

Facilitating the development of the Vegetable Industry communication network in Western Australia - Stage 2

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Vegetable Growers Association of
WA Inc

Project Number: VG04023

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Project Number: VG04023
(28th November 2008)

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Media Summary

The national industry development program has operated and been managed by Industry Development Officers (IDO) based in each state of Australia. The Western Australian program has successfully delivered on industry development issues for 10 years across two five year projects. The role was to assess growers' needs in order to facilitate industry driven research projects, manage industry development imperatives and to disseminate the resultant research information to all stakeholders.

The IDO project in Western Australia (WA) has:

- facilitated the establishment of a communication network to link growers, grower groups, private Research and Development (R&D) providers, agronomists, field officers, Department of Agriculture and Food WA (DAFWA), and other research agencies within WA,
- created a link and cooperative research and development arrangements with the Department of Agriculture and Food WA (DAFWA),
- initiated research projects to address industry development issues and opportunities for growers and industry through various state and national funding bodies,
- developed linkages between government from local, departmental and state and the industry to strategically manage industry issues and development,
- expanded a comprehensive database through a process of consultation and review with stakeholders in the Western Australian vegetable industry to include vegetable growers, details of their crops and production, staff levels, industry stakeholders and,
- provided communication and extension opportunities for further industry development and exchange of information throughout the supply chain.

Two independent reviews of the WA IDO project indicated a broad understanding of the vegetable levy and how it works for growers. Respondents expressed an appreciation of the IDO's role as an organised independent and universal point of contact and communication across the breadth of the industry.

The second stage of the WA IDO program in 2004 created the opportunity to build on the existing framework and knowledge base. This provided the impetus to identify new directions in the vegetable industry and engendered a view of the vegetable industry as responsible and proactive across a range of issues vital to the sustainability and efficiency of the vegetable industry in Western Australia. The continuity of the position has also facilitated the understanding of the way the vegetable levy works for growers and stakeholders in the industry. It has also been advantageous to create a sense of cohesiveness in an industry that is based on self-reliance and driven by supply and demand.

Underpinning the above is the development of a comprehensive communication network that continues to expand with the industry. This is crucial to the development of the Australian vegetable industry's vision of an industry that is cohesive, market focused, a producer of quality produce, profitable, environmentally responsible, and positioned as a serious competitor in the global food industry.

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1.0 Introduction

The project “Facilitation the development of the Vegetable Industry Communication Network in Western Australia – stage 2” was the second 5 year project funded by the national vegetable levy and Horticulture Australia. The WA IDO project was one of the national industry development initiatives that provided the communication, facilitation and management roles that assisted the implementation of the Australian Vegetable Industry Strategic Plan.

The vision statement set out in the Australian Vegetable Industry Strategic Plan states: *The Australian Vegetable Industry will be cohesive, market focussed, profitable and environmentally responsible; positioned as a serious competitor in the global food industry, with a reputation for quality.* One of the key goals for achieving this is to: *improve the communication and collaboration within industry.*

The national industry development network, established by the regional IDO's, worked with growers and industry members to facilitate and drive the industry strategic vision and plan. The success of this model is evident by the positive findings from the many evaluations performed by AUSVEG and Horticulture Australia and the innovative programs developed nationally.

The WA IDO, guided by the National vision for the industry, facilitated the provision of meaningful information exchange and the identification of State and regional initiatives and projects that assisted the industry from the grower to stakeholders throughout the supply chain. The success of the second stage of the WA IDO project was the consolidation and extension of working relationships and programs at a national, state and regional level and was informed by a broad knowledge of growers needs, stakeholders in the supply chain, latest research and growers needs. This was made possible by the development, and maintenance, of an efficient and effective industry communication network within the Vegetable Industry. This communication network was vital to the primary role of the IDO, that of a knowledge broker, and information and industry learning facilitator. The IDO role has the long-term interests of the grower as a priority (Coutts, Bell, & James, 2003).

vegetablesWA (WA Vegetable Growers Association Pty Ltd) provided leadership and financial stability that enabled the organisation to retain the services of one staff member over the length of the two projects (eg 10 years). This allowed for continuity and progressed industry, in large part due to retention of intellectual property and knowledge.

2.0 Technology Transfer strategy and methodology/ activities

2.1 Initial Stage

The second stage of the WA IDO project built on the achievement of the inaugural project. These achievements included the following:

- informal and formal communication networks,
- database and statistical information,
- industry and R&D knowledge,
- cooperation with research provides,
- cultural understandings and motivators, and
- strategic planning.

The establishment of these objectives, in the first project, enabled communication networks to be extended in the second stage of the project without significant financial cost, in conjunction with maintaining an effective and efficient network.

The IDO project in Western Australia (WA) focused on:

- facilitating the establishment of a communication network to link growers, grower groups, private Research and Development (R&D) providers, agronomists, field officers, Western Australian Department of Agriculture, and other research agencies within WA,
- creating a link to facilitate cooperative research and development arrangements with the Department of Agriculture and Food WA (DAFWA),
- initiating research projects to address industry development issues and opportunities for growers and industry through various state and national funding bodies,
- developing linkages between local, departmental and state government institutions and the vegetable industry to strategically manage industry issues and development,
- expanding the comprehensive database through a process of consultation and review with stakeholders in the Western Australian vegetable industry to include vegetable growers, details of their crops and production, staff levels, industry stakeholders, and
- providing communication and extension opportunities for industry to foster the exchange of information throughout the supply chain and the relevant research community.

