and commercial support we will not be able to capitalise on the investment made in the breeding program.

If we are to get rewards from our breeding program, varieties need to be supported through the evaluation process and taken to the marketplace by someone with the incentive and enthusiasm to do so. Otherwise, varieties that are good for the industry will not be able to compete for shelf space with those from private breeding programs that have a commercial sponsor. Our current breeding and evaluation program is a bit like a car plant producing good vehicles without a distribution network, retail showrooms or an advertising campaign.

This is the challenge facing the committee and the industry.

*Neil Perry  
Chairman*



*Taste testing for flavour and texture has been introduced into the program*



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# Understanding how rotations affect soil borne diseases



**The benefits of crop rotation in reducing diseases have been known since at least the middle ages. Rotating crops and pastures, modifying paddock preparation, targeted weed control post and pre sowing, managing irrigation timing and fallowing all contribute to lessening disease build-up. In spite of farmers following best practice, diseases such as common and powdery scab and rhizoctonia still frequently cause problems and sometimes severely affect crops.**

## The challenge

Research in Australia and overseas in the past 15 years has greatly improved our understanding of the main potato diseases. The Australian work, largely funded through the potato levy, has provided a solid foundation for the Processing Potato R&D Program (PPR&DP). The challenge now is to take this knowledge, further our understanding and identify practical ways cropping systems can be managed to minimise losses to diseases.

New tools and knowledge generated in other parts of the PPR&DP will play a valuable role in helping us to achieve this goal.

## Clues from levy funded research

Levy-supported research projects have given us many clues as to what is going on in the rotation. The *Rhizoctonia* fungus, for example, is able to grow and survive on the roots of pasture species and rotation crops, such as fodder Brassicas. This has important implications for how we manage pastures and crops prior to sowing potatoes, and for the sequence in which we grow crops.

## What needs to be done

One of the first things we are doing to meet our goal is finding out more about the rotations currently used in South East Australia. These vary from potato followed by several years of pasture, to continuous cropping rotations involving many different crops. Growers are also responding to market pressures and often change their rotation to meet market demands.

A sample of growers is being surveyed in South Australia, Victoria and Tasmania to find out more about their rotations and the impact of management decisions on disease. We will be asking questions about rotations, seed-bed preparation and various crop management practices. Eventually we want to link this information with disease levels by using the DNA probes developed within the research program.

The DNA probes will be a vital tool for us in this work, because they will allow us to measure and track disease populations over a large number of sites, both when potatoes are being grown, and in the period between potato crops - something that has been very difficult and somewhat impractical to do in the past.

We still lack a good understanding of the important relationships between disease populations and their interaction with host and rotation crops and the soil environment. We want to know enough to be able to predict disease in a cropping system. To increase our understanding, we need to do more than track diseases in the paddocks. So we will run field and glasshouse trials to learn how to better manage potato cropping systems for disease control. One trial will look at how and when pasture should be managed prior to planting potatoes to give the best control of rhizoctonia.

We will also work with growers and processors to better use and add value to information already collected by the processing companies. Our aim is to come up with an improved but affordable way of assessing disease in commercial crops. If we achieve this aim, then industry will have a system by which it can track disease severity and better understand how much these diseases are costing.

The Processing Potato R&D Program is a collaborative program between research groups in Tasmania, Victoria, South Australia, New Zealand and Canada, processors and growers. Subprograms in the program are closely integrated to help achieve the aim of better disease control.

*Leigh Sparrow*

*Team Leader – Rotations*

*Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research*

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## The program

**The Processing Potato R&D Program (PPR&DP) consists of six sub-programs with the following goals:**

### DNA probe tests

To develop inexpensive tests to determine how much disease is present in the soil, on seed or in water.

### Soil amendments

To improve our understanding of the interactions between the diseases and the structure, chemistry and biology of soil.

### Crop rotations

To understand how cropping sequences (or rotations) and associated cultural practices impact on diseases.

### Enhancing resistance

To specifically target some novel ways to improve resistance to common scab and Tomato Spotted Wilt Virus.

### Resistance screening

To identify resistant varieties to the target diseases in our breeding program.

### Communications

To support the research teams in communicating progress and outcomes, and help networking between participants.

*The PPR&DP is a collaborative venture between growers, processors and research centres in Tasmania, Victoria, South Australia, New Zealand and Canada.*



# Elders Potatoes



**H**armony is a bright skinned smooth potato that is well suited to both the washing and brushing market sectors.

Plants have good vigour and produce an even run of tubers with a high pack out percentage.

The potatoes are well suited to all end user requirements except for frying.



**V**alor is a high yielding white skinned potato best suited to the brushing sector.

The plants are deep rooted and have big tops to fill out the tubers produced. The variety can tolerate dryer growing conditions, has good resistance to blight, and presents excellent pack out figures at harvest time.

