

HORTICULTURE COMMITTEE

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Dear Horticulture Members,

On behalf of the NSW Farmers Association ('the Association') and Horticulture Committee I would like to thank delegates, speakers and guests who attended the recent Horticulture AGM and Conference and the Association Annual Conference.

It was a busy week with the Horticulture Committee electing me as Chairman for a fifth year. I am very grateful to lobby with the on-going issues in Horticulture such as drought, the Horticulture Code of Conduct, Flying Fox management in NSW and improving price transparency and returns for producers.

The Committee welcomes Charles Armstrong as the Association's newly elected President, the Committee looks forward to working with Mr Armstrong together on issues facing Agriculture and Horticulture.

Horticulture Members can be pleased to hear the incoming Executive Council will consist of many Horticulture representatives with Peter Comensoli as the Association Treasurer, Jeff McSpedden and Geoff Moar as Horticulture Committee Representatives, Fred Haskins Region 7 representative, John Ward Region 9 Representative, John Ainsworth Region 13 representative and myself as an Association Vice President.

The Committee thanks John Robson for his efforts with the Horticulture Committee over the past decade which have shown great dedication from John. John's successor Ian Cathels, an apple producer from Batlow will take up the Riverina Highland representative position on the Committee. We welcome Ian to the Committee.

Important issues like water affect all of us in Horticulture, regardless of what we produce or where we live, and makes us appreciate the need for strength in numbers. This requirement for unity is why one of our major priorities is Membership and we have launched a new Membership drive at AgQuip. We are asking all our current Members to help us in encouraging other farmers to join our Association.

With each new Member, we will be building a stronger and brighter future for agriculture in NSW. Best of all for our Members, if you refer a new Member, you will receive an extra three months added to your Membership when you renew at no extra cost. So you will be getting 15 months of Membership for the cost of 12, as will the new Member you sign up. Contact the Association for further details on this offer

Regards,



Peter Darley
Chairman – NSW Farmers Association Horticulture Committee

Horticulture Annual General Meeting & Conference Report

The Horticulture Committee held their Annual General Meeting and Conference on Monday 27 July 2009. Delegates took the opportunity to discuss the various facets of the industry with a list of guest speakers including the Shadow Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Hon. John Cobb.

The Shadow Minister spoke on a number of issues including the use of nuclear energy technology to reduce fossil fuel carbon emissions, food security and water availability issues for this new century, Murray Darling Basin water buybacks, and provided a comparison of the US policy for Agriculture to the Australian policy for Agriculture in the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme legislation.

Developing a Future with Carbon for Horticulture towards Sustainable Healthy Soils, Healthy Foods and a Healthy Nation was the focus of the conference with presentations from Mr Michael Kiely with his wife Louisa of Carbon Farmers of Australia, a company that will aggregate and sell soil carbon credits, and Mr Peter Deuter, Senior Principal Horticulturist for the Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries, based at the Gatton Research Station.

Other speakers included Kathryn Adams, Australian Centre for Intellectual Property in Agriculture ('ACIPA'), James Turtle – Business Manager, ToughNet Australia established by the Batlow Fruit Co-operative Ltd, Peter Mills - Production Horticulture Lecturer, Charles Sturt University, Michael Champion, Champion Mountain Organics, and Justin Crosby, NSW Farmers Association Industrial Association Manager.

2009 - 2010 Horticulture Committee Representatives

Central West Horticulture District	Peter Darley (Chairman, Ag Chem Committee Rep)
Hunter/Hawks Horticulture District	Fred Haskins
Mid North Coast Horticulture District	Chris Nelson (Exotic Disease Committee Rep)
Northern Horticulture District Council	John Cade
Riverina Highlands Horticulture District	Ian Cathels
Riverina Horticulture District Council	Geoff Moar (Vice-Chairman, Executive Council Rep)
Western Rivers Horticulture District	Jeff McSpedden (Executive Council Rep)

Motions discussed and passed at the 2009 Horticulture AGM

H2009/01 – Imports

Motion: That the Association lobbies State and Federal Government to undertake chemical residue testing on all fruit and vegetables imported into Australia.

Left on the table to progress for the Horticulture Committee to determine the wording

H2009/02 – Trade

Motion: That the Association investigate “agency agreements” as applied to chemical distribution in NSW and ask Government to declare this practice be stopped if it disadvantages primary producers.

Carried

H2009/03 - Government Department Structure

Motion: That the Association lobby State Government so that the Department of Primary Industry be given its own Cabinet Minister separate from Mineral Resources, State Development, & Energy.

Carried

H2009/04 - Pest Control

Motion: That the Association ask that the LHPA as a service to Horticulture be responsible for the removal of “Rogue” fruit trees that establish on public roads and reserves in NSW.

Carried

'AppleQuest' Apples in Schools promotion program

The Horticulture Committee has secured funding to conduct apple and pear industry promotions for 2009. A part of the promotions is the Association's 'AppleQuest', apple in schools program which has operated since 2002. AppleQuest aims to educate schoolchildren around the state on the benefits of healthy eating, the role it plays in alleviating childhood obesity, as well as raising the profile of the Association's apple growers.

Organisation for AppleQuest 2009 has included a meeting with representatives from Woolworths Limited to arrange Woolworths as the distribution of apples to involved schools across the State. Woolworths will be sourcing NSW grown produce from the major apple production regions. The Department of Education and Training, NSW Canteens Association and Sydney Markets will be involved with the program.