2.2 The Communication Plan for the Western Australian Vegetable Industry Development Officer

The forms of communication within the vegetable industry have increased significantly over the past ten years. Growers are being inundated with a proliferation of information. There is a risk that valuable information is lost in the “noise” of advertising, information sheets and newsletters and catalogues. Growers have needed to become discerning and selective about the research and development and industry development information they wish to access. The strategies incorporated in the communication plan take this and other key information and data, into consideration.

The primary goal of the communication strategy is to increase the uptake and adoption of R&D project outcomes by communicating better with Western Australian vegetable growers.

The key broad aims outlined in the WA IDO communication plan are reflective of the national communication plan and other states and regions communication plans, they include:

- improve grower awareness levels with the information received on national levy funded projects,
- reduce the level of apathy among the majority of vegetable growers which leads to a low activity level to seek out information,
- improve knowledge that the national levy funds R&D program,
- increase access from eastern state R&D programs to Western Australian growers,
- enhance communication capabilities within the industry.

To achieve the aims established in the communication plan the various communication strategies were investigated to determine the levels of resources that should be allocated to each area (refer to table below). This method allows the industry to target resources to achieve the most beneficial outcome.

Communication Strategy	Audience Reached	Audience segment	Effect on audience segment	Effect on industry	Communication Resources Allocated
Visual identity	100%	All	Small to Medium	Small to Medium	10%
Face to face	20%	Opinion leaders Industry leaders Early innovators Significant growers	Very Large	Large	25%
Publications	90%	All	Medium	Small to Medium	10%
Direct Mail	2 to 80% (70%)	Required Target audience	Large	Medium	10%
Media	15%	All	Small	Small	5%
Electronic	35%	Early innovators Technology adopters Greenhouse growers Young growers	Large	Medium	10%
Personal communication	20%	Service industry	Large	Medium	20%
Other	10%	Knowledge seekers	Large	Small	10%

Table: Relative effect of the various communication activities on industry.

It was determined that all communication should contain key messages. These key messages are consistent across Australia so that communication originating from a regional, state or national level will deliver the same messages. The broad key messages for the WA communication strategy are:

1. Your National Vegetable levy is a worthwhile investment.
2. Research & Development can directly benefit your business if you use the information.
3. The National Vegetable levy funds your Research & Development program.
4. Research and development aims to keep the vegetable industry globally competitive.
5. Research & Development investment benefits are better achieved as a group, by pooling resources
6. The vegetable industry Research & Development investment (National Vegetable Levy) is matched by the Australian Government through Horticulture Australia
7. Australian vegetable businesses have received benefit from the National Vegetable Research & Development program.
8. There is a lot of Research & Development information available and it is easy to access.
9. Growers make the decisions on where the National Vegetable Levy is spent. Those that pay have the say.
10. You can have your say.

The WA IDO officer promulgated these messages by implementing the most appropriate strategies, and consistent with an action research approach the process of implementation and review of these actions has been maintained over the life of the project, to date.

2.3 WA Vegetable Industry Database

A comprehensive and effective database of growers throughout the state was vital to the IDO project's aims and remained a priority over the life of both IDO projects. It is a valuable resource and promotes the concept of a unified and cohesive industry to government, and stakeholders in the vegetable industry. It became an effective tool and resource in terms of information related to the access of funding, and promoting the interests of growers within the state.

At the time of the inception of the WA IDO project in November 1998 the WA vegetable industry had minimal tools to communicate with growers. There was no consolidated data base and information was scattered and reflected the independent nature of the industry. For example a review of grower communication found the following:

- there were three grower associations – each with a small membership base,
- WA Department of Agriculture had been going through a change in focus with less extension staff with no central grower database,
- the central markets did not have a central database (all communication was through market agents), and
- the main method of communication was through word of mouth.

Database developmental process

The data base was developed in stages to allow for trial and error adjustments, and grower uptake and acceptance with a focus on achievable outcomes and benefits to growers to continue to drive the process.

Stage 1 – Simple grower details

Focus was on contact details online and collecting all growers names in WA.

Stage 2 – Comprehensive grower details

Focus was on using basic information and collecting useful targeting information.

Stage 3 – Integration of industry services (capabilities)

Focus was collating information of use to growers and industry (eg Project details, grower stats) and producing industry reports.

Stage 4 – Stakeholder details

Focus was on industry all participants in the industry on the database to allow the implementation of the communication plan.

Stage 5 – Verification and maintenance

Focus on validating the data in the database and ensuring every contact detail is updated.

Stage 6 – Expanded industry details

Focus was on collecting information that would allow targeting of information and services to growers.

Stages 5 and 6 were carried out as part of the second project. These stages were the most costly and time-consuming component of the database development. Over a period of four years every person on the database was contacted and interviewed three times to obtain information relating to crops grown, production levels, staff levels, areas of interest and up-to-date and comprehensive contact details.

