Australian STONEFRUIT GROWER

incorporating the Low Chill Stonefruit Grower

April/May 2012

…Issue No. 2/12

'Australian Stonefruit Grower' is the official publication of Summerfruit Australia Ltd & Low Chill Australia Inc. – the industry bodies representing the interests of Australian stone fruit growers.

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To find out more about Summerfruit Australia Ltd, check out the website: www.summerfruit.com.au

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ABN 283 812 712 44

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Cover Photo - supplied by Summerfruit Australia

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From the LCA President –
Raymond Hick

Winter is approaching and most growers are thinking about winter pruning. Copper Sprays have gone out and preparation for the upcoming season is well underway. Here in the North Coast of New South Wales the rain hasn't let up and the BOM is projecting similar conditions for the next three months. With the continuous rain Brown Rot remains a major challenge.

A workshop was recently held at *The House with No Steps* and was well attended - over 50 in all. Phillip Wilks did a great job in organizing guest speakers, visiting Victorians through to local growers. Brown Rot control has become a major issue for all growers including medium and high chill growers in Victoria and South Australia. The contents of this workshop can be accessed on the Low Chill Website.

I would strongly recommend that all growers take the time to look at these presentations.

A group of specialists has been put together to undertake detailed research into various application rates for chemicals that are used for the combat of QFF and Med Fly as well check the residue levels to ensure they are within guidelines. These include Fenthion and Dimethoate.

SAL views this as the single most important issue facing the Industry Australia-wide and has set aside the majority of available funds to complete this task. The chairman of the group is in dialog with APVMA to ensure that they are aware of our actions and directions.

The vulnerability of farmers was again brought home recently. A local Guava grower who has supplied a juice company for three generations was one week off harvest to be told by the company that his product was no longer wanted as it would be imported from now on. This to me seems like a case where we should boycott the product. At what stage do we all support local farmers.

I hope all the preparatory work undertaken in winter will result in a successful season for all.

Kind Regards

Ray Hick – President –

CHECK OUT THE LOW CHILL AUSTRALIA INC. WEBSITE
www.lowchillaustralia.com.au

INDUSTRY NOTICE – Levy Update …

Summerfruit Australia Ltd Redistribution of levy income to pay PHA subscriptions

Following the recent rejection by growers of the proposal to increase the Stone fruit Levy, the SAL Board has taken the decision to reallocate existing levy funds to meet the required subscription rate for Plant Health Australia (PHA).

The current rates of the R&D and Marketing components of the levy/export charge is one (1) cent per kilogram of stone fruit, with 55 % going to R&D and 45 % to marketing initiatives. The new allocation of the one (1) cent per kilogram levy will be 53.9 % to R&D, 44.1 % to marketing and 2 % to cover the subscription rate for membership of PHA, averaging around $12,500/pa.

Following this adoption for the PHA subscription, the SAL Board will recommend a redistribution of more Marketing funds (unmatched) to increase the 'bang for buck' allocation to R& D (matched) investment.

Why is it important for SAL to be a Member of PHA?

Membership of PHA ensures that our industry is prepared for and protected from plant pest incursions that could affect production.

A recent biosecurity assessment made by PHA, SAL, HAL and state government experts, found that there are 16 high priority pests that currently don't exist in Australia that could establish in our orchards and threaten production. These include **the Plum pox virus**, **Plum fruit moth**, **Spotted Winged Drosophila** (suzukii) and **Peach rosette mosaic virus**, all of which would have a high economic impact in the case of an incursion. A 'high' economic impact means **"severe impact on standing crop, with significant host mortality and/or storage losses"**.

While Australia's national quarantine system helps to prevent the introduction of harmful exotic threats, the threat from these pests is still very real. In addition to the possibility of pests entering via natural routes, rapid increases in overseas tourism, imports and exports and changing transport procedures such as refrigeration and containerisation of produce make it all the more likely that **a plant pest incursion which affects stone fruit will occur**.

The benefits of PHA membership are twofold: in 'peace time' PHA works with industries and governments to prepare for plant pest incursions (such as the risk assessment described above); and in the event of an emergency plant pest (EPP) incursion, PHA coordinates the plant pest response.

Industries that join PHA are also permitted to sign the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed (the EPPRD) which is the formal legally binding agreement between PHA, the Australian Government, all state and territory governments and national plant industry peak-body signatories, setting out how eradication responses to EPP incidents are to be managed and funded.

SAL became a signatory of the EPPRD in May 2005, providing valuable protection for stone fruit growers. For stone fruit growers the main benefits this brings are:

- The procedure for dealing with an emergency plant pest incursion is agreed before one occurs, allowing a swift, coordinated and effective response. This gives us the best chance of preventing the incursion from spreading from orchard to orchard.
- Potential liabilities are known and funding mechanisms agreed in advance.
- In the event of an incursion affecting stone fruit, SAL will immediately be at the table contributing to decision making about mounting and managing the EPP response, not just government representatives.

- Growers whose crops or property is directly damaged or destroyed in the course of response plan are eligible for the payment of owner reimbursement costs under certain circumstances.

Currently SAL is one of 32 plant industries that are Members of PHA. PHA is a not-for-profit company that is one-third owned by federal government, one-third by state and territory governments and one-third by plant industries. **The PHA website holds a list of all PHA Members.**

SAL has taken the decision to pay for the PHA subscription out of the stone fruit levy because it is so important for our growers. Without PHA Membership and the provisions of the EPPRD, stone fruit growers would be liable to pay for a government clean-up in the case of EPP incursion and there would be no reimbursement for growers who happen to be in the incursion area and have their orchard destroyed. SAL considers PHA membership to be a very wise investment.

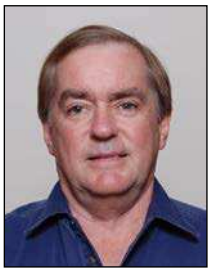
*More information about PHA and the **EPPRD** is available on the PHA website – http://www.planthealthaustralia.com.au/go/phau*

John Moore – *CEO SAL* – 8/452 Swift St. Albury NSW 2640 – ceo@summerfruit.com.au

(NOTE: This article is a reprint from the February Issue of the Australian Stonefruit Grower)

Summerfruit AUSTRALIA

From the Summerfruit CEO …



CEO Round Up …

John Moore – *CEO Summerfruit Australia Ltd*

Mark your diaries – 4th August for the AGM /Levy Payer and Gala Ball – to be held in Melbourne's CBD.

Let's start with a social theme. The tree fruit industries are holding a Gala Ball to be held in Melbourne on 4th August 2012. This will be a significant event and an event of this type is probably long overdue. Apple & Pears, Cherries and Summerfruit Industries will also use the occasion to hold concurrent Annual General Meetings and Annual Levy Payer Meetings during the day, prior to the evenings Gala Ball.

This format of meetings presents the opportunity to producers who have mixed production bases, commonly across this mix of tree fruits, to attend specific Industry forums. All of the meetings will be at the one venue for the ease of attending relevant sessions of interest; with accommodation available at the meeting venue and when the business end day has been dealt with, it will be a short stroll to the Gala Ball event.

Please take note of the flyer for this coming event and gather a group of friends or neighbours and take advantage of the table for ten offers. This is sure to be great night and an occasion for orchard producers to gather for the formal business of your commercial specialty and soak up some well-deserved social indulgence.

Now to other matters.

The OHMA (Office of Horticultural Market Access) structure and operation is under some review, coincidental with timing for renewal of funding. It is being argued that future funding contributions should more

clearly relate to involvement in and need for market access, as well as to *'bang for the buck'*. There are a number of horticultural industries with varying market access aspirations, for example each with their own specific requirements for commercially viable protocols. Also there are a range of market access issues that are not commodity specific but range across different horticulture industries.

The current OHMA Committee comprises an Independent Chair, a mix of Industry appointees, selected supplementary observers, independents, an AIC representative and an appointed National Director for the day to day business who, by the way, has not renewed his contract at the end of February. To date the OHMA model has been funded 100% by an across industry project. The Across Industry Committee is a sub-committee of HAL and includes CEO Representatives of the five largest industries. The AIC has determined that funding ratios are disproportionate upon some industries and a more equitable scale needs to be agreed to with a reduced input by the AIC.

I don't propose to argue the case here but merely alert you to a complex debate for which a solution will need to be tabled by next month.

Plant Health Australia (PHA) has developed *The Australian Handbook for the identification of Fruit Flies* in consultation with and input from fruit fly entomologists, scientists, academics and diagnosticians. The handbook integrates all the techniques currently used in Australia for the identification of 48 species of exotic fruit flies. The handbook is available from the PHA web site at http://www.phau.com.au .

For the information of producers, a plum prunus salicina verification trial was undertaken and approved by BAPHIQ for the 2011/12 export season. At the time of these trials insufficient fruit was available to properly conduct a similar verification trial for prunus domestica due to overarching brown rot issues. The trial undertaken was not approved by BAPHIQ due to the reduced sample size. I have commenced the process with Biosecurity Australia and hopefully this season, when appropriate, a prunus domestica project will be undertaken to present a data package to BAPHIQ for adjudication and approval.

An item often asked by producers is the ability to receive final reports from projects undertaken under the HAL umbrella. I am pleased to inform you that HAL is encouraging digital release and accordingly these can now be distributed freely for levy payer knowledge and benefit – **a great decision.** Whilst on the subject of useful information flow, I recommend you visit the http://www.futurewise.net.au site. If you enter your region, it's a very handy tool for climate predictions and records of historical weather events along with other useful network links.