The potatoes are ideal for boiling and baking.



**K**estrel is 'The Versatile Potato' It has a distinctive purple blush with a cream skin, and has a great potato flavour.

The plants produce an even range of tubers that presents an excellent pre-pack sample.

The potatoes are suited to all end uses, which makes Kestrel a great potato to grow and eat.

**For further information please contact  
Rene de Jong, Elders Potato Coordinator on 0418 523 710 or your local Elders Branch  
Website:<http://potato.elders.com.au>**



# Potato 2005 - National Potato Conference

## PROGRAM OF EVENTS

### Sunday 18th September

5.00 pm **Reception and registration**

### Monday 19th September

8.00 - 8.30 am **Registration**

#### Session 1 Product potential

8.30 - 8.40 am **Welcome**  
Conference Chairperson,  
Con Powel

8.40 - 9.40 am **The big picture and the drivers for Australian agriculture**  
Professor Neville Norman,  
Associate Professor of  
Economics,  
University of Melbourne

9.40 - 10.30 am **Potato industry trends in the UK**  
David Higgins,  
The Higgins Group, Scotland

10.30 - 11:10 am **Morning Tea and Trade Fair**

#### Session 2 Product Potential (Concurrent A)

11.10 - 11.35 am **What's hot and What's not - What consumers are saying**  
Dean Harris, Market Equity

11.35 - 12.00 pm **Hakas and Hangis - Selling spuds the New Zealand way**  
Kevin Wilcox, Chairman,  
Potato Promotions Committee  
New Zealand

12.00 - 12.20 pm **Umpiring the market game - ACCC at work**  
John Martin, ACCC

**Organised Management (Concurrent B)**

11.10 - 11.35 am **Integrating dispute resolution into your business**  
Bob Gaussen,  
National Grocery Industry  
Ombudsman

11.35 - 12.00 pm **Getting a fair go - Horticultural Business Code**  
Euan Laird, AUSVEG

12.00 - 12.20 pm **Good, better and best practice in the workplace**  
Stuart Bailey,  
Victorian Workcover Authority

12.20 - 1.45 pm **Lunch and Trade Fair**

#### Session 3 Tuning the technology

1.45 - 2.25 pm **What's in the toolbox - Research initiatives in the UK**  
Alison Lees,  
Scottish Crop Research  
Institute

2.25 - 2.45 pm **Five year review of the outcomes of Pathology Research**  
Dolf deBoer, Vic DPI; Calum  
Wilson, TIAR and Trevor  
Wicks, SARDI

2.45 - 3.05 pm **Five year review of the outcomes of agronomy research**  
Philip Brown, TIAR and John  
Fennel, PIRSA

3.05 - 3.45 pm **Afternoon Tea and Trade Fair**

#### Tuning the technology (Concurrent A)

3.45 - 4.10 pm **Hatches and matches - Potato Breeding**  
Tony Slater,  
National Potato Breeder,  
Vic DPI

4.10 - 4.35 pm **Virus Y - A re-emerging problem?**  
Brendan Rodoni, Vic DPI

4.35 - 5.00 pm **The benefits of virus survey in seed production**  
Mark Holland,  
AGWEST Plant Laboratories

#### Tuning the technology (Concurrent B)

3.45 - 4.10 pm **Precision detection methods for soil borne diseases**  
Nigel Crump and Robert  
Faggian, Vic DPI

4.10 - 4.35 pm **Checklist and self assessment for potato storage and handling**  
Doris Blaesing, Serve Ag

4.35 - 5.00 pm **Turning ideas into profits on the farm**  
Andrew Weidemann,  
Birchip Cropping Group

6.00 - 8.30 pm **Evening excursion to the Phillip Island penguin colony (Optional)**

### Tuesday 20th September

8.00 - 9.15 am **Industry Meetings**  
Annual Meeting of VICSPA  
French fry contract growers  
*Venues are available for formal or informal meetings*

9.30 - 5.00 pm There will be three tour options available. Tours will commence and finish at Cowes and groups will be taken to a number of venues around the district.



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**Tour Option 2:** Visit the Mornington Peninsula and look at vegetable packing and marketing, organic production, planning issues with urban encroachment and wineries.

**Tour Option 3:** Visit South and West Gippsland. Early certified seed crops, commercial plantings at Thorpdale, potato planters and wineries.

Conference delegates will be required to select just one of the tours on offer at the time of registration or prior to registration.