2.4 Communication actions/activities

The communication action/activities have evolved over the life of the two projects. Initially the focus was on locating, and communicating with growers in order to obtain information to develop effective, responsive and meaningful (to growers) forms of communication. This groundwork also facilitated the process of familiarising growers with the IDO, and his role in the vegetable industry and provided opportunities to educate growers about the vegetable levy. All forms of communication implemented and these were assessed in terms of growers' preference, responsiveness to critical issues, cost effectiveness and ease of use over the life of the two projects. This has been a work in progress as growers embraced electronic forms of communication, and their preferences changed as growers became more selective about the ways they received information. Nonetheless the more traditional activities such as farm visits and meetings have continued, albeit at a reduced level. In recent years communication network activities became focused, cost effective and time sensitive.

The IDO became the conduit for information regarding all aspects of the vegetable industry as a result of communication with growers, research and developers, state government bodies, and stakeholders in the supply chain. Through this process, and with the stability of the IDO, the IDO position gained recognition and acceptance as an independent source of valuable information and knowledge of growers' needs and the evolving vegetable industry.

The following section briefly outlines the communication activities that have been established over the life of the two projects with emphasis on those that have been trialled and implemented in the second project.

2.4.1 WA VegeLINK Newsletter

The WA VegeLINK Newsletter has remained the main form of written communication to growers. The newsletter is produced four times a year and sent to every grower in Western Australia as an insert in the WA Grower magazine. The WA Grower was seen as a good vehicle because it was recognised and accepted in the industry and as a consequence is less likely, in these times of information overload, to be discarded as junk mail.

The format of VegeLINK has changed in response to grower feedback. It contains information that is relevant to the WA vegetable industry and information is presented in a format that can allow the reader to make decisions regarding the relevance of the material to their business. Information on links to access further information is provided. Information on latest research findings are regularly included. This keeps growers abreast with innovations in the industry and creates opportunities for expansion and diversification.

The newsletter is distributed to all vegetable growers in WA and other stakeholders in Western Australia quarterly and is presented in a high quality, full colour format.

2.4.2 Electronic communication (email, website and SMS) WA VegeNEWS (email service) and Website (www.vegetableswa.com.au)

Electronic communication reaches over 25% of WA vegetable growers. These growers are generally the innovators of the industry, young growers or greenhouse growers. The strategy to targeted leaders in this area results in considerable investment in electronic communication. The three forms used in the project are email, website and SMS

Email is the main method of communicating electronically through the WA IDO program as it is targeted and a active form of communication. Growers responded well to regular short information being sent to them. The email service was branded "WA VegeNEWS".

vegetablesWA website was developed through the project to be a source of research information and a news bulletin. The website provides another access point for electronic media.

The use of SMS messaging is another important tool for the industry. Its main use was as an irrigation and weather information device. However, it was trialled as a meeting and workshop reminder.

These activities highlighted the need to improve the electronic details on the WA vegetable industry database.

2.4.3 Individual growers visits

This remains the preferred form of communication for the majority of growers. Farm visits require a high investment in time and thus, are less cost effective than other forms of communication. Nonetheless farm visits continued to be conducted and had the advantage of reaching “grass root” vegetable growers, who are often busy doing the “hands-on” farm work. This personal approach was consistent with the vegetable industry small-business culture where the grower is independent and an expert in his/her business. These visits also have a regional flow-on effect as growers reported to other growers in their vicinity and promoted the IDO project.

2.4.4 Meetings

Growers and stakeholders are advised about meetings through the communication channels established by the projects. Meetings are generally better attended if they are scheduled at night and provide relevant targeted information pertinent to the region. Meetings that followed this format have been well attended and have provided opportunities for growers to share information and problem solve in a constructive and expedient manner. Feedback from growers suggests that meetings that address critical regionally based issues are productive. External factors such as time of meetings, weather, and on farm issues influence attendance figures. Provision of food and drinks has little impact on turn-out.

2.4.5 Mailouts

This form of communication continues to be used extensively although information is targeted and relevant to the recipient. Targeted mail-outs remain an important and valuable communication tool.

Distribution of VegeLINK Newsletter	Quarterly
WA VegeNEWS email service	Fortnightly
Grower Group Meetings	Fortnightly to monthly
State Grower Regional Visits (11 Regions)	Each region: 0.5 to 4 times per year
Facilitation of Research workshops and field days	Monthly to bimonthly
Mail outs	Fortnightly
Face-to face farm visits	Weekly to fortnightly
National Strategy and R&D Meetings	Six
State R&D Committees meetings	Three
Conferences and seminars (National & State)	Eight
vegetablesWA (WA VGA) meetings	Monthly
Meeting with government departments and other organisations	Weekly

2.5 Meetings with Stakeholders

The IDO conducts frequent meetings with researchers who may wish to present findings of research or discuss aspects of their projects. The IDO's broad knowledge of the vegetable industry at a state and national level assists in facilitating developing researchers understanding of their participant group, the parameters of their research and how this fits with national imperatives. The IDO also brings together researchers and vegetable growers to discuss their needs and how they may be met effectively.

Meetings to discuss research issues and research findings are also instigated by researchers who wish to target growers who will benefit from their research. From these discussions the IDO organises growers meetings and field days to promote the researchers findings.

2.5.1 Grower speciality groups

Speciality groups include the Carrot Association for Research and Development (CARD), the Warren Cauliflower Group and the WA Greenhouse group. The IDO works with these groups to assist in communication, identify research issues, develop strategic plans and facilitate effective outcomes.