At the recent SAL/ IAC meeting, Rowan Little announced he was stepping down as the IAC Chair, a position held for 2 years. Rowan said on 6th March 2012 that, *whilst enjoying the time as Chair and working collaboratively with the IAC committee to set a clear strategic investment plan for the future, it was time for Industry to take ownership of its destiny and put in place a truly independent chair for clear transparency.*

Thanks Rowan for your dedication and efforts. The SAL Board is currently reviewing the structure of the SAL/IAC combination and is in consultation with HAL.

The National Working Party on Pesticide Application (Across Industry Committee of HAL) held a forum and the take home news is that APVMA have indicated that they are reviewing their position on Spray Drift and Mandatory Buffers. There appears to have been some changes in both staff and thinking that has brought about a need to review the position defined within their documentations back in 2008/09.

APVMA has/is meeting with DAFF, State Agencies, Health and Environment to prepare a new implementation position. **A document will be available for industry consultation in June this year.**

It is timely to remember that in this day and age we live in a very litigious society and the forum heard from specialist presenters that it is imperative that Horticultural producers need to begin receiving written advice on how to use chemicals especially when undertaking misting or spraying and placing themselves in possible spray drift situations. Understanding droplet drift and inversions, or Drift Reduction Technologies is foremost. The operator of the tractor needs to be the specialist or technician. The BOM website has some good information for chemical users http://www.bom.gov.au/info/leaflets/pesticide-spraying.pdf .

Finally, in the last newsletter (page 15 onwards) there was an open message to levy payers of the stonefruit levy. Following the recent rejection by growers of the proposal to increase the Stone fruit Levy, the SAL Board has taken the decision to reallocate existing levy funds to meet the required subscription rate for Plant Health Australia (PHA).

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Without PHA Membership and the provisions of the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed (EPPRD), stone fruit growers would be liable to pay for a government clean-up in the case of Emergency Plant Pest (EPP) incursion and there would be no reimbursement for growers who happen to be in the incursion area and have their orchard destroyed. **SAL considers PHA membership to be a very wise investment.** This open message is produced again on **Page 5** of this newsletter preceding this Report.

For any further assistance, please contact

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Fruit Masquerade Ball Saturday 4 August 2012

Apple & Pear Australia Ltd – Cherry Growers Australia Inc – Summerfruit Australia Ltd

Registration Form and Tax Invoice

Apple & Pear Australia Ltd
ABN 55 490 626 489

Individual	$130 per person	_____ tickets	**Total Due by 30 June 2012**
Table of 10	$1,170 per table	_____ tables	**$**

Ticket price includes canapés on arrival, three course dinner, beverages (wine/beer) and entertainment

Booking contact:_____ Company: _____

Address: _____

_____ Postcode/State: _____

Email: _____ Telephone: _____

Attendees

Name 1:_____ Company: _____

Name 2:_____ Company: _____

Name 3:_____ Company: _____

Name 4:_____ Company: _____

Name 5:_____ Company: _____

Name 6:_____ Company: _____

Name 7:_____ Company: _____

Name 8:_____ Company: _____

Name 9:_____ Company: _____

Name 10:_____ Company: _____

Dietary requirements: _____

Contact person: Rebekah Jacobs, Apple & Pear Australia Ltd
39 O'Connell Street, North Melbourne Vic 3051
Email rjacobs@apal.org.au Tel 03 9329 3511 Fax 03 9329 3522

PAYMENT Upon payment of fees, this form will become your Tax Invoice. All prices quoted are inclusive of GST

❑ EFT payment to: Apple & Pear Australia Ltd, BSB 083-355 A/c no. 69-130-4002
Please quote *'Gala Ball'* when paying by EFT

❑ Mail cheque for $_____ and registration form to 39 O'Connell Street, Nth Melb Vic 3051

COPPER – NOW AT LOWER RATES!

Coppox® rate reduction = cost savings!!!

After numerous efficacy trials, we are happy to announce Coppox® WG has received approval for a rate reduction – for example:

Stone Fruit	Blossom Blight Freckle Rust	NSW, ACT, Vic, TAS, SA, WA only	**200g**	Apply from late bud swell to early blossom.
	Leaf curl Shot hole		**250g**	Apply at early bud swell. Additional spraying in autumn when leaves begin to fall will improve control.
	Bacterial Spot, Bacterial canker Leaf Curl Shot Hole			Apply at pink bud stage. For Freckle and Shot-Hole, repeat post-harvest when leaves begin to fall.
		Qld only	**300g**	Apply at early bud movement, 7 to 10 days later (pink stage in apricots) and on plums only, at blossoming.
Apricots			**350g**	
	Shot hole	NSW, ACT, Vic, Tas, SA, WA only	**200g**	Apply at bud swell but before the earliest sign of leaf bud development. Apply a minimum of 1 post-harvest spray.
	Freckle	All States		
	Bacterial gummosis	QLD, Vic, Tas, SA, WA only		Autumn: apply at 25-50% leaf fall and again at 90-100% leaf fall. Winter: apply in mid-Winter. Spring: apply at first sign of bud movement and repeat application 7-10 days later.
		NSW, ACT, Vic,Tas, SA, WA only	**100g**	Apply 1 week after petal fall and repeat application 7-10 days later. These sprays control the leaf population of bacteria in mid to late spring.

***Note:** this is a label extract only. For full details please download our new label from www.melpat.com.au

Melpat International Pty Ltd
4/22 Parry Ave, Bateman, WA 6150
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E-mail: melpat@melpat.com.au
Website: http://www.melpat.com.au

Summerfruit Australia Ltd Election Information …

12th March 2012

Dear Member,

Re: Summerfruit Australia Limited – Election of Directors

Summerfruit Australia Limited has commenced its Annual Directors' Election process and as a registered member, I welcome your participation.

Elections are held to ensure a fair and democratic system of governance.

The process starts with a call for nominations of candidates in March and ends with a declaration of the results of a ballot (if required) in June. The attached documents explain the key steps in some detail. I would ask you to please familiarise yourself with the election process.

The Board welcomes the call for nominations. The retiring directors Alfred Baronio – Queensland; Andrew Smith – Victoria and yours truly are not re-nominating. Messer's R. Hick –NSW; M. Oakley – TAS; A. Conti –VIC and M. Wilkinson - WA are re nominating for election. The following states of Queensland and South Australia require nominations and one more nomination to make up the composite number of seven (7) Directors'.

I encourage all members to participate in the election process.

All of the necessary forms are available on our web site.
www.summerfruit.com.au

Yours sincerely,

Ian McAlister
Chairman

8/452 Swift Street, Albury NSW 2640
Tel: 02 60416641 Fax: 02 60416641
e-mail: ceo@summerfruit.com.au web: summerfruit.com.au

Summerfruit Australia Ltd Election Information …

Summerfruit Australia Limited
2012 elections

This will be the tenth election for directors for Summerfruit Australia Limited. The process will be similar to the previous elections and members should note that elections are an annual event. It is not a requirement to vote although Directors encourage all members to exercise their democratic right.

The process

Summerfruit Australia Limited will follow a set process for the election of Directors, as set out in the Constitution. Please have a read through (available on the website www.summerfruit.com.au) so that you are familiar with what will happen. The following is a diagram of the way in which this will occur

Membership open
Nominations are called Wednesday 14th March, 2012
Nominations closed Thursday 3rd May, 2012
Membership list closed Thursday 3rd May, 2012
Postal ballot commences Wednesday 16th May, 2012
Postal ballot closes Wednesday 6th June, 2012
Ballot declared soon after ballot close

Membership open

Membership is now open and all members are invited to participate. Directors have set the 2012/13 membership fee $110.0 (inc GST). A membership form is available on the Summerfruit Australia website www.summerfruit.com.au

A member of Summerfruit Australia Limited is a business entity, with one vote per member irrespective of size. Each member will be represented by a single person (the business representative) and they will hold the vote for the member.

All registered levy paying businesses who apply for membership will automatically become A class members unless they opt not to do so. Only A class members will be allowed to vote in this election. B class members are those who are not levy paying businesses.

Note that each business has one representative as indicated by you when you joined. If you wish to change this representative it is possible up until the membership list is closed.

Nominations are called (March 14th)
Nominations will open on March 14 for those wishing to become directors of Summerfruit Australia Limited. A person who wishes to nominate for the 2012 elections must be a representative of an A member, and they also must have the support of at least two representatives of A class members. A nomination form will need to be completed before a nomination can be accepted. Note that retiring directors are able to re-nominate.

As well as the above prospective, directors will be required to complete a 'Consent to Act as a Director' Form. This is to ensure that we comply with the Corporations legislation.

Nominations close (May 3rd, 3.00 pm)
At least 45 days after the call for nominations they close. At the completion of this process the nominations are vetted to ensure they comply with the constitution. If the number of nominations in any one state is equal to the vacancies then the poll for that state is declared and no vote is necessary.

If the number of nominations for any state is more than the vacancies (ie: one), then an election (by way of a confidential postal ballot) will be held in that state. If the number of nominations is less than the vacancies (ie nil) in that state then the vacancy may be filled by candidates selected by the directors.

Membership list closed (May 3rd 3.00pm)
Prior to any ballot the membership list for Summerfruit Australia Limited will be closed. Until the time indicated above, new members may join and alterations to the business representative and other details may be made. When the list is closed, no other alterations are possible until after the election process is completed.

The membership list will be used to mail out ballot papers if required.

Postal ballot commences (May 16th)
Elections for Summerfruit Australia Limited will be by confidential postal ballot. A series of envelopes and voting papers will be sent to each A class member to complete and return.

The voting system is similar to government electoral voting and your preference is indicated by voting 1 for the most preferred candidate. Do not use ticks and crosses as a way to indicate your preference. You may only vote for the candidates in your state (as determined by the principal business address).