6.00 – 7.00 pm **Pre dinner refreshments in the Trade Fair Area**

7.00 pm **Conference Dinner**  
Guest Speaker: Paul Martell

## Wednesday 21st September

7.45 - 8.15 am **Registration**  
(for single day attendees)

8.15 – 8.30 am **Conference opening**  
Bob Cameron,  
Minister for Agriculture,  
Victorian Government

### Session 4 Attention to water

8.30 - 9.00 am **National Water Policy**  
Chloe Munroe,  
National Water Commission,  
Canberra

9.00 – 9.25 am **Trading Water Rights**  
Charles Thompson,  
Member of the HAL  
Water Initiative

9.25 - 9.50 am **Improving the efficiency of irrigation**  
Kain Richardson,  
Potato farmer, Ballarat

9.50 - 10.10 am **Recycled water for potato production**  
Jim Kelly, Coordinator,  
Reclaimed water in  
Horticulture

10.10 – 10.40 am **Morning Tea and Trade Fair**

### Session 5 Tomorrows trend

10.40 – 11.30 am **Debate (Adjudicated)**  
Should the Potato Industry  
Continue to Invest  
Compulsory Levy Money  
into a National Potato  
Breeding Program?

**Affirmative Speakers**  
Representatives from Vic DPI  
and the fresh and French  
fry industries.

**Negative speakers**  
Manager of PBR and,  
fresh and government  
representatives.

11.30 – 12.00 pm **Industry outlook for French Fry manufacturing**  
David Antrobus,  
McCain Foods

12.00 – 12.30 pm **New initiatives through the Processing Potato R & D Program**  
Rowland Laurence,  
Program Coordinator, TIAR

12.30 – 1.40 pm **Lunch and Trade Fair**

### Session 6 Opportunities for families

1.40 – 2.10 pm **Role of the smaller producer in modern agriculture**  
Chris Fry,  
National Australia Bank

2.10 – 3.00 pm **Incorporating family life with the family farm (Panel of three speakers)**  
Farmers will present their approach to balancing farming and family commitments and their own special interests in potato production.

3.00 – 3.30 pm **Conference Outcomes and Summary**

## For more information and to register contact:

Conference Secretariat

PO Box 1349

Warragul VIC 3820

Ph: (03) 5623 4188

Fax: (03) 5622 0806

Email:

potato2005conference@yahoo.com.au

Internet: www.spv.org.au



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# APIC winds up

**At a special February meeting in Melbourne, it was decided the Australian Potato Industry Council (APIC) would be wound up. The process should have been concluded by the time you receive this newsletter.**

## What happened

At the November meeting of AUSVEG, a decision was made to notify APIC of AUSVEG's intention to withdraw from the Council. APIC was informed of the decision at their meeting that followed.

At a special APIC meeting held in February, the Processors and Merchants supported the decision and the process of winding up APIC began.

## Why the change

Although AUSVEG initiated the action, the change had been coming for a while with processors also questioning their involvement.

For processors, the Potato IAC was their main interest and if any other issues arose they could deal with AUSVEG directly.

In the case of AUSVEG, the organisation had undergone many changes. It had become a company, employed a CEO to manage the organisation's affairs and last year the AUSVEG Potato Group became part of the Board therefore eliminating the need for a separate group. The question for AUSVEG was – can we do without APIC and therefore save time and money? The answer was yes.

For merchants, APIC provided a useful forum. The loss of APIC though does not exclude the industry sectors meeting as required on important issues.

APIC was also restricted by a small budget. It required money to make APIC more effective.

Members such as AUSVEG could have increased their contributions but that would have taken money away from their own organisations.

At the end of the day, it was a matter of how limited resources could be spent most efficiently.

As representatives of the industry, it is our responsibility to ensure we are efficient and effective. Time marches on and our industry's needs have changed.

## A bit of history

The industry is very grateful to Tony Biggs who did a lot of work in 1988-89 to help set up APIC, when the idea of a national body was first mooted.

In 1988, Potato Growers of Australia (P.G. of A.) moved at its meeting to actively pursue the concept of a truly representative national forum or body. Later in that year unbeknown to P.G. of A., David Montgomery (potato grower and merchant) and Tony Biggs (NSW Agriculture and Fisheries) organised a meeting of interested people in Sydney to examine various options for forming a national body. A steering committee was created, chaired by Max Walker (Tasmanian Department of Agriculture) to examine various options for a national body and to prepare options for a national forum in Sydney in December that year.

At the forum, an interim council was formed to draft a constitution, develop guidelines and objectives and assist discussions about APIC. In May 1989, a further forum was held after the P.G. of A. meeting and the Australian Potato Industry Council was officially formed.

The inaugural Council consisted of:

### Farmer representatives

John Smink (Tasmania) and Wayne Cornish (SA) - Chairman

### Merchant representatives

James Croll (Jandav Investments)

Neil Dvorak (Western Australian Potato Marketing Authority)

### Processor representatives

Duncan Menzies (APD Snack Foods)

Milton Rodda (McCain Foods)

### Government representatives

Tony Biggs (NSW Agriculture and Fisheries)

Max Walker (Department of Primary Industry, Tasmania)

Over the years, we have had many representatives, all of which I would like to thank for their dedication and commitment to the task.

