

HORTICULTURE COMMITTEE

Central West District

Committee Chairman

NSW Farmers Vice President

Peter Darley

E: peter.darley1@bigpond.com

Riverina District

Vice Chairman

Geoff Moar

E: moar@iinet.com.au

Western Rivers District

Jeff McSpedden

E: jester@bluemaxx.net.au

Northern District

John Cade

E: jmcade@activ8.net.au

Riverina Highlands District

Barney Hyams

E: hyamsbarn@hotmail.com

Hunter/Hawkesbury District

Fred Haskins

E: cotsmagic@yahoo.com.au

Mid North Coast District

Chris Nelson

E: chris@coastalavocados.com.au

NSW FARMERS' ASSOCIATION HORTICULTURE STAFF

Ben Mason

Policy Manager:

Cropping and Business,
Economics and Trade

T: 1300 794 000

F: 02 8251 1750

Level 25, 66 Goulburn Street

E: masonb@nswfarmers.org.au

Alison Anderson

Senior Policy Advisor: Horticulture
and Agricultural Chemicals

T: 1300 794 000

F: 02 8251 1750

Level 25, 66 Goulburn Street

E: andersona@nswfarmers.org.au

Website

www.nswfarmers.org.au

Dear Horticulture Members,

Welcome to the May edition of the NSW Farmers' Association (the 'Association') horticulture update, including reports from recently attended industry meetings, information about current issues and industrial relation matters.

I am extremely pleased to report that the NSW Government has committed to providing netting grants for orchardists in the Sydney Basin and Central Coast for the management of Flying-foxes. Orchardists in this region have suffered enormous losses for many years.

I also welcome the news this week that the NSW Food Authority is reminding retailers of their obligations under the Food Standards Code and the Food Act in regards to Country of Origin Labelling. For the first time both Coles and Woolworths have been fined for Country of Origin labelling breaches, labelling imported fruit as Australian produce. We need to ensure that consumers are not misled and are able to make informed purchasing decisions; earlier this year it was observed that some independent retailers had not correctly labelled apples from China.

I encourage you to join me and the Horticulture Committee at this year's Horticulture AGM and Conference, where food security will be the focus.

Regards,



Peter Darley

Chairman – NSW Farmers Association Horticulture Committee

2011 Horticulture AGM and Conference

The 2011 Horticulture Committee AGM and Conference will be held on Monday 18 July 2011 at Sydney Showground, Sydney Olympic Park, starting at 9:30 am. This year's theme will be *Food Security* and speaker details will be confirmed in the next few weeks.

Motions to be considered at the Horticulture AGM and delegates for each Horticulture District Council need to be submitted by Friday 1 July. Please contact your Regional Services Manager for a copy of the motion submission form or if you are interested in representing your Horticulture DC at the AGM.

Horticulture Committee Nominations

Nominations for the 2011/12 Horticulture Committee close on 10 June 2011. If you would like a nomination form please contact your Regional Services Manager.

Sydney Markets Council of Market Representatives

Peter Darley has been appointed by the Sydney Markets Limited Board to the Sydney Markets Council of Market Representatives as the Industry Group Representative for the Association. The appointment is for a term of three years.

Flying-fox Netting Grants

Following a long campaign by an alliance of farmers, conservation and animal rights groups across NSW the then State Labour Government announced on 6 March 2011 that it would provide more than \$5 million in financial assistance to orchardists in the Sydney Basin and Central Coast to install netting to protect their crops from damage caused by flying-foxes. The NSW Liberals and Nationals also announced they would provide \$5 million to protect orchards in the Sydney Basin.

The announcement said that licences to shoot flying-foxes will be phased out across the State over 3 years, commencing from 2011-2012. After the three-year phasing out period, licences will be issued only in exceptional circumstances (e.g. when they affect areas where they are not typically found such as occurred in Orange 2010).

The State Government is currently finalising grant details, with the aim to have grants available through the Rural Assistance Authority from July 2011.

With flying-foxes causing damage in inland fruit growing regions such as Orange and Batlow again in 2011 the Minister for Primary Industries, The Hon Katrina Hodgkinson MP has asked the NSW Department of Primary Industries to present an options paper for flying-fox management for the State Government to consider.

Zebra chip in potatoes

The potato industry is taking steps to voice their concerns about the potential importation of fresh potatoes for processing from NZ due to the concern they will introduce the disease 'Zebra Chip' to Australia.