Postal Ballot ends (June 6th, 3.00 pm)
Three weeks after the ballot commences it will close. After this time no other votes will be allowed. The time above indicates the close of the ballot.

An independent returning officer will examine each vote to ensure it has been properly undertaken and count the votes for each candidate.

Ballot declared
At the completion of the counting of the votes the returning officer will declare the vote.

Exports …

Summerfruit Exports turn to positive trends

The key summerfruit results for the season* to February 2012

Total Volume	7,981 MT	+37 % on last year
Value	A$23.2m	+ 30%
$ per kg	$2.91	- 15c (-5%)

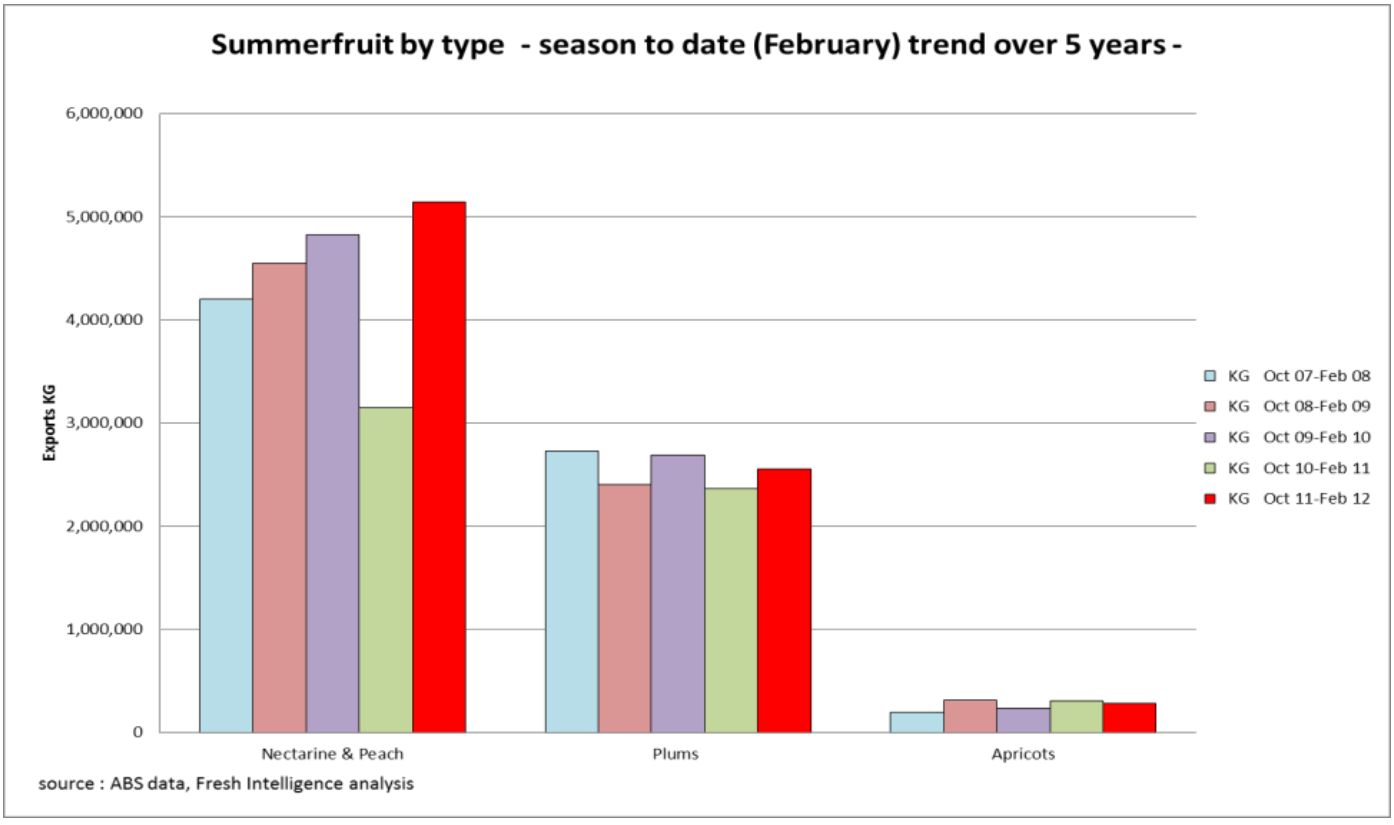
**October – February = approx. 80% of the total season*
Source: ABS data, Fresh Intelligence analysis, funded by project MT10022

By Wayne Prowse, *Fresh Intelligence Consulting*

After several seasons of less than average results there are encouraging signs that summerfruit exports are on the way up again. According to ABS export data to end February which accounts for around 80 per cent of the season exports, summerfruit exports are tracking 11% ahead of the last 5 year average for October – February period and 37 per cent ahead of last year.

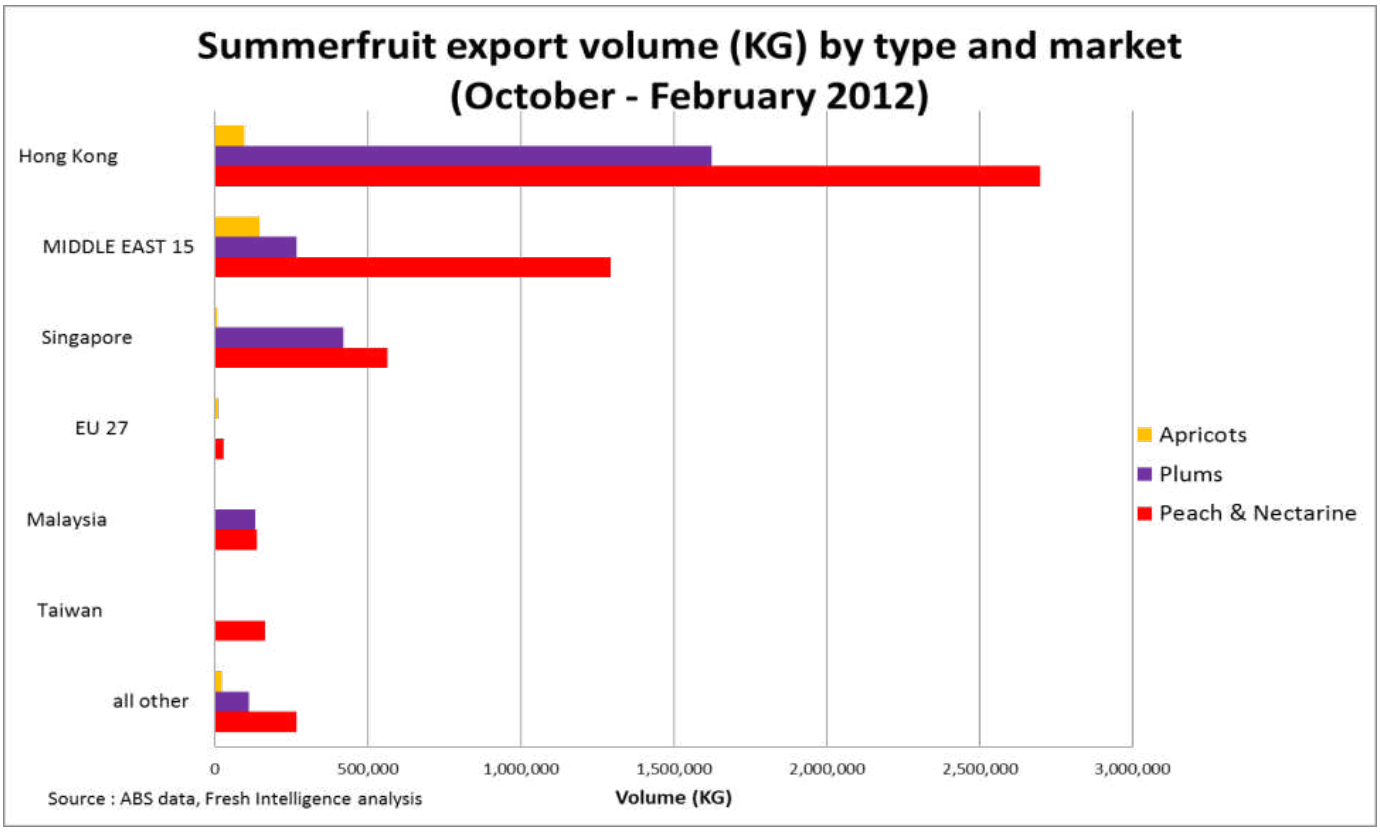
These results have been driven by nectarines, +63% compared to the same period in 2010/11, plums +8% though apricots finished early at (-8%) on same period last year.

Peaches and nectarines have increased their share to 61% of Australian summerfruit exports followed by plums accounting for 36% and Apricots 3% for the period.



The leading destinations of Hong Kong, Middle East and Singapore accounted for 88% of total Nectarine and Peach volume exported this season and these markets combined recorded a 77% volume increase over last season to date. For plums, Hong Kong, Singapore, Middle East and United Kingdom accounted for 91% of exports over the last 12 months and for apricots the Middle East and Hong Kong are the main destinations accounting for 86% of apricot exports albeit at a smaller level.

Taiwan is the largest import market for fresh peaches and nectarines in Asia. In 2011 Taiwan accounted for 58 per cent of all peaches and nectarines imported by Asian markets according to analysis of 10 Asian market import statistics, and imported 21,600 tonnes of which 17,200 from United States and 4,000 tonnes from Chile.