Many issues were dealt with but APIC took a lead role with cadmium, the R&D Program (especially throughout the 90's), National Seed Certification Standards and improving communication (eg. Potato Australia and Eyes on Potatoes) in the industry.

## We appreciate your efforts

I would like to thank all representatives, and those from within and outside the council who put so much time and effort into APIC for the benefit of the industry. With regard to the R&D program, I would also like to thank Jonathan Eccles and the staff from HAL (formerly HRDC) for their support.

In concluding, I would like to give special thanks to Tony Imeson our current APIC Secretary for his continuing support and help with the windup arrangements.

*Geoff Moar*

*APIC Chairman*

## Past Councillors and advisors

*Those not already mentioned.*

Phillip Beswick

Geoff Biggs

Ron Cumming

Mike Durkan

Paul Frost

Tony Gietzel

Les Horsfield

Max McKenna

Ray Nalder

Phillip O'Keefe

Jeff Peterson

Ian Rickus

Len Toohill

Craig Wilson

Brian Newman

(Secretary)

Barry Philp

(Government adviser)

Rowland Laurence

(Government Adviser)

Leigh Walters

(Communication Adviser)

**Hopefully nobody has been missed.**

# Call for nominations:

## 2006 World Potato Congress (WPC) Awards



**President of the World Potato Congress (WPC) Inc., Lloyd Palmer from Prince Edward Island, Canada and Chairman of the WPC Awards Committee, John Rich, from Tasmania, Australia, have announced that nominations are now being called for the 2006 World Potato Congress Awards.**

The World Potato Congress Awards are an important and prestigious event on the International potato scene. They aim to recognise lifetime contributions of individuals to the potato industry. It is usual for up to four awards to be presented at the Congresses, held every three years. The next Congress will be in Boise, Idaho in August 2006.

Written nominations are invited to be submitted. The application form and submission instructions appears on the World Potato Congress website [www.potatocongress.org](http://www.potatocongress.org). Applications close on March 31st next year (2006). The usual procedure is for the Awards Committee to assess the written applications and make appropriate recommendations to the WPC Board.

Prominent recipients to have received past awards include J R Simplot and Harrison McCain. Award recipients presented at the previous Congress in China in 2004, were Mr Tony van Leersum from Canada, Mr Ray Owen from England, Mr Walter Krohn from Germany and Dr. Prof. Song Bofu from China.

*John Rich*  
Chairman  
WPC Awards Committee  
✉ [jmrich@bigpond.net.au](mailto:jmrich@bigpond.net.au)



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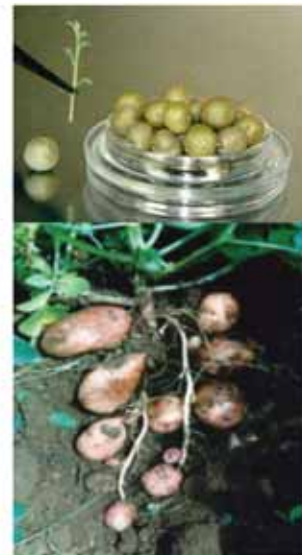
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# Late Blight

## - the current state of play

**Australia is one of the few potato growing countries lucky enough not to have the new aggressive strains of late blight that have been sweeping the world for the past two decades.**

Although the disease (caused by *Phytophthora infestans*) occurs now and again in parts of Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia, it is, on the whole, not a serious problem in this country.

Late blight is also known as 'Irish blight' because disease epidemics over several seasons in the mid 1800s caused the great famine in Ireland. Since then, the world learned to live with late blight by developing new cultivars and a suite of chemical controls, of which the chemical metalaxyl was the most effective.

### The threat

In the early 1980s, new and more aggressive strains of late blight spread from their ancestral home in central Mexico to Europe, North America, Africa and Asia. These new strains are now found in Indonesia (Java) and indications are that the late blight epidemic that destroyed potato crops in the Papua New Guinea (PNG) highlands in 2003 was also caused by a new strain or strains (see Potato Australia 2003, p8 – Late blight devastates PNG Potato Industry).



*Inspecting a late blight infected crop in Papua New Guinea*

The new strains, consisting of two different mating types (A1 and A2), instead of the previously widespread A1 mating type, rapidly developed resistance to metalaxyl, causing serious crop losses where the disease was previously under control. The new strains operate under a wider range of climatic conditions than the old strains and also cause more crop damage. Management of the disease depends on regular spraying (5 day intervals) with a range of fungicides throughout the life of the crop.