The 2009 program will introduce some additional new components to the program which will further enhance learning in the classroom and extend the message to the main grocery decision maker in the household. The program is anticipated to occur in Term 4 of the 2009 school calendar during mid November.

Flying Fox Management in NSW – ASSOCIATION WIN

The Association has welcomed the announcement by the NSW Government that the licensing scheme for the culling of flying foxes in orchards will remain in place until a suitable alternative can be found.

The NSW Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water ('DECCW') NSW Flying-Fox Licensing Review Panel Report was released Tuesday 11 August. The review report provides outcomes on licensed culling of Flying Foxes in NSW orchards after extensive lobbying and dedication from the Association and Sydney Basin Orchardists. The Horticulture Committee thanks the assistance from Orchardists Edward Biel, Peter Comensoli and Glenn Fahey for their continued dedication and firsthand experience contribution on Flying Fox Management in NSW.

The Flying Fox Consultative Committee has provided a strong voice for recommendations designed for the Government to consider for future management of Flying Fox crop damage in NSW.

The Review Panel found that full exclusion netting is the most effective method for protecting commercial fruit crops from damage by flying-foxes. Both horticulturalists and animal welfare organisations are fully aware of the costs, and in some cases logistics, of adopting alternative crop protection methods.

The Government has stated it has a responsibility to respond both to animal welfare imperatives and industry impacts. That means that further work still needs to be done. The report will help guide the development of a new management policy that delivers for both flying foxes and fruit growers. In the interim, and as recommended by the panel, the following measures will be put into place:

- The Department of Industry and Investment will be developing Standard Operating Procedures ('SOP') for licensed shooting, in consultation with orchard growers and animal welfare groups. The SOP will be put in place during the 2009/10 fruit growing season.
- This will be supported by a targeted compliance campaign to ensure the rules are followed. This will be led by the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water, and will include prioritising agency resources for compliance work, and encouraging greater involvement of the NSW Police Force.
- Finally, DECCW will be commissioning a detailed economic analysis and a feasibility study to examine some of the options outlined in the report. It is anticipated that this work will be completed by the end of the year.

The Association will monitor the Economic Study to ensure that it will not complicate the process of the NSW Government committing financial assistance to fruit growers to protect their crops and end culling of flying-foxes.

Queensland Government's decision to ban the state's damage mitigation permit scheme in May last year, without a transition period or workable alternative solutions in place for the fruit industry, had seen growers

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suffer millions of dollars' worth of damage to stone and pome fruit and lychee crops on the Granite Belt, Bundaberg and elsewhere in the state last summer.

A recent study in Queensland has estimated the loss for the stone fruit industry in the Granite Belt caused by flying foxes could be \$4.8 million at the wholesale level in 2008. Multiplier effects to the community have been estimated to a total of \$11.9 million.

The Association will also continue its involvement in the Flying-Fox Consultative Committee to ensure all studies from the report recommendations provide the best outcomes for Orchardists managing the impact of Flying Foxes to orchards.

Modern Horticulture Award 2010

The National Farmers Federation ('NFF') appeared before the Australian Industrial Relations Commission ('AIRC') on July 16 2009 to put forward arguments for favourable transitional provisions to the Pastoral Award 2010 and the Horticultural Award 2010.

On Wednesday, 26 August 2009, the Minister for Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, the Hon Julia Gillard MP, varied the Award Modernisation Request. The variation requires the Australian Industrial Relations Commission ('AIRC') to provide for flexible working hours within the Horticulture Award 2010 (the 'Award') that takes into account harvesting requirements related to perishable horticulture products. It also requires the Award to contain genuine piecework provisions.

Initially, the Award only allowed 38 ordinary hours to be worked per week on five days Monday to Saturday, and required that payments for pieceworkers be hedged against the minimum hourly rate. In making the variation the Minister accepted the industry position put forward by the Association and the National Farmers Federation ('NFF') that the removal of genuine piecework rates would make it unviable to employ inexperienced young people and grey nomads, and would increase the burden of record keeping.

The AIRC will now reconvene consultations with industry stakeholders in the development of new provisions within the Award.

Horticulture Workplace Relations Compliance Program

The Minister for Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, the Hon Julia Gillard MP has announced that the Government will be undertaking a compliance program based on workplace relations laws in the horticulture industry. The National Farmers Federation ('NFF') has been requested by the Government to sit on an industry reference group for the program.

The Association understands that the program will focus on education and compliance monitoring.

Ten Australian vegetable growers to be sent on mission to the USA

AUSVEG announced ten Australian vegetable growers will be given the opportunity of a lifetime when they visit agricultural facilities in the United States of America and attend the Produce Marketing Association Fresh Summit in California this October.

Participants' tour costs will be significantly subsidised by the National Vegetable Levy. Growers will be asked to contribute \$3,000 towards the cost of the tour. All air and land travel, accommodation and most meals will be included. Anyone working within a vegetable growing business is encouraged to apply for this fantastic opportunity. Applications for the 2009 Vegetable Growers' Study Tour to the USA are now being accepted.

The tour is open to all vegetable levy payers and will expose growers to production, marketing and whole of supply chain systems in renowned growing regions of the USA.

For more information about the tour including details of the itinerary, please contact AUSVEG Communications Manager, Hugh Tobin on (03) 9544 8098 or hugh.tobin@ausveg.com.au

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