Australia has shipped 162 tonnes so far this season which is the second full season that the market has been open since 2006 for our peaches and nectarines. There have been no recorded plum exports to Taiwan from Australia since the market reopened in January 2012 for plums. Last year during the southern season, Taiwan imported 1780 tonnes of plums from Chile, the only supplier.

The annual value of Australian Summerfruit exports was A$28.9 million for the 12 months to February 2012.

For more information contact Wayne Prowse, *Fresh Intelligence Consulting* wayne.prowse@bigpond.com **.**

Sunshine Coast nursery takes home national award

Woombye-based Birdwood Nursery is celebrating winning the Nursery and Garden Industry Australia (NGIA) award for the best Large Production Nursery for the first time, adding to an already impressive list of awards for the commercial nursery.

The locally owned nursery was a frontrunner for the national title having been awarded the state title for the past three years consecutively and with owners, **Peter and Sandra Young** being recognised at the ***"Australian Farmer of the Year Award: Plant Biosecurity"*** at the end of 2011.

Birdwood's Research and Development Manager, **Denis Roe** says the team of 35 local staff members were delighted to be recognised for their commitment to quality product, customer service and good business practice.

"We are fortunate to have a great team at Birdwood Nursery and it's thanks to them that we have been recognised as a national benchmark in our industry," said Denis.

"We understand the importance of supplying the highest quality fruit trees to commercial growers and retail nurseries across Australia and we continue to strive for excellence across all areas of our business."

The nursery sells approximately 300,000 trees annually including a number of varieties of avocados, mangoes, passionfruit, mandarins, guava, kiwi fruit, pawpaws, apples, oranges, grapes and many other exotic fruits. Their clients include farmers, retail nurseries and Bunnings garden centres.

The Awards recognise and reward excellence within the nursery and garden industry and acknowledge industry leaders as they strive to achieve best business practice. Criteria taken into account in the judging process include use of technology, systems and procedures related to the maintenance of healthy products, environmental sustainability and strategic management.

For more information on Birdwood Nursery please contact (07) 5442-1611 or info@birdwoodnursery.com.au.

About Birdwood

Birdwood Nursery was established in 1978 and specialises in fruit tree production supplying wholesale quantities of the highest quality fruit trees to commercial growers and retail nurseries throughout Australia.

They take pride in delivering on time, in full and exceeding quality expectations whilst maintaining their environmental responsibility. This is ensured through industry best practice nursery management combined with a desire to constantly seek new and improved varieties from breeding programmes both within Australia and throughout the world.

They are founding members of the Avocado Nursery Voluntary Accreditation Scheme (ANVAS), the Australian Nurserymen's Fruit Improvement Company (ANFIC) and accredited by the Nursery Industry Accreditation Scheme (NIASA) and the Australian Passion Fruit Industry (APFI).

NOTE: Birdwood Nursery is a member of Low Chill Australia Inc.

Technical Information …

STONEFRUIT NUTRITION FOR FRUIT QUALITY

Historically most stonefruit nutrition programs are aimed at maximising production. This is not necessarily a program that delivers optimum tree health and fruit quality. The following comments come from 30 years' experience as a stonefruit grower, followed by a period as an agronomist consulting to horticulture and broadacre industries, for a company supplying alternate fertiliser solutions.

The industry has typically come to rely on heavy fungicide and insecticide programs to control problems such as brown rot and carpophilus. The principal aim should be to produce a tree with an inbuilt resistance to pest attack. Unfortunately a lot of the nutrition programs in place across the industry invite fungal and insect problems which compromise the crop.

A plant does not get attacked by fungal diseases because of a lack of fungicide. It is susceptible to attack because it is out of balance. The main culprit in creating the imbalance within the plant is Nitrate. We have traditionally been told to apply plenty of Nitrate to drive production. The commonly used application of Potassium Nitrate and Calcium Nitrate, particularly late in the fruit growing season, creates an environment conducive to brown rot and carpophilus.

Nitrate remains in solution in the soil, and as such, plants are forced to take it up whether they need it or not. The Nitrate then accumulates in the plant sap, at levels beyond the plant's requirements. The excess Nitrate sends out a signal to insects like carpophilus that the plant is *"sick"* and needs to be *"cleaned up"*.

What is happening is that the Nitrate is altering the pH of the sap. A healthy plant has a sap pH of 6.4. If the pH drops below 6.4 the plants become susceptible to fungal attack. This means the plant is low in cations – eg. Calcium, Magnesium, Potassium.

As the sap pH moves up from 6.4 the plant becomes more susceptible to insect attack. This indicates a shortage of negatively charged ions –Phosphate, Sulphate, Nitrate. Unfortunately excess Nitrate can cause more trouble than a shortage.

Once you get insect attack, the sap acidifies around the wound, inviting fungal attack.

The role of Nitrate in the plant is to combine with Phosphate and Sulphate to form amino acids and proteins. This has to happen as quickly as possible so that the Nitrate can't accumulate. This process is driven by Calcium (along with Boron) and requires a number of trace elements. If any of these are short, the processing of the Nitrate is restricted. Any time you are wanting to add Nitrate, it is essential that all these other minerals are in place, or tree health will be inadequate and disease and insect attack will follow.

High Calcium levels are crucial during fruit maturity. Calcium is the carrier of nutrient into the plant. It draws the nutrient (when available) into the plant in the ratios required by the tree. Unfortunately Nitrate, as a fast moving nutrient, moves ahead of the Calcium. Increasing Calcium uptake can deliver higher quality fruit, through increased Brix (sweeter fruit), firmer fruit, better colour, better keeping quality, and less insect and disease pressure.

There is a lot of merit in the applications of Calcium and Potassium in the lead up to harvest, but forms not containing Nitrate (or Chloride) are a preferred option.

The long term aim must to have a healthy balanced soil with an active biological component capable of supplying the majority of the Nitrogen requirement through the nutrient cycling, and the activity of bacteria and fungi in the soil. The plants will then take it up as required. This leads to a healthier, lower input orchard, supplying a better product to the market. An added bonus is reduced summer pruning and more light getting to the fruit.

As well as delivering a superior product, you will be supplying a better eating experience and saving money through a reduced reliance on fungicide and insecticide applications.

Rowan Berecry – *Manager and Consultant Agronomist*
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Research …

Use of Embryo Rescue in Peach Breeding in Spain and Australia

Margarita Pérez Jiménez[1] José Cos-Terrer[1], Antonio Carrillo-Navarro[1], Dougal Russell[2], Sharon Hamill[2], Karen Eccleston[2] and Bruce Topp[3]
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Ms Margarita Pérez Jiménez is a visiting Spanish scholar who is studying with Dr José Cos-Terrer for her PhD and working with Dr Bruce Topp at the Maroochy Research Station on the HAL funded "Low-chill Peach Breeding" project. In this report Margarita describes an embryo rescue procedure being used in breeding early-ripening peaches in Murcia. Sharon Hamill leads the embryo rescue component of the low-chill HAL project at Nambour.

Countries producing low-chill stonefruit support breeding programs aiming to develop cultivars best suited to their unique climate and market prospects. These plant improvement strategies rely on selecting and building better traits into improved cultivars. Biotechnology tools assist the breeders to create improved cultivars.

Margarita Pérez Jiménez, visiting scholar at Maroochy Research Station, Nambour QLD

In both Spain and Australia embryo rescue is a biotechnology tool used by breeders to access a wider range of germplasm after conventional cross-pollination. There are similarities and differences in approaches from each country but collaboration by the international scientists contributes improvements to the individual plant improvement programs.

Agriculture in Spain is one of the few sectors that is not being affected by the global economic crisis. In fact, agriculture is supporting many regions in the country. Spain is one of the largest stone fruit producers in the World. It has around 75,000 ha of peach and nectarine, 20,000 ha of plum and 25,000 ha of sweet cherry. Spain annually exports around 500,000 T of peach and nectarine (almost half of the production), 15,000 T of sweet cherry and almost 100,000 of plum (MARM, 2009).

Murcia is located in the Southeast of Spain, by the Mediterranean coast. It has a Mediterranean semiarid climate with an annual precipitation of around 300 mm. In Murcia, some 15,000 ha of peach and nectarine are cultivated every year. They produce around 250,000 T of fruit. In such a difficult market, growers are looking for early ripening varieties with high productivity and good organoleptic quality.

The *Instituto Murciano de Investigacion y Desarrollo Agrario y Alimentario* (IMIDA) is a government research institute that aims to support farmers in the Murcia area. In the last several years IMIDA and an association of growers whose name is NOVAMED (New cultivars for the Mediterranean) have developed a peach and nectarine

breeding program in order to obtain new varieties adapted to the growing area of Murcia. The first new varieties were released last year.

In the past decade Australian growers have benefited from the HAL low-chill stone fruit breeding program with over 16,000 trees released in large-scale test. As a consequence development and application of embryo rescue in Australia has been required to increase the efficiency of early-ripening cultivar breeding. As with the program in Spain, the breeding programs benefit from application of biotechnological tools.

To develop improved cultivars suited to the climate and to local markets, breeders perform controlled cross-pollinations in the field using two cultivars with the desired traits. Embryo rescue is needed in low-chill stonefruit breeding because the early ripening mother parent will usually produce immature seeds. Immature seeds result as the fruit matures and ripens before the embryo has had time to mature. If these immature seeds are not *"rescued"*, they will usually abort and die.

Embryo rescue is used to save the immature seeds so they can continue to develop and then germinate in a suitable *in vitro* environment (see Figure 1).

