

VICTORIAN

SUMMER 2007/2008
ISSUE 32

VEGETABLE

GROWER



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT:



LUIS GAZZOLA
President

Greetings to all Victorian vegetable grower members, industry associate members and

suppliers to the vegetable industry.

The VGA Vic AGM was held last October in Melbourne and a new executive elected. I was disappointed not to meet more members at the meeting. It is always the same few that commit to attend and I extend a big thankyou to all those in attendance for their continued support of the industry.

The VGA Vic needs more support and new blood with fresh ideas going forward. My position of President was elected unopposed and I would thank the new executive for their support and confidence.

I am very fortunate to have a strong executive committee supporting me with special reference to David Wallace, past Senior Vice President, for his full support and attendance at Strategic Alliance Group meetings, market relocation design

committee and Chairman of the Growers Advisory Committee. I would also thank Vince Doria for accepting a position with the market design committee for Epping. John Said our AUSVEG representative on the Industry Advisory Committee (IAC) to Horticulture Australia (HAL), was elected VGA Vic Senior Vice President and Rocky Lamattina VGA Vic Junior Vice President.

I would make special mention of the industry work by our executive member Peter Cochrane in his role of President of the VFF Horticultural Group. Peter is dedicated to the position and spends more time away from the farm at both Victorian and interstate industry meetings and is a great ambassador for the vegetable industry.

The relocation of the Melbourne Market from Footscray Road to Epping was not the general wish of vegetable growers but it has been made clear at industry meetings that the State Government has made that decision. As your nominated representative with David Wallace to the Strategic Alliance Group we are in negotiations for a new market facility that provides the best commercial arrangement and trading conditions for all vegetable growers.

As your board member of AUSVEG, I can inform you that the national organisation is moving forward with reviewing the structure and a new constitution. The AUSVEG AGM will be held on Wednesday 30 January 2008.

There has been an ongoing investigation in 2007 into the vegetable industry levy system involving HAL and AUSVEG by the Federal Department of Agriculture and Fisheries. This has not been an easy period for the Chair, CEO and Staff of AUSVEG with a new internal audit committee and independent chair Dr. L. Duncan recommending changes. The final outcome will be delivered at the AUSVEG AGM.

The weather outlook has not changed much since my spring report with some areas receiving rain and other areas not. The markets are oversupplied with produce and there is an indication that there are sufficient crops planted to maintain the oversupply through to winter. It will be very interesting to see the reaction from the newly elected Federal Government in resolving the drought, water storage, recycled water and piping of irrigation flows to prevent evaporation and leeching. There is no doubt

Continued Page 3

WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE VICTORIAN VEGETABLE INDUSTRY? LOG ON TO WWW.VGAVIC.ORG.AU

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FOR 2008

VGA PRESIDENT

Luis Gazzola 0418 172 320

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT

John Said 0418 393 029

JUNIOR VICE PRESIDENT

Rocky Lamattina 0416 056 458

TREASURER

David Wallace 0408 547 708

MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE

Peter Cochrane 0418 392 113

Anthony Mason, 0412 591 899

Silvio Favero, 0417 455 610

Paul Gazzola, 0418 556 366

Frank LaMattina, 03 5998 5225

Tom Schreurs, 0418 591 699

Craig Arnott 0419 336 454

Robert Nave 0417 301 578

Tony Imeson, Executive Officer
Office: 03 9687 4707 Mobile: 0414 458 561
email contact@vgavic.org.au

DISCLAIMER

The purpose of the Victorian Vegetable Grower and the Vegelink newsletter is to communicate to the Victorian vegetable industry a sample of the activities that are being carried out in the State in relation to the VGA and the national vegetable levy. The information provided should not be interpreted as an advice or recommendation of any kind. The VGA and its officers disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from your relying on any information in this publication.