Zebra Chip is seen as dark streaks, flecks or spots in tubers which go dark brown when they are cooked, resembling zebra stripes, making infected potatoes unsaleable as they are visually unappealing.

A bacterium (*Liberibacter*) has recently been confirmed as the cause of Zebra chip, with a phytoplasma also associated with the development of the disease. The vector of Zebra chip has been recognised as the tomato/potato psyllid (*Bactericera cockerelli*). Adult psyllids look like tiny cicadas and are 2 – 3 mm long. *Liberibacter*, in addition to causing Zebra chip, turns plants yellow and will lead to plant death within 2 to 3 weeks of infection.

New Zealand growers have experienced huge losses to Zebra chip in recent years with the psyllid being first identified in New Zealand in 2006. The disease has also rocked the United States potato industry and has cost the international potato industry millions of dollars.

AUSVEG has initiated a petition of members of the Australian vegetable and potato industries to stop the import of fresh potatoes from New Zealand due to serious disease concerns. Potato growers and other industry members are urged to sign the petition so that they too can add their voice to the growing list of those concerned about the threat imported fresh potatoes presents to the Australian potato industry. Hard copies of signed petitions need to be returned to AUSVEG for submission to the House of Representatives. The petition can be accessed by contacting your Regional Services Manager or visiting the AUSVEG website:

<http://ausveg.businesscatalyst.com/news/potato%20periodical/Petition%20Letter-online.pdf>

AUSVEG 2011 National Convention

The Association attended the 2011 National AUSVEG Convention in April 2011. Speakers included Senator the Hon Joe Ludwig MP, Senator Barnaby Joyce, The Hon Tony Abbott MP, Malcolm Jackman (CEO Elders) and Greg Fraser (CEO Plant Health Australia). A debate with the topic 'Water usage in the Murray-Darling Basin' was held between Dr Arlene Harriss-Buchan (Australian Conservation Fund) and Dr Jennifer Marohasy (The Land columnist and Adjunct Research Fellow at CQ University) and moderated by Laurie Wilson (President of the National Press Club). The trade show featured approximately 70 exhibitors.

At the AUSVEG National Awards for Excellence Gala Dinner Jeff McSpedden was awarded the AUSVEG Chairman's Award, in recognition of his contributions to the vegetable industry.

Apples from NZ

Biosecurity Australia has released the *Draft report for the non-regulated analysis of existing policy for apples from New Zealand*. This draft report has been completed in response to the final ruling by the World Trade Organisation (WTO) regarding the validity of existing measures required for the import of NZ apples.

The draft report recommends that export quality fruit produced using NZ's standard commercial practices be permitted access to Australia, subject to verification that standard orchard and packing house practices have been followed. Specifically, the risk management measures are:

- Application of the Integrated Fruit Production system, or an equivalent, to manage pests and diseases in the orchard.
- Consignments must be tested to ensure that only mature fruit is exported to Australia.
- There must be maintenance of sanitary conditions in dump tank water.
- High pressure washing and brushing of fruit must be undertaken.
- A minimum of 600 fruit from each lot packed must be inspected and found free of quarantine pests.

A key issue to be addressed is what constitutes "standard commercial practices". Australian growers have no access to the NZ Integrated Fruit Production manual. This sets a precedent for other commodities and one must question whether other countries would accept a quality assurance program or standard practices as a quarantine measure.

Comments on the draft report need to be submitted by 4 July 2011. The Association will prepare a response.

APAL Apple Breakfast, Grower Roadshow and Conference

Apple & Pear Australia Ltd (APAL) have organised a breakfast event in the Senate Courtyard at Parliament House, Canberra, to launch an economic study that shows the huge impact on Australian apple growers that will be caused by the Biosecurity Australia decision to allow apple imports from China and New Zealand. Coupled to the recent release of the draft New Zealand protocols, it is vital that politicians hear firsthand from growers the impacts of these recent decisions. It is important that MPs and Senators hear directly from growers. The Association encourages apple growers to attend. Please contact the Association or your Regional Services Manager for more information.

The proposed dates for the 2011 NSW workshops for the APAL Grower Roadshow are Thursday 30th June (Orange) and Friday 1st July (Batlow). The workshop program will cover imports, APAL activities, Aussie Apples promotion activities and the outcomes of the report, *'The Economic Impact of Apple Imports from China, NZ and the USA on The Australian Apple Industry'*.