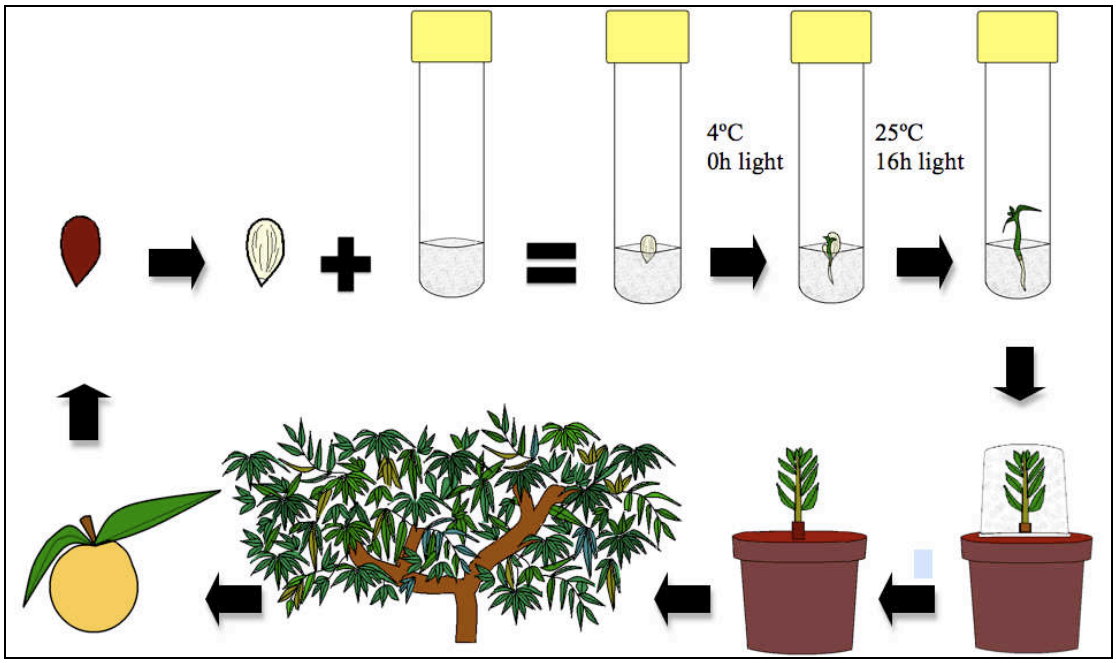

Figure 1. A schematic representation of embryo rescue that is used by IMIDA breeders to develop early-ripening peach cultivars.

An appropriate medium composed of nutrients, vitamins, carbohydrates and sometimes hormones is poured into tubes before being sterilized. In a laminar flow cabinet the immature seeds are placed in the tubes and then kept for 90 Days at 4°C in a climatic chamber in darkness. During this time the seeds receive the chilling hours they need to germinate and at the same time they are absorbing the nutrients they need to develop. After that, the temperature is increased to 25°C and a photoperiod of 16 light hours is applied. This allows the seeds to germinate and/or elongate into new plantlets.

Plants rescued by *in vitro* techniques are acclimatized and planted in pots (see Figure 2) and then will be evaluated in the field as potential varieties. Thus, the *in vitro* recue allows breeders to produce plants which would not germinate in natural conditions.

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Figure 2. Young peach seedlings that have been rescued by embryo culture and are being acclimatised by use of humidi-crib enclosures in the glasshouses at Nambour in 2012.

The embryo rescue process used in Australia has been developed to suit the germplasm used in the breeding program. Each year there have been improvements leading to a greater number of surviving embryos and with better plant vigour. Both countries successfully use different approaches to embryo rescue to ensure maximum efficiency of their own breeding programs. Ongoing collaboration continues to provide technology transfer benefits to both countries.

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Field Day Report …

Blossom Blight Field Day Report

A very successful an informative field day was held on 13th April at Summerland House for stone fruit growers. It was well attended with over 50 growers from Victoria, Stanthorpe, Gatton and the Kumbia regions of Queensland as well as a good roll up from local growers in northern NSW.

There were local growers who gave their experience with managing *blossom blight/brown rot* (BR) over the last two very difficult seasons, presentations from **Dr Oscar Villalta** – *Agriculture Victoria* on current and future research into brown rot control and **Dr Dean Metcalf** on biological fungicides to manage orchard diseases using strains of *Trichoderma.*

After lunch we were shown around the excellent packhouse and dipping facilities of Summerland House by manager **Mark Keene**.

The afternoon session focussed on presentation by **Matt Moyle** from *Nufarm* and **Leith Plevey** from *Syngenta Crop Protection* on their respective product protectant range and future products under development. On hand to answer questions and provide information on the availability of products was **Scott Herd** from *Norco*.

Mark Keane showing attendees at the field day Summerland House orchards

Summary of the presentations

It was pleasing to see three very experienced local stone fruit growers **Robert Hood**, **Geoff Prior** and **Rick Dali** address the audience and give strategies they use on their own properties to manage blossom blight. The following strategies rely on a systems approach and a three-pronged attack which relies on orchard hygiene, insect control and careful use of chemicals.

Robin and Robert Hood at their orchard in northern NSW

THE KEY STRATEGIES THEY USE ARE:

- Fungicides used at flowering with longer withholding periods are avoided around harvest
- Use chemicals with shorter withholding (WHP)periods around harvest time
- Insect control (Monolepta and Carpophilus beetles, snails and fruit fly) is just as important as disease control as insects damage fruit and allow disease to take hold.
- Keep orchard trees healthy by planting on mounded rows to avoid waterlogging as unhealthy trees are more susceptible to brown rot
- Avoid spraying fungicides when trees are wet after rain, at night or after heavy dew
- Keep trees well clipped and open for better spray penetration
- Keep coolrooms clean and use an air filtration unit such as a bio air purifier to stop disease transmission when fruit is being held before transporting.

Dr Oscar Villalta is a plant pathologist with *Agriculture Victoria* and is currently principal research leader on a project jointly funded by Horticulture Australia limited (HAL) and Summerfruit Australia (SAL) looking at Brown Rot and Blossom Blight (*Monilinia spp.)* in stone fruit. The project initially began in 2006 and it has been refunded and is the second project looking at *Monilinia* control.

Dr Oscar Villalta (Left) and Shawn Reynolds looking at brown rot in local orchards

Stone fruit growers in northern NSW and Queensland have always managed this disease with varying degrees of success. Stone fruit growing areas of southern Australia have up until 2010 season had drought and this disease was a minor problem. However over the last two seasons (2010/11 and 2011/12) once the drought broke this disease returned and caused major economic losses to the industry.

Many chemical protectants especially those with short withholding periods have been suspended or are under review by the APVMA and so are no longer available for stone fruit growers to control *Monilinia*. This has exacerbated the problem as not only were conditions perfect for disease spread but growers did not have sufficient chemical protectants to control the disease in their crop once it was there.

Oscar described the stages that stone fruit trees are most susceptible to *Monilinia* which is during the flowering period and 8 weeks from harvest. We classify *Monilinia* infection of flowers, blossom blight and later fruit infection as brown rot.

***Monilinia* survives from season to season on 'mummies' (shrivelled fruit) either left on trees or on the ground.**

The first message to growers was orchard sanitation is important in reducing the disease load. Remove all mummies and fallen fruit on the ground or in trees. Remove by pruning out all twigs and tissue infected with cankers.

Growers must control the disease early in the season as the spores can infect green fruit but remain invisible or undetected.

The second message was that although sanitation is important protectant fungicides are still important for management.

The third message was that Carpophilus beetles do spread *Monilinia* spores. It is important to control these beetles early with attract and kill traps to minimise the numbers around in the orchard.

It is a numbers game and early trapping in August and September here on the coast will reduce beetle populations. Attract and kill systems require medium to low levels to work effectively and it takes about 3 weeks to properly reduce beetle numbers.

Even though growers may be doing everything they should to manage *Monilinia* there may be individual orchard differences that will allow an outbreak to occur.

There are other external factors that need to be observed and tactical changes at the orchard level concerning the following need to be made by growers to manage *Monilinia.*

Trees and fruit may be rapidly expanding so that protectant cover sprays are not protecting all fruit and shoots. Has heavy rain (over 25-50 mm on the coast) washed off the fungicide that was applied? Is there fungicide resistance or is the disease less sensitive to fungicides (*Iprodione*) from constant use?

MAIN POINTS AND MESSAGES TO GROWERS

- Control brown rot in the field so it is not a problem in the shed
- Place beetle traps out early to reduce numbers to low levels.
- Remove fallen fruit mummies and infected twigs by pruning out cankers
- Orchard hygiene is important but growers still need a fungicide program

- Growers need to be aware of the mode of action of registered fungicides
- The industry needs additional protectants to be registered to manage this disease.
- Use Scholar® as a post harvest dip and not in the field as it is UV sensitive.

Dr Dean Metcalf formerly plant pathologist with Tasmanian Department of Primary Industries (Department of primary industries parks water and environment, DPIPWE) and now managing director of *Metcalf Biotechnologies* presented growers with information on biological control for *Monilinia*.

Dr Metcalf explained to attendees that certain races of a *Trichoderma* fungus will control other fungi such as *Monilinia*. Much of his previous work was in white rot of onions.

Dean has also worked with grape growers that have successfully controlled *Botrytis* in grapes using *Trichoderma* as a biological control agent. He achieved good *Botrytis* disease control by spraying *Trichoderma* onto grapes at 80% flowering. Unfortunately it did not provide good control late in the season until another variant of *Trichoderma* was used later in the season.

Trichoderma fungi were tested against *Monilinia* on cherry flowers in Tasmania to see if they would colonise them. Early results look promising in reducing the levels of *Monilinia* in cherries and even though he is not recommending growers treat their whole crop with *Trichoderma* for Brown rot control he is hoping that growers may want to trial it on their own orchards in a limited way to see how effective it could be on stone fruit in this region.