Executive Officer's Corner POST Summer 07/08



Tony Imeson, Executive Officer

VEGETABLE INDUSTRY TRAINING

The VGA has a strong relationship, and continues to support, vegetable apprenticeship and industry training programs currently held at Gordon Institute of TAFE's Werribee Campus.

Should you have persons on the farm who would benefit from attending a training course please contact David Milburn Tel : 0438 413 505 at the Werribee Campus.

PRIMARY PRODUCERS ARE VEGETABLE GROWERS.

Despite all the media hype regarding price increases for vegetables and shortages due to drought, produce traded through central markets do not reflect that shortages are causing higher prices to the consumer. Vegetable Growers are not experiencing any major increase in farm gate prices, yet costs in maintaining levels of production of vegetables continues to increase due to seasonal increases to basic raw materials and maintaining water availability. There are areas in Victoria where vegetable growers have no option but to reduce their growing acreage due to the lack of available water to maintain a saleable vegetable crop.

MELBOURNE MARKETS RELOCATION TO EPPING.

The State Government is moving forward with plans to relocate the market operation to a proposed site at Epping from 2011 and negotiations are continuing between State Government agencies and Strategic Alliance Group members.

VGA Victoria continues to represent the interests of vegetable growers, especially those with current market trading stands as an ongoing participating member of the Strategic Alliance Group.

VGA Victoria will ensure that facilities for grower traders are effectively provided at the proposed new location with representation on the market design and planning committees.

FOOD SAFETY ACCEPTING THE RESPONSIBILITY

Food safety is a "paddock to plate" effort that requires the entire supply chain to be effective and play its part; this includes growers, wholesalers, providers, distributors, retailers and the consumer.

Growers bear the "on farm" cost burden from regulation, quality assurance, MRL testing and packaging presentation to meet specifications and demands of the buyer, yet remain mystified when alerted to rejection or objection that can occur when handling produce down the supply chain and the open displays at retail outlets. There is a need to maintain consumers' confidence in the vegetable industry and that the industry is doing all it can to assure a safe food supply.

Consumers need to be reminded and made aware that fresh produce requires washing before eating. We cannot have consumers avoiding fresh produce. Health authorities tell us that not including fresh produce in our daily diet can be a greater risk to our health, than the off chance of incurring a foodborne illness.

The main question to be answered is "Who should educate the consumer about food safety?"

Strong pressure from vegetable associations and industry representatives in close cooperation from supermarkets has resulted in no further action being implemented for additional Chem and Micro testing requirements for fresh produce.

VGA Vic congratulate supermarkets in working with industry to provide a positive outcome.

On behalf of President Luis Gazzola and the Executive Committee of the Vegetable Growers Association of Victoria, New Year greetings to all vegetable growers and their families with health, prosperity and lots of natural rain during 2008.

Tony Imeson
VGA Executive Officer



THOUGHTS FOR SUMMER

"The beginning is always today"

AND

"If your mind isn't clouded by unnecessary things the New Year will be the best year of your life".

A NEGATIVE ATTITUDE IS A TRUE HANDICAP.



THE VGA PROUDLY RECOGNIZES THE SUPPORT OF OUR INDUSTRY SPONSORS ...



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT:

that history repeats and there will be wet seasons and dry seasons. We can only keep pressure on Governments to refurbish existing dams and reservoirs plus build more storage facilities for the future of Australia.

Craig Murdoch our Industry Development Officer is attending to the vegetable levy

R&D projects and readily available to call at your farm or have a chat on the phone.

On behalf of the executive committee special thanks to our Executive Officer Tony Imeson and our appreciation for his loyal and professional attention to VGA Victoria.

(continued from Page 1)

May God bless us with health and prosperity for 2008 and again lots of Mother Nature's rain!

Luis Gazzola
President

Comprehensive Cover for you and Extra Support for VGA



Now there is a way for you to receive an easy to understand product, tailored to your requirements, backed up by local personal service - and help support the Vegetable Growers Association of Victoria. How is this all possible? Well, by simply calling your local Wesfarmers Federation Insurance (WFI) Area Manager.