2.6 Information Resources

The IDO has the responsibility for identifying, collecting and collating information that may be helpful to the IDO position and to stakeholders in the vegetable industry in the Resource library. The library is available to growers and contains information regarding outcomes of research.

One of the recommendations of this report is that a catalogue of the resources of the materials available to growers and stakeholders should be developed and maintained. This would enable ready access and could be available electronically. It has not been seen as important by industry but as time moves forward important resources are lost to growers. This project could be contracted out.

3.0 Evaluation and measurement of outcomes – impact and adoption

The assessment of this project was largely based on a qualitative action research model, which has the express purpose of achieving an understanding of issues that lead to practical applications and solutions. This solution-focused approach has allowed the IDO to adjust his methods to suit the needs and growth of the industry.

The intellectual knowledge that the IDO has acquired through numerous meetings with growers across the state and nationally, and with government officials, stakeholders in the vegetable industry and representatives of other horticultural industries has been re-invested in the ongoing exchange of information at a micro level and macro level. For example a committee meeting attended by growers and the IDO may be discussing on-farm issues. The IDO acts as a resource to provide information as to how the issues under discussion may be considered in terms of off-farm issues such as water use or environmental considerations. This reflects the changing nature of the vegetable industry whereby vegetable growers can no longer conduct their businesses largely independent of consideration of community and government issues. The IDO as the go-to person has facilitated much of this change process.

The measure of the success of communication strategies and the effectiveness of the IDO project, consistent with the action research model, can be demonstrate by the following outcomes:

- One of the key activities of the IDO program has been the leveraging of resources to address growers and industry priorities and the strategic plan. The WA IDO was ideally positioned to drive the industry strategic plan by seeking and managing these projects. This is demonstrated by the increase in the number of government and industry funded projects that have been supported. Many of these projects have been formulated from information collated by the IDO through the grower database and through the identification of growers needs. The IDO has also been able to act proactively by anticipating future needs of growers by being across issues including water resource and efficiency management, sustainability and environmental management, quality assurance issues, equipment innovation and changes in the supply chain.
- The development of a comprehensive and accurate database that is recognised by stakeholders. (The is addressed more comprehensively below).
- Positive feedback from a series of industry development reviews.
- The IDO's involvement in various steering and management committees for industry and Government . For example The IDO is on the board of the Perth Region NRM incorporated. This provides input into resource management issues across the region, which assists industry to gain an insight into key environmental issues that will need to be managed in the future

3.1 WA Vegetable Industry Database

A current, comprehensive and detailed data base is critical in communicating with industry. The WA vegetable industry database has been develop to contain more information than just contact details so has become an integral part of the WA communication plan allowing communication of target group, opinion leaders, crop details, size of businesses, staffing levels, etc and accurately measure of industry trends and the status of the vegetable industry.

The process of annual updating has led to the discovery of a range of useful information and data. Some interesting results from the update include:

- Total production area was approximately 8,000 hectares
- Average size of farm was 42.8 hectares
- Permanent staff employed directly in the industry was approximately 800
- Part time staff employed directly in the industry was approximately 450
- Two to three growers produce over 50% of the product for the smaller vegetable lines (eg Spring onions, Leeks, Rhubarb, etc)
- Four to five growers produce over 50% of the product for the larger vegetable lines (eg Carrots, Lettuce, Cauliflower, etc)
- On a number of vegetable products one grower produces 70 to 80% of the product.

Analyse the data from the review of the WA vegetable industry database.

The complete data review of the database still points strongly to the decreasing number of producers in the industry while noting that production is still increasing. The tables below indicate some of the findings

CROP	TOTAL HECTARES	Percentage of CROP PRODUCED by TOP 3 GROWERS	TOTAL NUMBER OF GROWERS (Growers that did not provide area)
Artichokes	4	100%	2
Asian Veges	45	87%	14
Asparagus	22	77%	7 (1)
Beans	100	95%	23
Beetroot	16		10
Broccoli	417	50%	43
Brussell Sprouts	60	100%	3
Bunch Lines	1	100%	2
Cabbage	150	47%	25
Capsicum	98	64.5%	38 (1)
Carrots	1990	72.5%	27
Cauliflower	316	28.5%	42
Celery	85	76.5%	9
Chillies	6	70%	12 (1)
Chinese Radish	7	100%	1
Cos Lettuce	5	100%	2
Courgettes	3	100%	2

Cucumbers	34	56%	35
Egg Plant	57	96%	20
English Spinach	3	100%	6
Garlic	1	100%	3
Gourmet Lettuce	36	94%	4
Leeks	13	100%	3
Lettuce	470	17%	47
Mesclun	5	100%	1
Okra	2	100%	3
Onions	227	45%	21
Parsley	2	100%	3
Parsnips	19	88%	10
Peas	101		2
Pumpkin	481	42%	71 (1)
Radish	28		6
Rhubarb	11		4
Shallots	2	100%	3
Silver Beet	1.5		5
Spinach	6	86.5%	8
Spring Onion	22	97.6%	9
Squash	16	97%	8
Swede	3		6
Sweet Potato	6.2	64%	8
Sweet Corn	222	66%	25
Turnip	6		5
Zucchini	13	70%	16

3.2 Independent Evaluation of the effectiveness of the communications of the WA IDO.

In December 2008, an independent evaluation was carried out by Business Today for vegetablesWA, under the direction of the IDO management committee. Telephone surveys of a representative sample of key stakeholders were conducted. They investigated four keys areas. This study indicated acceptance of the IDO was extremely high with all stakeholders surveyed considering the role of IDO as a positive direction for the industry. The findings of the report are included in the appendix and available from vegetablesWA.