Final Sessions of the day were focussed on two chemical company representatives from ***Nufarm*** and ***Syngenta crop protection***.

Both Matt and Leith stressed to growers a few main points for using chemical protectants that are currently registered for stone fruit against diseases such as *Monilinia*.

Tank mixes should be buffered as fungicides are most effective at pH of 6m to 7. If two or more chemicals are mixed in a tank measure the pH with a pH meter or paper to make sure the chemicals are working effectively.

Use no more than two consecutive chemical sprays from the same group to avoid the build-up of disease resistance. Rotate sprays from different chemical groups often to minimise the possibility of resistance. Most chemical sprays are one of 3 main groups.

NON SYSTEMIC, LOCALLY SYSTEMIC AND SYSTEMIC/CURATIVE

Non systemic and locally systemic products rely on good coverage for their mode of action as they do not move within the plant. Systemic curative sprays are not as reliant on good coverage as they are able to move within the plant.

The main messages that came from these presentations were:

- Monitor spray tank mixes and mix in a buffer to maintain the pH around 6-7
- Never acidify a spray tank mixture containing copper as it will cause leaf burn
- Pristine® fungicide will be registered in 2012 for brown rot control in stonefruit
- Surround® is a clay based spray additive which when sprayed on trees indicates spray coverage
- Rotate chemical groups to avoid resistance
- Use a maximum of two consecutive sprays from each chemical group

On behalf of LCA I would like to thank all speakers for their informative presentations, Mark Keane from Summerland House for taking the time to show the group their commercial packing facilities and Lynelle Foster for her help on the day.

Phillip Wilk

NSW Department of Primary Industries – Wollongbar NSW

LCA News …

Low Chill Australia Inc. Website Survey

Dear LCA Member,

Thanks so much for completing the LCA Website Survey. We really appreciate your time and input for this.

However, it appears that you have not yet completed the LCA Journal Survey, which was distributed as a separate email and link. We are sure that this is an oversight, and would really value you taking just a few more minutes to do the Journal Survey as well.

Both surveys are needed for the LCA update of the communications plan, so we'd really appreciate your response.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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CHECK OUT THE LOW CHILL AUSTRALIA INC. WEBSITE
www.lowchillaustralia.com.au

Employment …

Pacific Seasonal Worker Scheme

- **ARE YOU A FARMER STRUGGLING TO FIND HARD WORKING, HONEST, CONSTANT STAFF?**
- **ARE YOU PART OF THE HORTICULTURAL INDUSTRY? HAVE YOU HEARD OF THE PSWPS?**
- **THIS LEGISLATION WAS PASSED TO HELP *YOU*!!!**

On 18 December 2011, the Federal Government announced the Seasonal Worker Program, to begin on 1 July 2012.

This initiative builds on the Pacific Seasonal Worker Pilot Scheme. The program will be open to employers in the horticultural industry and seasonal workers from East Timor, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

The Australian Government will also undertake a small-scale, three year trial of seasonal labour mobility arrangements with cotton and cane growers, aquaculture ventures and accommodation providers in the tourism industry.

Australian farmers will be able to employ workers from the Pacific Region and East Timor under a permanent Seasonal Worker Program.

Pacific seasonal workers are reliable and returning workers who are willing and able to come back in following seasons. Pacific seasonal workers can perform a variety of tasks, such as picking, pruning, thinning, packing, and planting.

Growers and horticultural enterprises who participate in the Pilot can benefit from an increasingly experienced and stable workforce and lower costs due to reduced turnover, training and administration.

Pacific seasonal workers have assisted many horticultural enterprises with their seasonal labour needs, including citrus, stone fruit, capsicum, fig, almond, asparagus and tomato producers.

The $21.7 million Seasonal Worker Program will begin on 1 July 2012 and builds on the success of the Pacific Seasonal Worker Pilot Scheme.

Why use an Australian Approved Employer (AAE)?

AAE's responsibilities include:

- Initial liaising with growers and horticultural enterprises regarding their seasonal requirements for labour and advice regarding compliance with all regulations governing PS workers including remuneration formulas.
- Remove onus on growers and horticultural enterprises to compliantly advertise/screen/shortlist/interview local labour respondents – Labour Market Testing.
- Providing Pacific seasonal workers with an average of:
  - 30 hours' work per week over six months;
  - 35 hours' work per week over five months; or
  - 38 hours per week over four months.
- Offshore recruitment and sourcing of workers with right attribute for work:

  - English competency
  - Physical ability
  - Health check/Chest Xray
  - Criminal History
  - Financial literacy training
  - Pre departure briefings – type of work/life in Australia etc.
- Facilitate all initial payments regarding DIAC visa applications, health check, flight bookings, transfers, etc.
- All the above expenses must be paid in advance of any suitable PS worker departing their country of residence for Australia. This can amount to considerable sums when large people are required.
- Approved Employers will pay the full cost of the workers' international airfares to and from Australia upfront, and later recoup a percentage of that cost from the worker.
  - Previously, Approved Employers contributed 50% of the international return trip cost from Pacific seasonal workers, but now they contribute (as of July 1st it will be a flat rate of $500 total)
    - 35% of each i-Kiribati workers' airfare
    - 50% of each Tongan workers' airfare
    - 55% of each Papua New Guinean workers' airfare
    - 80% of each ni-Vanuatu workers' airfare.
    - Further advice on new participating countries will be advised soon.
- Arranging and facilitating worker payments for accommodation of a suitable standard, private health insurance and transport to and from work on a daily basis
- Providing pastoral care and grower support – 24/7, on arrival briefings, OH & S training, banking, local community representation / assimilation / social cohesion activities / food shopping familiarisation / religious worship introduction.
  - Assist with initial cost of living expenses
  - Assist with initial clothing
  - PPEs/OH & S briefings
  - Working in partnership with grower / setting targets / KPI's etc.

Paying workers in accordance with the Horticulture award 2010 or other relevant industrial instrument.

Reporting monthly to DIAC/DEEWR as well as FWA Audits.

- Weekly Payroll deductions and statutory obligations eg. PAYG/Workers Compensation payments/ Superannuation/Payroll tax/GST etc.
- Assisting workers with access to personal banking, gaining a tax file number, preparing a tax return.

All pre-departure briefings, airport transfers and check-in.

WE CURRENTLY HAVE A GOVERNMENT APPROVED EMPLOYER IN THE REGION FROM CONNECT GROUP www.theconnectgroup.com.au

Call Leanne for an obligation free meeting to discuss your needs.
Phone: 0459 111 044 or email: LeanneHampton@live.com.au

Research …

Harnessing beneficial microbes to suppress Brown Rot

Dr Dean Metcalf – *Biocontrol Australia Pty Ltd*
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I have worked on biological control agents for controlling crop diseases since 1992, mostly by using a group of fungi called *Trichoderma* spp., which are natural predators of other fungi. There have been quite a lot of attempts to control crop diseases using biological controls, most of which have not amounted to commercial success. The biggest reason for failure has been lack of understanding of how the biological control agent attacks the disease and how to strategically use it. By understanding this it has been possible for us to develop a number of biological controls that are effective, including for grey mould (*Botrytis cinerea*) in grapes.

Brown rot is a very serious disease for cherry growers in Tasmania. In 2011 season there were a number of growers who lost the entire crop to the disease. In cherries, the disease seems to be mostly caused by *Monilinia laxa*, but there is another species *Monilinia fructicola* which is also widespread (the two look almost identical). Brown rot is closely related to *Botrytis* and has a similar infection method (by first infecting flowers then waiting until the fruit ripen to cause decay), so there is reason to believe that the biological control approach could also work on brown rot.

Two trials were set up in southern Tasmania to try to control brown rot in 2011/12 season. The microbes we used were tested in microscope experiments to make sure that they were able to at least kill *Monilinia* in culture. The trials were sprayed at 30% and 70% flowering.

Cherry growers in Tasmania generally consider that they suffer badly from brown rot, but not much from *Botrytis*. The first interesting result of the trial was that much of the decays seen in the cherries were in fact caused by *Botrytis cinerea* rather than brown rot. The two fungi look quite similar on decayed fruit, and it begs the question of how much supposed brown rot could be *Botrytis* in other orchards. We tested the cores of cherries in the trials and found the three *Trichoderma* races we tested were successful in growing into about 80% of flowers, which was a good start for controlling the disease.

In trial 1 there was 3.49% *Monilinia* prior to harvest which was significantly reduced to 0.76% in the *Trichoderma* Td81b treated plots (see Figure 2), which is a similar level of control to that afforded by the commercial fungicide treatment of Rovral (iprodione). There was too little Botrytis in this trial for a strong comparative test.

In trial 2 (no graph shown), the level of *Botrytis* infection was 8.05% in the untreated control and was 2.99% in the Td81b treated plots (which was again the best of the biological controls and was comparable to the control provided by the chemical spray program). There was only 1.4% brown rot in the untreated control of trial 2, but no brown rot at all in the *Trichoderma* Td81b treated fruit or the chemical treatment.

Td81b is a race of *Trichoderma* that has already been shown to control *Botrytis cinerea* in grapes under conditions of high disease pressure, so the result is very encouraging. We would like to learn more about how well Td81b can suppress brown rot in peaches, apricots, nectarines and plums and are planning more trials in the coming year. We are fairly new to the stonefruit industry and are keen to find out more about individual growers perspectives on the disease, so would encourage growers to get in touch.