The threat to the Australian industry, based on experience in the United States, is that introduction of new strains could result in late blight becoming more common and widespread, and requiring expensive spray programs to manage. These new strains are likely to be resistant to metalaxyl. The most effective chemicals used overseas are not registered here. There will also be serious implications for interstate trade and export of potatoes from Australia. It is critical we are prepared for the possibility of an incursion of new strains.

### What to look for

Late blight typically develops after a few days of relatively mild (15 C-25 C), still weather after row closure and under conditions of high moisture (drizzle, heavy dews, sprinkler irrigation, high relative humidity). Disease can be spread from infected piles of cull potatoes, seed potatoes or volunteer potato plants. Leaflets are infected and under ideal conditions the disease can spread into the crop within hours from the source. The spores which spread the disease are carried by wind and water splashed from plant to plant.

The Australian strain of late blight is an A1 mating type and is sensitive to metalaxyl. It is regarded a relatively old strain compared to those affecting potatoes in Europe and North America. The protectant fungicides used for target spot control give some protection against late blight if applied early enough and metalaxyl can effectively stop disease spread if applied at the first sign of infection.

Changes in disease patterns in crops may be the only indication that new strains of late blight have arrived in Australia. The disease may occur earlier in the life of the crop and spread much more quickly because new strains can attack the lower stems directly causing collapse of the entire plant stem. (The current Australian strain infects the leaflets, with the disease gradually spreading onto petioles and stems).



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Sprays of metalaxyl or application of the currently registered 'protectant' fungicides may not be effective in controlling the disease. Farmers may complain the disease is much more common than it used to be and may occur in areas where it was not obvious before.

The new strains are better adapted at infecting the tubers below ground than the old strains, and this will affect seed production. Evidence from PNG indicates that common commercial cultivars grown in Australia will be very susceptible to late blight caused by the new strains.

### Being prepared

HAL has commissioned a project to develop a Potato late blight incursion management plan (Project Leader Jacky Edwards, DPI, Victoria). This project will look at predicting the occurrence, spread and impact of late blight strains in potato production in Australia; identify new chemical control options for registration in Australia; identify diagnostic protocols and tools for working with late blight incursions; outline management of market access and trade-related issues and identify sources of resistance to the new strains of late blight. The incursion management plan will become an appendix to the Plant Health Australia Biosecurity Plan for the potato industry.

This project is complimented by an Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) project in Papua New Guinea (*Management of potato late blight in PNG*, Project Leader Dolf de Boer, DPI Victoria) which will look at managing the disease through a combination of disease resistant cultivars and integrated management strategies suitable for small farms.

### Who to talk to

For further information, the following people can be contacted: Dolf de Boer and Jacky Edwards (Vic DPI) Trevor Wicks (SARDI), Hoong Pung (Serve-Ag Research) and Andre Drenth (CRC for Tropical Plant Protection, Qld).

### Hotline

If you suspect a problem either contact one of the above people or the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline on 1800 084 881.

Dolf de Boer

Vic Department of Primary Industries

☎ (03) 9210 9222

✉ [dolf.deboer@dpi.vic.gov.au](mailto:dolf.deboer@dpi.vic.gov.au)

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Sthn NSW	0427 651 971	<b>Dave Farmer</b>
VIC & TAS	0417 832 784	<b>Toby Brown</b>
SA	0418 819 350	<b>Jason Sims</b>
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# Students Crop a Career

*A paddock to plate program encourages young growers*



*Cropping a Career students check out the latest potato machinery*

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**The increasing age of our farmers and lack of young people entering Tasmania's vegetable and potato cropping industries have been of concern for a number of years. But the industry is trying to address these issues.**

The Cropping a Career program, which takes young potato and vegetable growers through Tasmania's vegetable and potato production from field to processing and packaging to the supermarket, has allowed participants to get together, be pro-active and address their future.

Cropping a Career has achieved enthusiastic support from its industry partners, with the pilot program started in March with eighteen participants.

They saw how a dirt-covered potato is transformed into a frozen French fry in a few hours and how necessary quality standards must be met at each stage. They also looked at how a potato crop is harvested with the latest high-tech equipment using skilled labour on the machines. They saw the importance of irrigation in determining tuber shape, quality and yield and how different systems operate. Students were then treated to a comprehensive tour of the Simplot Australia processing plant at Ulverstone. This reinforced why tubers need to be of a particular shape and size, how it is important to remove dirt and rocks from the sample



*Above: Students study crop production requirements*





Students learn about the technology of managing water use efficiency in potato cropping



Students grade fry samples for colour

and use only the best potatoes for long-term storage. Most importantly, the students came away with the knowledge that there is more to Tasmania's potato industry than meets the eye and if they buy French fries anywhere in Australia, there is a good chance they were grown and processed in Tasmania.