The Vegetable Growers Association of Victoria is an alliance partner of WFI. As such, the Association receives a small commission each time one of our members takes out or renews a policy with WFI. These extra funds help us to continue to represent and support vegetable growers, and the industry. With WFI you receive personal on-farm service from a local Area Manager. There are 16 WFI branches across Victoria, so you can rest assured that WFI is never far away.

To decide whether WFI's Rural Plan is the right product for you, give them a call on 1300 934 934 to obtain the product disclosure statement and an obligation free quote.

You will not only be helping yourself to comprehensive cover, but also helping your Association.

The Vegetable Growers Association of Victoria does not make any recommendation or provide any opinion about this product. Any advice or product information contained above was provided by WFI and does not take into account any individual's objectives, financial situation and needs.

vegelink

LOCALLY GROWN ... FOR LOVERS OF GOOD FOOD

We can all picture scenes of rural markets in Europe and Asia where local growers sell their produce directly to the public. Farmers markets are becoming ever more popular in Australia as people realize the great taste of fresh produce and the value of local markets that lift community spirit.

Those who enjoy good food can select from a wide range of seasonal produce, some not commonly seen in supermarkets. Health conscious consumers appreciate the great flavour of freshly harvested vegetables and are keen to learn more about how their food is grown.

Farmers markets strengthen the age-old bond between growers and consumers who value the quality of really fresh produce.

The Pearcedale farmers market is a great success story and "great for the local farmers", said local market gardener Shona Crawford, "... the

atmosphere of the market is really unique and being there among the farmers brought back wonderful childhood memories of community togetherness ..."

The Victorian Farmers' Markets Association was awarded a \$2million State grant to promote farmers' markets as a community based option for farmers to deliver their products directly to consumers. The grant recognises the success of farmers' markets in providing real financial and social benefits to growers and local communities.

To find out more about farmers markets in your area, please contact:

Sophie O'Neil

Victorian Farmers' Markets Association

(t) 03 5942 7057 (m) 0414 559 338

(e) sophieoneil@optusnet.com.au

(w) www.farmersmarkets.org.au



vegelink

ACTION ON WATSONS CREEK



Watson Creek is set to benefit from a federal grant to improve water quality. The grant recognises the recent agreement of all parties to address the issues without pointing the finger of blame.

Watsons Creek has a history of nutrient and bacterial troubles which pose a hazard to the Yaringa Marine National Park in Westernport Bay.

The grant will enable the communication of a shared understanding of Watsons Creek's environmental significance and encourage water quality improvements throughout the catchment.

A range of activities are planned in 2008 including water testing, awareness workshops and field tours to engage landowners, schools and local businesses.

EnviroVeg certified growers on Watsons Creek have reviewed their crop management and drainage systems to protect the creek. Melbourne Water, Parks Victoria and Local Councils are also making significant contributions to the Watsons Creek action plan.

With such good will ...and a little more rain, the health of Watsons Creek is sure to improve in 2008.

For further information contact:

Janet Borley

Project Officer, MP & WP Biosphere Foundation

(m) 0425 772 331

(e) janet@biosphere.org.au

SUMMER STOP PRESS ITEMS

VicFresh Dinner at the Crown Melbourne will be held on Saturday 23 February 2008. Two tables have been pre-booked for VGA Vic and any members wishing to attend should contact Tony Imeson at the VGA Office tel: 9687 4707.

Having difficulty sleeping? the answer according to a scientific report issued from the UK is before retiring to bed eat a potato or a banana and sleep soundly.

Drought, floods, rising fuel prices how long can vegetable growers keep absorbing escalating production costs? Vegetable growers are price takers not price makers in a competitive market. Without improved returns at the farm gate

some growers will not continue producing fresh vegetables in Victoria.