Ph: 0409 054 323
Email: metcalf@tassie.net.au
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Figure 1: *Monilinia laxa (brown rot) in cherries.*

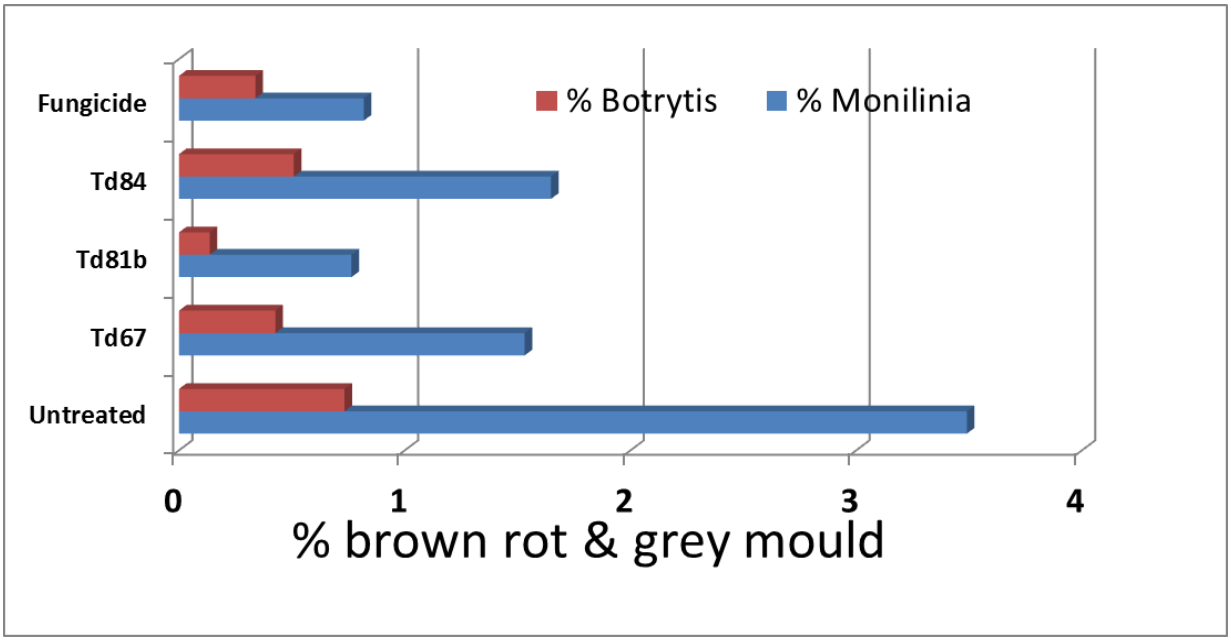

Figure 2: *Percentage of fruit which developed brown rot or grey mould in trial 1 after being treated with Trichoderma Td84, Td81b, or Td67 in comparison to untreated control and the growers normal spray program. lsd0.05 Bot ns, Mon 0.97.*

Retail …

The rise of alternative channels

New retail channels catering to demand for convenience are gaining ground even in an era of value-conscious shoppers.

By Martin Kneebone – martin@freshlogic.com.au

While most of the pressure in the current food market is centred on meeting the priorities of a value-seeking consumer and an intense level of retail competition, some new ways have evolved to distribute food to Australian households - and they are finding traction.

These are being referred to as 'alternative' channels. They are new or rejuvenated ways to sell and supply food products. While their current volumes may be modest compared to mainstream retail or food service, there are clear indications they are enjoying strong growth.

Alternative channels include services that deliver fresh foods and complete meals into the home or workplace and operate in competition with a retail or foodservice shopping experience. These channels have been evolving since the mid-1990s, but it is only in recent years that they have gained mainstream appeal.

Those offering fresh food as ingredients or as part of meals can be broadly described in three categories. The first, providers of complete food and grocery ranges, is a group currently dominated by *Woolworths* and *Coles*.

The second are fresh food specialists, ranging from multi-state operations like *Aussie Farmers Direct* and *The Fruit Box*, to a second tier of operators covering selected metro areas, and a third tier of smaller local options that are often an extension of the local greengrocer.

The third are providers of meals, which range from the national operations of *Jenny Craig* and *Lite n' Easy*, to a second tier of state-based operators covering state capital metro areas, and then a third tier of local operators than are often an extension of local restaurants.

A technology kick-start is a common thread in helping these channels expand, with the highest leverage coming from increases in internet use. In 2011, 77 per cent of Australian households had internet access, which was up from 59 per cent in 2006. This has provided a low cost technology platform that has effectively replaced a higher cost sales and admin function.

The rapid uptake of smart phones, which has effectively put mobile cash registers in place with 37 per cent of Australians, has taken the technology leverage to another level.

The direct interface with consumers enables two-way communications, which presents some opportunities. While some enterprises have learned that poor service can suffer at the hands of wildfire activism, it is also clear that those who have learned to manage this connection have built different customer relationships and developed marketing advantages. Technology has also aided the demands of managing the customer interface as well as highlighting the value of the skills required.

Success at this interface is often distinguished by the ability to engage in a conversation with customers, rather than just selling them a product or service. This level of relationship introduces the chance to gain acknowledgement of other product and service attributes and in general add value and build levels of customer loyalty. Some enterprises are using these channels to test and guide new products as well as generate sales.

Logistics is the other critical competency, as these offers are dependent on their ability to get fresh product delivered in a condition that will earn the next order. Logistics are a high cost part of these operations and many food distribution cost analyses have concluded that the supermarket business model, which harnesses customer labour to select, pack and transport the goods to the home, is the lowest cost food distribution model.

Clearly these alternative channels are winning support from some food consumers by offering more than what the supermarket shop provides.

The drivers of logistics for these channels are centred on the breadth of product range, the ordering system and delivery promise to customers. If the product range includes ambient, chilled and frozen product it has the most challenging handling requirements. This range means that product can't be left for long periods and typically delivery has to be organised around customers being available to receive the order.

The other variable of the ordering system needs to meet is the lead time for delivery required to win customer support. Most providers set out to encourage customers into a regular weekly order as this makes for easier operations. Most also typically offer customers the option to adjust orders online.

Some providers in these channels are delivering in the cooler temperatures of early morning into insulated bags provided to customers. These deliveries are made in smaller, quieter vehicles and at this time it is assured that the delivery will be taken inside when the households rise. This approach has removed the constraint of aligning deliveries to a time window when customers are home. Other options include packing meals into polystyrene boxes supported with cooling aids, which serves to maintain even temperatures for longer periods.

Some enterprises have targeted the business canteen market and given that workplaces are typically occupied from Monday to Friday, this again has made for easier deliveries, by removing the need to meet a customer prescribed delivery window.

Coles are addressing the logistical challenges with trials of internet orders being collected through their convenience store network. Based on similar systems in the UK, this has potential, but some fine tuning seems to be required as the queue of vehicles waiting to collect at 5.30pm in trial locations is looking like the supermarket queues these shoppers have set out to avoid.

Woolworths have matched this with a *'Click Then Collect'* option, which as a starting point sends people back to stores. *Woolworths* have also set out to make the ordering easier with a virtual store allowing pictures of food products to be scanned and ordered with a smart phone. In short, both major retailers investing in these channels can only confirm their potential.

The demand for this offer seems is largely centred on aspects of convenience. The regular deliveries allowing for easy home menu planning and elimination of a shopping trip and the meal offers are also providing meal preparation convenience and better value than eating out.

Australian internet sales were assessed by the *NAB Online Retail Sales Index* as increasing by 29 per cent in 2011 to be worth A$10.5bn or 4.9 per cent of the total retail market, with food and liquor contributing up 13 per cent, or A$1.36bn of this total. The volumes and dynamics of these channels now at least warrant understanding and potentially some investment to gain exposure.

*This article was originally published in **Produce Plus Magazine**, and is reproduced here with permission. To secure your subscription to **Produce Plus**, email alexandra@fruitnet.com.*

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THE MAGAZINE FOR FRESH FRUIT AND VEGETABLE MARKETING IN AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND

Promotion …

2011/12 Australian Summer Stonefruit PR Campaign

Crossman Communications, Australian Summer Stonefruit's public relations consultancy, together with **David Weisz**, *Summerfruit Marketing Manager* at *Horticulture Australia Limited*, developed an innovative public relations campaign for the 2011/12 season to build awareness of the availability of peaches, plums, apricots and nectarines and encourage purchase.

Con the Fruiterer was re-engaged as the face of Australian Summer Stonefruit for a third year. He added to Australia Day celebrations by announcing his *'Summer Stonefruit' Day Awards*, with the public nominating Aussie celebrities for particular categories. Discussion was driven through *Con's Facebook* page, *Summer Stonefruit's Facebook* and *Twitter* pages and the media. Winners were announced exclusively through *Today Tonight* as well as the *Herald Sun Confidential*.

A social media campaign was implemented to drive awareness of the season via *Facebook* and *Twitter*. *Crossman* posted engaging content daily on the harvest, fruit quality and recipes, responded to comments and questions and undertook a small *Facebook* advertising campaign to build the fan base.

This strategy secured close to 3000 *Facebook* 'likers' and more than 900 *Twitter* 'followers'.

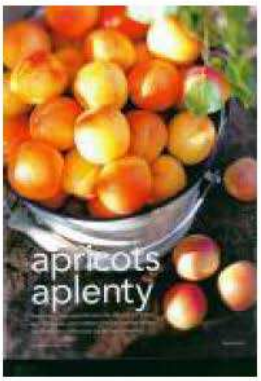
Crossman created opportunities to run promotions in community newspapers across Australia as well as **Taste.com.au**. These were very well received with Taste.com.au attracting an impressive 2,400 entrants while Brisbane's *Quest Newspapers* received 4,733 followed by Melbourne's *Leader Newspapers* with 4,171.