Students also saw how growing a potato crop is much more than just ploughing the land. Farmers need to be skilled in soil, water and crop management, grow their crop to meet tight specifications and harvest at a time and quality to suit the market.

They experienced the science of potato growing and the search for new and better ways of managing crops and soil. They attended a University of Tasmania session on the importance fry colour and how it varies according to potato variety.

Industry representatives highlighted to participants that their industry offers a wide variety of opportunities, careers and rewards for anyone wanting to be involved.

The final day of the program saw four outstanding students awarded industry- sponsored bursaries to further their careers in agriculture. The four winners were Rebekah Couche, 17 from Launceston, Jye Hill, 16 from Montrose, Matt Yaxley, 17 from Penguin and Ben Cleary, 16 from Howrah.

Tracey Taylor

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# Potato IAC Update

The IAC met in Sydney in March.

## Changes in industry structure

The two signatories to the legislation for the potato levy are AUSVEG and Potato Processors Association of Australia. In the past, the Australian Potato Industry Council (APIC) has represented the industry on the HAL members' committee. In March, APIC resigned as a member of HAL prior to the Council disbanding. In the future AUSVEG will represent growers' interests and Potato Processors Association of Australia have applied to HAL for membership to represent processors' interests.

## Biosecurity update

The industry biosecurity plan is well underway and, by the time people read this item, it should be in the final stages of completion. HAL has contracted Department of Primary Industries Victoria to develop an incursion management plan for the new strains of late blight which should be concluded by mid next year.

## Fresh potato marketing

The Fresh sub-committee commissioned through HAL a market research and a marketing feasibility study to provide the foundation for an industry marketing strategy. The market research has been reported in this and the March edition of Eyes on Potatoes.

The sub-committee and the potato representatives from AUSVEG had a detailed discussion on the path forward. Representatives were comfortable about what needed to be done to achieve higher sales, but expressed concerns about the likelihood of growers to capture benefits. If growers are to support introduction of a levy to fund a marketing program, they need to be able to capture some benefits to justify the investment.

The IAC role in this complex topic is to investigate the opportunities, with any decision ultimately being made by AUSVEG. Further work is being done by AUSVEG to progress the issue and identify further research required.

## Processing Potato R&D Program

The Processing sub-committee would have liked to allocate further funds to the processing program but at this stage cannot do so. The committee is very happy with the progress that has been made and is keen to support the initiative as much as possible.

*John Gallagher*  
Chairman

## Latest R&D reports

The following is a list of HAL Final Reports released in the past three months.

The reports are available in hard copy form only and cost \$22.00 in Australia or \$US30 outside Australia including GST and postage. Summaries of the projects and an order form can be found on HAL's internet site at – [www.horticulture.com.au](http://www.horticulture.com.au). Select **Project results** then **Potato** and use the search engine to find the reports of interest.

For those people not connected to the internet, call Horticulture Australia on ☎ (02) 8295 2300.

A partnership to build crisping potato capacity of West Java and Australian seed potato sales	PT02018
Control of black dot in potatoes	PT01001
Effects of potato seed characteristics on seed-piece breakdown and poor emergence	PT02017
International R&D workshop and industry extension meetings on common scab disease	PT02013
Management of tomato spotted wilt virus in potatoes	PT00019
Variety development for the fresh potato market in Western Australia	PT03070



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# French Fries may be back on the menu

**The American press has reported that Walter B Jones Jnr, the Republican congressman for North Carolina who called for "French Fries" to be renamed "Freedom Fries" when the French government did not support the US push into Iraq, has had second thoughts.**

He recently withdrew his support for the Bush administration's push into Iraq and has been a strong public critic of the war.

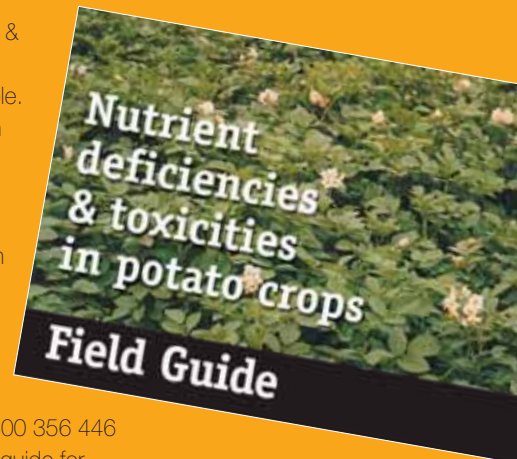
Jones first started his campaign against French Fries in March 2003, when he lobbied for three cafeterias in the US House of Representatives' office buildings to stop using the word French in their menus to describe the fries they made.