4.0 Projects and Programs

One of the key activities of the IDO program has been the leveraging of resources to address growers and industry priorities and the strategic plan. The WA IDO was ideally positioned to drive the industry strategic plan by seeking and managing these projects.

Some of the initiatives that were managed by the WA IDO included:

- Linking BMP's with vegetable growers (Good Practice Guide)
- Walking the walk on environmental management (Environmental Assurance Program)
- A web-based expert system for efficient vegetable irrigation on sand (Vegetable Industry Scheduling System)
- SMS weather service
- Increasing water and nutrient use efficiency in vegetable production on sandy soils
- Training needs analysis
- Skills passport
- Communication plan
- Innovation videos
- WA vegetable industry strategic plan
- PMA market investigation
- China investigative tour
- Young grower New Zealand study tour

4.1 Brief Outline of Projects/Programs

Linking BMP's (Good Practice) with Vegetable Growers. Funded by investment from both the Australian and State Governments, through the Natural Heritage Trust, the project is administered in the Swan Region by the Swan Catchment Council.

Project in brief: Under a bilateral agreement, this project addresses the three overarching objectives:

1. Biodiversity conservation
2. Sustainable use of natural resources
3. Community capacity building and institutional change

The first part of this project was to compile information on Best Management Practices (BMP's). This took the form of the vegetablesWA Good Practice Guide. The theme being that "any practice that helps us achieve a high yield of good quality produce, with minimal impact on the environment, is a Good Practice".

The second part of the project is to link BMP's with vegetable growers farm practices. A communications strategy to achieve this outcome involves the distribution and promotion of the Good Practice Guide to growers.

Walking the Walk on Environmental Management. This project is managed and supported by vegetablesWA and funded by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry (DAFF).

Project in brief: This project targets vegetable and potato growers who already have recognised food safety and Quality Assurance (QA) systems certification (through systems such as Freshcare and SQF). The aim is to use a vast array of information resources to work with growers, demonstrating their ability to satisfy environmental assurance criteria through economic and environmentally sustainable practice. We employed trained and experienced staff to source the relevant information and work one on one with growers, on their properties, assessing their practices, making

changes where appropriate and adopting appropriate record keeping to meet environmental assurance guidelines.

A web-based expert system for efficient vegetable irrigation on sand. Funded by the Government of Western Australia through a Premier's Water Foundation Grant; *"Fostering research and development that challenges boundaries and investigates innovative ways of managing our water resources"*.

Project in brief: The project was designed to allow growers to access improved management knowledge and so help reduce pressure on aquifers from over drawing and help protect aquifers against the effect of nutrient leaching.

The central output from this project is to provide Good Practice information in the form of a software/internet-based expert system capable of calculating real-time irrigation requirements for commercial vegetable growers. This project also allows for the development of a communications strategy to maximise the impact and adoption of this system.

SMS weather service. The SMS Weather Service was developed to help vegetable irrigators to lift efficiency through automatic messages to their mobile phones. Growers receive daily and localised evaporation, rainfall and other weather information. The system operates using data from the 21 live weather stations in the DAFWA network and includes Bureau of Meteorology weather forecasts.

Increasing water and nutrient use efficiency in vegetable production on sandy soils. This project is managed and supported by the Department of Agriculture and Food Western Australia (DAFWA), facilitated by Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL) in partnership with AUSVEG and is funded by the National Vegetable levy. The Australian Government provides matched funding for all HAL's R&D activities. The IDO program actively supported this project as it was a extremely high priority for growers and the need for industry support was critical.

Project in brief: The sustainability of horticulture on sandy soils with low capacities to retain water and fertilisers is questionable. Community and policy makers have an expectation that industries will be able to demonstrate they are using water efficiently with minimal impact on the environment. Adoption of soil moisture probe technology to schedule irrigation has been slow and the industry is perceived to be wasteful of water and a major source of nitrate leaching. This project works with growers, introducing them to soil moisture probe technology and facilitate its adoption for scheduling irrigation. Fertiliser programs which optimise crop recovery of applied fertiliser without compromising yields are also demonstrated on farm for adoption by growers.

Training Needs Analysis. This project is managed by vegetablesWA with funding from FarmBis WA. The consultancy company ARID performed the analysis and evaluation.

Project in brief: The Australian vegetable industry does not have a training culture. To address this Training Needs Analysis (TNA) were performed on a regional and

crop group level to determine industry training requirements, preferred training methods, and increase grower involvement.

Skills Passport. This project is managed by vegetablesWA with funding from Farm Training WA. The consultancy company ARID performed the project.

Project in brief: A key priority from the TNA review was staff training, recognition and retention. The Skills Passport program is a trial program to recognise staff skills, provide a tool that contains employment information and provide recognition for staff skills.