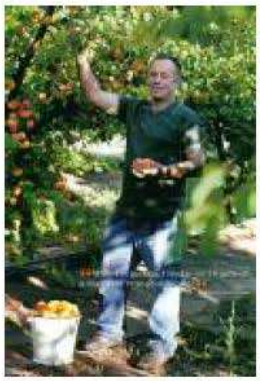
The season launch and recipe outreach was again a great success with numerous colourful recipes and stonefruit features running in metropolitan newspapers and magazines, and multiple grower interviews talking up this year's quality fruit in newspapers, radio, television and online sites.

The campaign was a resounding success with **304 media** hits generated on all platforms across the country, blitzing the campaign objective of 175 stories by 129 clips. With a total reach of **101 million** pairs of eyes, the campaign overachieved the 'known' audience target by an astounding 76 million.

2011/12 Australian Summer Stonefruit Coverage Overview – In-Season Features

2011/12 Australian Summer Stonefruit Coverage Overview – Grower Articles





Signs are good for bountiful stonefruit season

by Anna Yeo

Reaping the rewards

Year of growing promise

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Pesticides …

National Working Party on Pesticide Applications – 2012 Report

In July 2008 the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) outlined new processes in Australia for assessing risk from spray drift (*APVMA Operating Principles in Relation to Spray Drift Risk*).

Subsequently, the Regulator released further information (effective March 2010) by means of an Operational Notice (*New Registration Application and Label Requirements in relation to Spray Drift Management*). This was followed by "Supplement 1" released in November 2010 which defined changes to the definition of 'orchards' and droplet size criteria for orchard air-blast spraying.

This policy enables highly specific downwind mandatory zones to be incorporated into the label, making it a legal requirement for the operator to leave (under some circumstances) cropping areas unsprayed and untreated on the downwind side of paddocks where adjacent, prescribed susceptible areas have been identified.

The provision of additional spray application technology requirements on labels has been recognised by most stakeholders as constructive and informative. However, the use of significantly larger mandatory downwind buffer areas (up to 300 metres) raised concerns, particularly regarding the application of pesticides in areas where geography, established boundaries and field size prevent the practical adoption of such drift mitigation techniques.

In response to these developments, a broad-based industry *National Working Party on Pesticide Applications* (NWPPA) was established in March 2010 to consider the potential outcomes of the spray drift reviews being undertaken by the APVMA and assist stakeholders work with the changes that may result from the pesticide reviews.

The last full meeting of the NWPPA, held in Canberra in April 2011, endorsed the following role of the NWPPA to:

- Provide a forum to assist growers and other stakeholders understand current APVMA policy and work with the Regulators to provide realistic and practical risk management
- Seek and facilitate investment from stakeholders and affected parties in support of a national coordinated program that supports the use of practical downwind buffers
- Facilitate targeted research that supports the use of practical downwind buffers
- Support and facilitate the development of a national training framework for pesticide application that would, for example, support the implementation of DRT's, (lower buffer distances), best management practice & improved product efficacy.

During 2011-12, the NWPPA Executive Committee has actively pursuing its work plan to fulfil its role and the results are briefly outlined below:

The Executive Committee has established on-going dialogue with the Regulators which has allowed for constructive discussions on options for the practical management of spray drift. The APVMA has welcomed and encouraged this collaboration and we look forward to continuing that dialogue. The APVMA has indicated to the Executive Committee that due to comments received it will not progressed 2,4-D and MCPA label changes until further implementation aspects can be fully considered.

I believe that this is in part due to the activities of the Working Party, and provides an opportunity for NWPPA stakeholders to gather further information on constructive management options for the management of pesticide spray

drift, review industry current best management practise and engage with all stakeholders on the development of spray drift management policy.

The Executive Committee has also endorsed and is implementing the recommendations from the independent report by Plant Health Australia (PHA). This report has formed the basis for the Executive Committee's on-going workplan.

The University of Queensland, with funding from the GRDC, completed a new assessment of Canadian research so that deposition curves for nozzles that produce very coarse and extremely coarse droplets could be generated. As shrouds are a recognised viable method for reducing the spray drift emitted by boom sprayers, this project also entailed an independent wind tunnel and field evaluation of a commercial spray shroud.

The Executive Committee endorsed the provision of this report to the APVMA for review and evaluation. The APVMA has accepted the findings of the study subject to minor revision.

A very significant 3-year research project at the University of Queensland has been established to:

- Develop a database (accommodating nozzles, formulations and adjuvants that will support the use of Drift Reduction Technologies (DRT's) for the application of pesticides using ground boom sprayers.

- Develop wind tunnel deposition curves (measurement of vertical & horizontal flux) that can be used to establish spray quality boundaries and assess the effectiveness of DRT's.

The Executive Committee asked Plant Health Australia to provide an report that looks at the Australian regulatory response regarding the risk assessment of spray drift in comparison with international regulators, particularly USA, Canada, UK and Europe and identify and review current linked international research to activity undertaken by these countries that would enhance and support the activity of the NWPPA. The preliminary findings of this study will be presented to the meeting on 17 April 2012.

Horticulture Australia Limited has engaged a consultant to undertake an industry analysis of industry/environment/equipment spray application profiles, develop a matrix of priority risk scenarios and develop a platform to determine current best management spray practices across horticulture industries.

The Executive Committee has asked Assoc. **Prof John Kent** to provide an independent assessment of current and potential revised national training framework(s) for pesticide application that would support the implementation of DRTs. In particular review:

- Mechanisms that could potentially deliver and recognise a practical national training framework;

- Mechanisms that would enable consistent practical training outcomes to be delivered supported by high quality peer reviewed applied research;

- Pathways that could link new and current DRT technologies and BMP to growers and regulators.

The preliminary findings from this report were presented to the meeting on 17 April 2012.

The meeting of the NWPPA in April 2012 presented an opportunity for stakeholders to receive the latest information on the activities of the Working Group and review and ratify the role of the NWPPA in 2012-13.

Gavan Cattanach, *Chair*
NWPPA
April 2012

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Industry Conferences …

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17th—20th May 2012

GETTING TO MARKET

The 2012 FGT Annual May Conference will be held in Launceston, Tasmania from the 17th- 20th May. Once again the Conference will follow the popular format of other May Conferences including 2 days of technical presentations, network drinks, conference dinner and field days.

This year two field days will be held: one for the berry industry (Thurs 17th) and one for the cherry/stonefruit industry (Sunday 20th).

Launceston is a central location for all Tasmanian growing regions and is easily accessed by air for those travelling from interstate or overseas. It is also only one hour drive from Devonport, home of the Spirit of Tasmania.

With the central location of this year's conference venue there is wide choice of accommodation options all within close walking distance. Accommodation options can be found on the Registration Form.

The Annual Awards Dinner will once again be held on the Saturday night of the conference and presentations will be made to the Young Fruit Grower of the Year as well as the Award for Excellence.

The program features an excellent range of speakers from Tasmania, interstate as well as from overseas. The international key note speaker for 2012 is Marlene Ayala from Chile who will be giving two presentations at the Conference.

Fruit Growers Tasmania would also like to extend a big thank you to all the sponsors whose continued support of the conference ensures it's ongoing success.

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Research …

Remote sensing catches bees in the act

Constant monitoring in places like banks and shopping centres is the norm, but electronic surveillance is about to enter the insect world with devices now being tested to prevent bees trying to sneak into the country through sea ports, potentially carrying with them pests and disease that could devastate the honeybee industry and food production.

With recent advances in technology, installation of low cost, miniaturised sensors are now commonplace in a multitude of commercial applications, from industrial motors to modern day mobile phones. The integration of such devices with wireless transmission systems has the ability to create a cheap but highly valuable measuring, monitoring and evaluation tool for application in the Australian bee industry.

The aim is to pick up almost immediately any foreign bees that enter so-called 'decoy hives' which are set up around ports and coastlines, and to reduce the cost and time involved for inspectors to regularly travel to the sites to see if there has been an incursion.

Experience overseas shows early detection is vital to dealing with foreign bee pests and diseases, as once they get established they are almost impossible to eradicate.

The research project is being funded by the Pollination Program, a partnership between the Rural Industries R&Development Corporation and Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL) and undertaken by the National Centre for Engineering in Agriculture (NCEA) based at the University of Southern Queensland.

This project aims to conduct a scoping study on measurement requirements of electronic beehive monitoring specific for the Australian beekeeping industry, and based on these findings, define the specifications and develop a proof of concept sensing system for an electronic hive monitoring system.

Field trials are now underway with a beekeeper near Toowoomba.

The researchers reviewed existing technology, including off the shelf sensors for weight, temperature and humidity as well as the motion detection cameras. They are now working with the beekeeper to entice groups of bees into an empty hive set up with the equipment to see how sensitive it is.

The aim is to have data from the decoy hives all over the country beamed back to a central location with inspectors monitoring for alarms from the office and only going out for a first-hand look if there's suspicious activity, providing a more effective early warning system.

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ARTICLES SOURCE – RIRDC E-NEWS – APRIL 17, 201

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- 2012 Publication Timetable -

Contributions are invited for the next scheduled publication - **AUGUST 2011**.

FEBRUARY	APRIL	AUGUST	NOVEMBER
Advertising Deadline **7 February**	*Advertising Deadline* **14 April**	*Advertising Deadline* **31 July**	*Advertising Deadline* **31 October**
Copy Deadline **10 February**	*Copy Deadline* **21 April**	*Copy Deadline* **7 August**	*Copy Deadline* **7 November**

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THE END