(Paraphrased from a story by Valerie Bauer: *The Associated Press*, 17 May 2005: from *The News & Observer*, Raleigh.)

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# Tasmanian potato growers lose ground

Simplot Australia is about to lose half of its McDonalds tendered contract of French fries to McCain Foods, according to recent media reports. Since McCain Foods in Tasmania is already processing at near capacity, most of the potatoes are likely to come from interstate or New Zealand. If Simplot cannot obtain further contracts, Tasmanian potato growers face a possible 43,000 tonne reduction in potatoes grown in the upcoming season. This figure represents about 15% less tonnage than the 2004/05 season contract.

This is a massive blow to Simplot potato growers and one that will have a huge flow on effect to the Tasmanian community. The loss to growers equates to around \$10 million with a ripple effect into the

economy of \$50 million. It will affect the likes of fuel suppliers, contract harvesters and their gangs, transport contractors, packaging companies and even Bass Strait transporters.

I am also concerned about the effect these cuts will have on young farmers coming into the industry and established growers who have already made substantial long term commitments based on contracts for production.

Denis Leonard

Tasmanian Farmers & Graziers Association

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# State ROUND-UP

## Western Australia

The start of April brought substantial rain across WA's south west. Rainfall of 178mm was recorded at Albany in the Great Southern region, on 1 April 2005. Some regions on the west coast received up to 70mm on 1 April. The heavy rainfall caused substantial damage to seed crops in the Albany area, with about 130ha of seed crops affected by flooding. This area produces about 50% of WA's domestic seed potatoes, which may cause a shortage of commercial seed this year and could affect the variety balance in following seasons.

Planting in coastal areas of WA started in March and these crops are growing well, despite strong winds in early April. Harvest of crops in the Myalup area is expected to start in May. Approximate yields of 60t/ha to 70t/ha are expected for *Nadine*, 40 to 45t/ha for *Royal Blue* and 50t/ha for *Delaware*. The main varieties planted since mid April have been *Nadine*, *Mondial*, *Royal Blue* and *Ruby Lou*. Weather conditions for the planting were good, with fine days and little rain. Seed quality appears good and emergence has been rapid and even.

Growing conditions for fresh and processing crops in Busselton have been good and average to above average yields and quality are expected for *Nadine* (70 to 75t/ha), *Royal Blue* (50 to 55t/ha), *Ruby Lou* (50 to 55t/ha) and *Atlantic* (50t/ha). The wet conditions in April reduced irrigation demand but caused no problems.

Conditions for the harvest of fresh market potatoes in the Manjimup / Pemberton region from mid March have been good. However, heavy rains in April resulted in the loss of some areas of crop and reduced yield compared to 2004. Yield estimates are down about 5t/ha compared with 2004.

Harvest of summer planted crisp varieties (*Atlantic*, FL1867) began in April in the South West. Supply has been reduced due to the heavy April rainfall, causing harvesting of crops on low lying areas to be delayed. Yield and quality of crops already harvested is good, which is also expected for crops located on high ground yet to be harvested.

Demand for frozen french fries on the WA domestic market is very strong with all product from local factories being sold. The quality of the french fry varieties (*Russet Burbank*, *Ranger Russet*, *Shepody*, *Kennebec*, *Nooksack* and *Eureka*) has been good, with supply also affected by the heavy April rainfall.

*Rachel Lancaster*  
Research Officer  
Department of Agriculture (WA)

## South Australia

Crops in the Riverland and Mallee regions are producing average yield and quality crops with no particular challenges except that excessive supply has greatly reduced fresh prices. Some commentators have suggested this oversupply phase could continue for at least another crop season but as always with this industry, the market is very dynamic and the cycle may change at any time.

The main storage of 50,000 tonnes for the processing crop in the South East is complete, with mild weather conditions assisting harvest and transport. General quality is average to good, with less Hollow Heart being reported than last season, due in part to milder conditions during tuber set. Yields overall were average but some very high yielding crops were reported. Reports indicate an over-supply of processing potatoes above contract that is challenging this market as well.

Seed growers reported a good season for yield and quality with their main challenge being marketing a seed crop into a depressed and volatile fresh market.

*Bob Peake*  
Horticultural Consultant  
Rural Solutions SA

## Queensland

The price of potatoes continues to play on most Queensland producers' minds and it looks like there will be reduced plantings in many production regions.

The area planted in the upper Atherton Tablelands is slightly down on last year. Crops have had good growing conditions and low insect and disease pressures. Early plantings on the lower Tablelands also appear to be growing well with minimal problems. As there is not a lot of confidence in the fresh market price, a number of growers are still undecided as to the size of their main season crop and it is thought that the overall area to be planted will be reduced. Varietal production will continue again at a slightly reduced rate.