The 2011 National Cherry Conference and the National Apple and Pear Conference will be held in Adelaide during the first week of August. More information is available at www.fruitgrowerstas.com.au

Asian Honeybee

The Association provided a submission to the Senate Standing Committees on Rural Affairs and Transport Inquiry into the Science Underpinning the Inability to Eradicate the Asian Honeybee on 31 March 2011. The Association stated that it supported the continuation of the Asian honeybee eradication program and asked the Australian Government to commit further funding to the eradication program immediately.

The Association also met with Bruce Christie (Principal Director, Biosecurity, Primary Industries) on 6 April 2011 to discuss the eradicability of Asian honeybee in the Cairns region of Far North Queensland. Bruce outlined the history of the Asian honeybee incursion in Far North Queensland, the funding arrangements for the eradication program which ceased on 31 March 2011 and the data being used to assess the likely eradicability of the Asian honeybee.

On 31 March 2011, the Senate requested the Consultative Committee on Emergency Plant Pests (CCEPP) meet again to reconsider the feasibility of eradicating the Asian honey bee. Two meetings later, the CCEPP did not reach consensus on whether the Asian honeybee could be eradicated from Queensland.

The Asian Honey Bee Coordination group, a Government and industry group, has now met on a number of occasions to consider actions to be undertaken to minimise the impact of the Asian honey bee. Queensland, as the State managing the current Asian honeybee incursion, is continuing activities to contain the bee.

Freshcare

The Association attended a Freshcare Program Workshop on 10 and 11 March 2011. An update on programs (Food Safety & Quality, Environmental, Environmental Viticulture and Environmental Winery), trainers, certification bodies and certification requirements of fresh produce suppliers to the major supermarkets was provided.

All audits after 1 September 2011 will be to Freshcare Food Safety & Quality Code of Practice 3rd Edition (COP3) with many Freshcare members still to be trained to COP3. The FarmReady program will recommence in July 2011 allowing those that need to be trained to COP3 to access grants.

Freshcare needs to be benchmarked to GFSI (Global Food Safety Initiative) to remain approved for Coles and the target for Freshcare to achieve this is 31 December 2011. This represents a cost to Freshcare (and ultimately growers) but Freshcare needs to be benchmarked to GFSI given the retailers' requirements.

The 2nd edition of the Freshcare Environmental Code was released in March 2011 and will be rolled out throughout the year. The intention is that growers do not need to go to refresher training to move from Environmental COP 1 to COP2.

In 2011 FSANZ will be starting the process of producing a Primary Production and Processing Standard for horticulture. This is a set of food safety obligations specifying requirements from production to processing of products for human consumption. It may cover requirements for control of use inputs, traceability and storage for example.

Management of Myrtle rust

A new publication has been released on the NSW Myrtle rust website aimed at helping people determine the risk of spreading Myrtle rust through their everyday work activities. The fact sheet "Myrtle rust: everyday management" provides a guide as to why people should be concerned about spreading this plant disease, areas to protect from infection and the basic concepts underlying the risk assessment process.

A copy of the factsheet is available at -

<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity/plant/myrtle-rust/management>

Vegetable Industry Development Program Update

The Vegetable Industry Development Program (VIDP) aims to help vegetable growers build their businesses and remain competitive in an increasingly market driven and globalised industry. Funded by HAL using the vegetable levy and matched funds from the Australian Government the Association is delivering the Collaborative Industry Organisations sub-program in NSW, assisting to develop, deliver and communication VIDP products to the vegetable industry.

The Association has a growing number of fact sheets available to vegetable producers covering a range of topics, including:

- Business decision making;
- Vegetable production statistics
- Soil health;
- Succession planning;
- Managing pesticide resistance; and
- Post harvest management.

A list of all current vegetable research, development and extension projects is also available, with contact details for the project leaders.

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Best Practice Guides for Lettuce and Brassica vegetables have recently been released and have been mailed to all brassica and lettuce growers in NSW. They provide a guide to management for key insect pests, diseases, viruses and control methods. To support the guides posters have also been produced which provide a list of current chemicals available for pest management in lettuce and brassica crops and their fit with IPM systems.

A project to review issues facing vegetable production in peri-urban areas is currently being funded through HAL. The Association recently hosted two meetings organised by Regional Services Manager Frances Tolson in the Sydney Basin between Gerard McEvelly from the project team and horticultural producers.

Fact sheets and IPM guides and posters can be obtained by contacting the Association. VIDP information and fact sheets can also found on the Association's website:

http://www.nswfarmers.org.au/policy_committees/horticulture/vegetable_industry_development_program