WA Communication Plan

The WA Communication plan is in line with the AUSVEG national communication strategy that has been produced and approved by the WA IDO management committee. The framework for this plan and initial outline was developed with the AUSVEG national communication officer.

There were three areas that were considerably developed in the new plan. These were 'key messages', visual identity and face to face communication. The face to face communication section of the plan utilises the powerful database resource that was developed in project VG98111. This resource will be further developed to allow the successful completion of the communication plan.

Technical transfer/ innovation video

Two vegetable industry innovation videos have been produced. The first focused on innovation and technology in the vegetable industry and the second on key areas in the industry strategic plan. Both videos were presented a number of times at the state dinner and awards night each dinner having 430 and 580 guests respectively.

There are been numerous request for copies of the videos to be used for export promotion, school awareness and government meetings. The videos were highly successful with the aim being: to promote the vegetable industry innovation and R&D developments those have had real on the ground outcomes for growers.

For example, the innovation video was produced and covered a range of industry development issues. The video was played 5 times in front of 580 guests at the vegetablesWA 60th anniversary dinner at the Burswood on the 31st May 2008. The video was used over the next year at any industry event. The video consisted of the following sections and format.

Theme	Strategic Areas	Caption
Market Development (4mins)	Consumers	1. Consumers (50 sec) 2. Health initiatives & benefits (50 sec)
	Markets	3. Product promotion differentiation (50 sec) 4. Export initiatives (30 sec) 5. Supply Chain (60 sec)
Sustainable Production (4 to 5 mins)	Competitiveness	6. Quality & Environmental Assurance (40 sec) 7. New Technologies (30 sec) 8. Biosecurity Threats (20 secs) 9. Best Practice (120 sec) 10. Climate Change (50 sec)

People & Leadership (3mins)	Leadership	11. Professional management (20 sec) 12. Industry Skills (10 sec)
	Information	13. Communication (30 secs) 14. Growers (90 secs) 15. Strengthening partnerships (30 sec)

WA vegetable industry strategic plan

A key function of the WA industry development program is to assist industry focus on the key issues that will address their priorities and concerns. A number of priorities, needs and reports were produced. This culminated in the production of the WA Vegetable and Potato Industry Strategic Plan. The plan was aligned to the national strategy and assisted industry in focusing its energies along a common path.

China Investigative Tour

The Australian Vegetable Industry is losing market share in a number of markets in Asia. One of the drivers for this loss is the increasing competition from China. To assist industry in gaining a better understand of China's current and future export plans and how this may impact on Australian vegetable exports the WA IDO along with a leading export visit China. The report produced for the Australian Vegetable Industry and the National Export R&D Committee gave a snapshot of the current situation in China.

The report outlined that it appears, that there are more reasons than just price for Asian importers to be shifting to Chinese produce. Currently Australian produce is quite competitive in terms of price when you consider quality and safety. The reason for this shift in thinking and buying practices toward Chinese produce include:

- Personal, family and business relationships in China;
- Culture and language advantages;
- Some Australian vegetable businesses have problems with consistency, availability and business relationships;
- Pressure on importers to provide cheaper produce because of economic pressures in Asia. At the moment buyers are accepting a downgrading in quality and safety to achieve sales and a lower price product;
- Australia is seen as a fragmented industry;
- Some Australian export produce coming from wholesale markets with 'domestic grade' produce resulting in low grade product in market;
- Some business is being done on short term opportunities instead of stable long term business relationships with a risk of containing an unacceptable chemical residue levels.

Young Grower New Zealand Study Tour

This was an AUSVEG initiative. It was coordinated by the WA IDO who also accompanied a group of young growers to New Zealand. The WAIDO provided the participants with the framework to understand the similarities between their objectives and those of vegetable growers in New Zealand. This enabled them to gain develop an appreciation of the opportunities presented by globalisation. This also provided the group members with opportunities to develop relationships with other growers off-farm, begin to experience a broader sense of the vegetable industry and encourage the development of strategic partnerships and alliances with a view to export potential.

5.0 Discussion

Over the ten years of the two IDO projects the vegetable industry has undergone significant changes. This has challenged growers, who historically growers have been farm-focused small business proprietors caught up in the supply and demand cycle of profitability with little time to look beyond the farm gate. Many of the changes have been imposed and called on growers to adjust their business practices. Beyond the farm gate, grower organisations and representatives have needed to respond differently to growers. Similarly industry stakeholders and research and industry development activities have also changed to meet the requirements of the new strategic imperatives.

What does the new environment look like compared to 5 and 10 years ago? The picture looks like this

- A marked reduction in the numbers of vegetable growers, largely due to urbanisation, retirement and new large volume direct supply chains,
- A greater number of large growers who have the capacity to supply large supply chains and adopt innovations and technology,
- An increase in government involvement in the industry around the issues of environment, sustainability and community,
- A greater emphasis on quality assurance and environmental issues, and
- Increased customer pressure to innovate and be a responsible industry.
- An increase in growers' responsibility to determine research and development priorities
- A greater need for leadership within the vegetable industry.
- An organised and well-funded vegetablesWA organisation that provides information to growers and an independent face for the vegetable industry.