The Bundaberg region has been conservative in plantings. Crops to date have had good growing conditions with low insect and disease pressures.

The Lockyer Valley continues to suffer very dry conditions resulting in reduced plantings, particularly where producers have options of growing higher value crops with their limited water supplies. Some early plantings were affected by white fly. The problem has been controlled in later plantings and, with a drop in temperature, has reduced considerably. Other insect and disease levels have been low.

The Darling Downs has also been unfortunate in the water stakes with very little rainfall and water restrictions appearing imminent. Autumn crops, while having grown in harsh conditions, have produced average yields of good quality. Processing crops have been producing average specific gravity.

Planning for spring crops will depend to some degree on water availability.

*Michael Hughes*  
Extension Agronomist  
Department of Primary Industries & Fisheries.

## Victoria

Victoria received a deluge of rain in February but no significant rain since. Autumn has been very dry.

The Ballarat McCain's crop has grown well this year, with no disease problems. The Russet Burbank crops have been above average this year - up to 70 tonne per hectare - with better quality than last year, although the size of tubers is bigger. Many growers are irrigating before harvest. McCain's storage filled up in the first week of May, which is much earlier than usual as there have been no interruptions to harvest.

The health of Gippsland crops has been very good this year with the exception of some low lying paddocks which become waterlogged in the February rain, when some losses occurred. The harvest has progressed well in the dry conditions.

Colac and Portland suffered some losses in some low areas but most paddocks were well grown and healthy with little disease, producing above average yield. Harvest is well ahead of last year in the dry conditions.

Kinglake seed crops were very healthy this year with good tonnage. The area is dry but still has good soil moisture for harvest, experiencing frosty mornings and cold nights in autumn.

Victorian seed growers have lost some seed sales due to the dry season in Queensland; some orders from long term buyers have been reduced.

Organisation for the National potato conference at Cowes, Victoria, in September is progressing well. Speakers and tours should be of interest to all parts of the potato industry and will be well worth attending. Hope to see you there!

*Bruce Fry*  
*Horticulture Extension Officer*  
*Department of Primary Industries*

## Tasmania

An exceptionally dry summer resulted in considerable pressure on water supplies, however processors and fresh market companies are reporting good results from the season. The dry weather has allowed harvesting of crops to progress unhindered. However some growers, who had to irrigate prior to harvest, were struggling for water. Both processors completed their storage ahead of schedule and report the quality of potatoes into store as excellent. Relatively few diseases and defects have been reported from processing lines, the only exceptions being common and powdery scab, some hollow and some undersize. Early crops were showing higher than normal grub damage and White Fringe Weevil seems to be spreading and causing increased levels of damage.

Seed crops have performed exceptionally well this season and most were in store by the end of April. Seed certification recorded the highest rate of lines passing tuber inspection since they were introduced under the National Standard. An apparent oversupply of seed resulted in a considerable amount of seed being processed this year and less seed is likely to be contracted next year. Both processors will be using entirely certified seed next season and McCains aim to pre-cut all their seed ahead of next season's planting.

The increasing levels of imported frozen product is causing considerable concern among growers and processors and is likely to put further pressure on the industry next season.

*Iain Kirkwood*  
*Agricultural Officer (Potatoes)*  
*Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment*

## New South Wales

Drought conditions returned to most of New South Wales over autumn, with many potato growing districts having received little or no rainfall over the past two to three months. The fresh market continued to remain oversupplied, with ware prices ranging from \$7 to \$11 per 50 kilogram bag (\$140-\$220/tonne) in March, April and May. Fresh market returns remained poor for the second autumn harvest in a row.

Digging of the mid-season crops in the Guyra, Orange and Crookwell districts started in February. With the mild summer conditions, most crops have remained free of major pests and diseases. However with the dry weather, many crops required irrigation in the later half of the growing season. Crop yields and tuber quality are excellent in most districts. This year's recommended price for Crookwell Certified Seed is \$550/tonne plus GST. To date, seed sales have remained slow and harvesting in some districts is not expected to finish until August.

Digging of late crops started in the Maitland district in May and in the Dorrigo and Riverina districts in June. Crop areas are down on last season. Good yields are expected in most districts with the mild autumn weather. Unless demand substantially improves during winter, another slow harvest is expected for this year's late crop.

Processing growers are also anticipating a depressed market next season, following this year's domestic over production of crisping potatoes and a global glut in the French fry sector. Imports of frozen product from Belgium and New Zealand into Australia have further exacerbated the situation for the local French fry industry. Reduced contract tonnages, delayed harvest schedules and the return of processing growers to the fresh market are possible consequences of the depressed processing market.

*Stephen Wade*  
*District Horticulturist*  
*NSW Department of Primary Industries*

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