The VFF membership affiliation provides all VGA Vic members with access to workplace relations information including the industrial handbook upgrades, legal and farm management advice with numerous discounts for power, fuel and communication charges. Are you taking advantages of your VFF membership opportunities?

The new Enviroveg manual is now available and all registered growers should now have a copy. For more information contact Helena Whitman on mobile 0409 535 051.

The Victorian Government has agreed to a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Melbourne Market Strategic Alliance Group representing the market community for the future development of the new site for the wholesale fruit and vegetable market to be built at Epping. The MOU sets a timetable for operations the new market to commence in 2011 and allows for potential purchase of the facility by the market community group by 2015.

National Vegetable and Potato organisation AUSVEG will hold their Annual General Meeting on Wednesday 30 January 2008 at the Holiday Inn, Melbourne Airport commencing at 1.00pm.

vegelink

ECONOMIC CONTROL OF CELERY LATE BLIGHT



Late blight is the major leaf disease of celery. It first appears as brown spots on older leaves and can quickly spread through the crop. The disease is currently controlled with routine weekly sprays of protective fungicide.

This levy funded project has developed a computer model that tracks weather conditions in the crop to predict the risk of leaf blight.

The trials have shown winter celery crops can be produced practically free from late blight saving over \$400/ha in fungicide costs.

Project leader, Liz Minchinton believes that as the accuracy of predictive disease models improve, growers will be able to apply fungicides only when its really necessary.

For further information please contact:

Dr Liz Minchinton

(t) (03) 9210 9222

(e) liz.minchinton@dpi.vic.gov.au



vegelink

KALE ::: THE SECRET TO GOOD HEALTH

On a small farm just north of Pearcedale some very unusual veggies are growing.

Steve Bruynen grows KALE ... a brassica that looks like giant parsley. So how did this come about?

Steve's father successfully grew leeks and celery at Heatherton after he moved from Holland in the 1950s. The business shifted to Pearcedale in 1975 and in 1979 Steve began working full time on the farm. When his father retired in 1986, Steve took over the business which he now operates with 3 other staff.

So Why Kale?

Kale is one of the healthiest foods around. It's full of vitamins A, C and K, and a great source of manganese, calcium and iron. Its powerful antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties are prized by health conscious consumers.

Kale was selectively bred from wild cabbage centuries ago and was one of the most common green vegetables in medieval Europe.

Kale has a lively pungent flavour with

delicious bitter peppery qualities. It can be cooked like spinach or added to salads along with other strong-flavoured ingredients.

The hardiness of kale is unmatched by any other vegetable, It rarely suffers from the pests and diseases of other brassicas.

During **World War II**, the cultivation of Kale was encouraged by the *Dig for Victory* campaign. Kale was easy to grow and provided much needed vitamins and minerals to people struggling with food rationing. Kale takes 12-16 weeks to harvest and multiple cuts are possible before replanting. The whole plant is unwieldy to transport but Steve now markets a chopped product for salad mixes.

Smaller growers do well with specialty crops as the sales volume is unattractive to larger operators. Besides Kale, Steve also grows his own line of RED CABBAGE and exports CELERIAC to Japan.

More about Celeriac in the next edition.

High praise for KALE

"I can't get over the number of people that write to me politely and say, "Look, you're an old geezer. How come you're so bloomin' healthy?" And it's true. I will be 80 in about four months' time. The last time I went to a doctor because I was sick was in 1951."

"The reason why I'm so healthy is because I actually do a lot of hard, physical work in the garden, and I also eat the food that I grow myself, but there's one particular thing that I grow that is extraordinarily good for you."

"It's called cottagers Kale. It is full of vitamins and minerals and I eat it. There is a variety called blue curl scotch and another called red Russian. It's lovely and magnificent in a salad. Try cooking the leaves and drink the water and it is utterly beautiful."

"So, now you know the secret of brilliant health: hard physical work, out in the garden and, above all, eat the food that you grow yourself and you'll never go wrong."

Peter Cundall
ABC Gardening Presenter