The above changes, and others, have impacted on the culture and viability of the vegetable industry, on many levels. As is evidenced above the vegetable industry has adapted to change and in the process has also changed. This process continues as the vegetable industry continues to adjust and evolve as new imperatives and innovations reform the industry. The WA IDO program has been part of this process and has worked, in conjunction with other vegetable officers and representatives, to influence the outcome of some issues, and facilitate change in others. While it is difficult to reliably quantify this influence there are a number of programs and products that the industry have resourced to support growers. Collectively growers have been advised of changes as they occur and have been provided with valuable information and tools to assist them. This has encouraged the uptake of practices that allow them to be at the forefront of the changes. The incorporation of new strategies into existing business plans minimises disruption to growers core activities.

These programs and products include the following:

- Email service to 65% of WA vegetable growers providing timely flow of information.
- Comprehensive database to target information which includes crops grown, production information, staffing levels and contact details
- Good Practice Guide to provide sustainable technical information to growers

- Environmental Assurance (EA) program to demonstrate to growers, in easy to follow steps, the implementation of EA and associated issues.
- Training Needs Analysis for all regions and crop groups in WA to assist industry understand training requirements and developmental issues
- Daily SMS weather and irrigation information to assist with water and irrigation resource management
- Vegetable Irrigation Scheduling System (VISS). Web based program to assist with the daily and long term water resource management with producing an irrigated crop
- Skills Passport to assist with staff employment, retention and training
- Newsletter – information in a writing form to communicate with all industry members
- Website (www.vegetableswa.com.au) – information to assist industry covering environment, sustainability, resource management, good practice, meeting, workshops, etc
- Regional and research workshops, forum and tours to assist informing industry of industry development and innovation that may improve business performance

The above demonstrates some of the developments that have assisted industry to respond to the changing environment they operate within. The reviews undertaken of the industry development program strongly support the effectiveness and value the IDO position provides within the total R&D system and recommend they should be retained and strongly supported. Similarly, an independent review of the WA IDO (2004 & 2008) indicated acceptance of the IDO was extremely high with all stakeholders surveyed considering the role of IDO as a positive direction for the industry.

The program activities along with the industry feedback suggests that the process of change has commenced towards achieving the vision of the Australian Vegetable Industry Strategic Plan which states:

The Australian Vegetable Industry will be cohesive, market focussed, profitable and environmentally responsible; positioned as a serious competitor in the global food industry, with a reputation for quality.

6.0 Recommendations

- There are two important industry development activities that should be considered by industry.
 1. Field extension – As industry numbers contract there is increasing need to support industry members one-on-one or in small groups as the business demands are extremely specialised.
 2. Industry management – There are a number of industry development activities that are of a coordination, information and management nature that can only be successfully carried out by industry personnel.
- Consideration should be given to increasing efforts to target research information to growers who can directly benefit from the latest technologies as businesses increasingly become more specialised.
- A catalogue should be developed of the resources of the materials available to growers and stakeholders. This would enable ready access and should be available electronically. It has not been seen as important by industry but as time moves forward important resources are lost to growers. This project may be contracted out.
- Consideration should be given for the industry development program to work closely with vegetablesWA (WA VGA) as it is an advantage to have an industry body that works closely with growers supporting the R&D process and industry development.

7.0 Acknowledgments

- Western Australian and Australian vegetable growers and industry for their ongoing support.
- vegetablesWA (WA Vegetable Growers Association), executive, board and staff for their guidance and support.
- The WA IDO Management committee for the provision of supervision and direction in a supportive manner.
- The National IDO Network for providing camaraderie, understanding and a sense of cohesive national working environment.
- The Department of Agriculture and Food Western Australia for their support of the industry and the WA IDO position
- Horticulture Australia Limited staff for their assistance, understanding and support of the IDO role.
- AUSVEG for their support in coordinating a national program that assists the IDO role.

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9.0 Appendix

1	Communication Plan for the Western Australian Vegetable Industry Development Officer – Stage 2
2	Sample of Work Plan for the Western Australian Vegetable Industry Development Officer – Stage 2
3	Feedback form
4	WA VegeNEWS email example
5	Sample of Targeted communication
6	Sample of Management Meeting
7	Western Australian Vegetable Priorities September 2005
8	TNA – Kimberley Vegetable Growers
9	WA Vegetable and Potato Industry Strategic Plan 2008 and beyond
10	The final stages of the WA IDO program

**APPENDIX 1 Communication Plan for the Western
Australian Vegetable Industry Development Officer – stage 2**

**Western Australian Industry
Development Officer Project – Stage 2**

**Communication Strategy
2008/2009**

**Funded by AUSVEG/ Vegetable R&D levy and Horticulture Austria
Project VG04023**

**July 2004 – June 2009
January 2008 Review**

**Active Document
Last Update: 20th December 2007**

Prepared by David Ellement

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Executive Summary

The new revision of the communication plan takes stock of the latest AUSVEG communication review and subsequent strategy, developments within the WA vegetable industry and structure, and current industry capabilities.

The transfer of information, derived from research projects and other information sources, within and external to the Western Australian Vegetable Industry is vital to driving positive change, growth and prosperity in the industry. Likewise the identification and prioritisation of industry issues is essential to enabling research providers in Western Australia and Australia to generate relevant and effective outcomes from their projects.

This Communication plan describes how the Vegetable Industry Development Officer will liaise with Stakeholders in the industry to ensure the results of research and development, funded through Horticulture Australia Limited and AUSVEG from levies raised from growers and voluntary contributions and federal government contributions, achieve positive and measurable outcomes for the industry.

The Plan recognises the effectiveness of vegetablesWA (WA Vegetable Growers Association), Carrot Association for Research and Development (CARD), the Warren Cauliflower Group, the WA Greenhouse Group, Swan Catch Council and the Department of Agriculture and Food (WA) in enabling our Industry to work together effectively in identifying R&D issues and ultimately only quality projects from Western Australia are put to Horticulture Australia Ltd Industry Advisory Committees and other funding bodies for funding, with an ensuing high success rate.

Monitoring and evaluation will be critical to the ongoing development of this Plan.

This Plan does not seek to be prescriptive and does not presume to dictate how other communicators and information managers should communicate. It does however seek to describe a framework for communication that others in the industry might wish to collaborate in.

AUSVEG, the Australian vegetable peak body, is currently undertaking a review of industry development in the Australian vegetable industry. Once this review is published the WA IDO communication plan will be revised to reflect the aims of the national communication plan.

Introduction

The Industry Development Officer Project in Western Australia maintains a communication network to link growers, grower groups, private Research and Development (R&D) providers, agronomists, field officers, Western Australian Department of Agriculture, and other research agencies around Australia. The WA IDO also maintains linkages and working relationships with Industry Development Officers in other States, AUSVEG and Horticulture Australia Ltd to maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of the IDO roles.

Key roles of the Industry Development Officer were identified as being:

- To work closely with Western Australia's Vegetable Industry Research & Development Advisory Group Members and other stakeholders to ensure that projects undertaken by Western Australian research and development providers align with overall priorities set by industry and include well-developed strategies for the transfer of research results to industry.
- To maintain a database of vegetable growers and industry personnel and seek to improve the methods of message delivery to the target audience. The database to provide details that will allow relevant information to be targeted to industry participants.
- To work within the guidelines of the AUSVEG national vegetable industry strategic plan (vegeVISION 2020) and with particular attention to the formulation and implementation of further development strategies for the Western Australian industry.
- To organise, facilitate and manage, as required, workshops, seminars, meetings and events which will contribute to the transfer of R&D results and contribute to the progress of the Western Australian vegetable industry.
- To monitor and assess the effectiveness, over time, of all Western Australian and relevant National projects and report to the stakeholders.
- To communicate to industry through newsletters, emails, mail outs and other targeted media relevant information pertaining to the levy, research activities and information significant to the Western Australian vegetable industry.
- To facilitate the formation of 'action groups' to focus on producing outcomes in high priority areas for WA as identified in the AUSVEG national vegetable industry strategic plan to maximise returns in the industry..

Situation Analysis

The Western Australian vegetable industry adds \$542.5 million to the WA economy with a value of production of \$350 million.

The state has a strong grower's association (vegetablesWA) that is funded by growers through a compulsory fee for service. The association has three roles agri-political, research and development and communication.

The funding for activities in the industry come from two separate sources; one national and one state based. The national funding (AUSVEG Levy) is for research and development and is collected as 0.5% of gross sales and raises approximately five and half million dollars per annum. This money is matched by the federal government and funds approximately eleven million dollars of research each year. The state funding is for a range of activities from funding communication, the state grower association and research activities. The funding started in July 2005 and information on money collected and activities funded is limited due to the new nature of the process. The state 'fee for service' is two cents for containers up to 100kg and seven cents for containers over 101kg. This will raise approximately two hundred thousand dollars and mainly funds the grower association.

The WA Vegetable fee for service created a unique opportunity that does not exist in the other states in Australia. The cross benefits of the state and national programs will be maximised by the IDO program to achieve outcomes for the WA Vegetable industry.

The Western Australian vegetable industry is located across the whole state with eleven identifiable growing regions. These are: Kununurra, Broome, Carnarvon, Geraldton, Gingin, Wanneroo, Baldivis, Myalup, Manjimup, Margaret River and Albany with seven of these regions producing most of the product for the state.

The national research program has produced a National Communication strategy which aims to increase awareness, knowledge and uptake of research and development program and increase the link between the R&D program and the national vegetable levy. This state based communication plan takes advantage of the national communication strategy and builds on opportunities and issues in Western Australia.

Research

The IDO program was started in Western Australia in November 1999 and is currently into the second WA IDO project. A lot a communication research and material has developed during this time. To develop this communication plan the knowledge from the IDO program and the following research material was utilised.

List research information:

- State WA IDO review
- Fee for service poll and campaign
- Final report from project VG98111
- Yearly grower database survey

- National communication audit
- National communication survey (August 2006)

Problems/Opportunities

1. A general low utilisation of R&D outcomes in day to day vegetable production.
2. Some active growers with high utilisation of R&D outcomes in day to day vegetable production.
3. Medium awareness of the AUSVEG Levy funded research and development program.
4. Medium confusion on which projects/ activities are funded by the national vegetable levy and other sources.
5. Project's funding needs to be identified and many funding sources creating confusion (eg fee for service, Catchment councils, DAFF)
6. Inconsistent use of logos and brands in the industry creating confusion as to what is and isn't levy funded.
7. High level of apathy among vegetable growers reducing the amount of information sourced out.
8. Use well defined audience definition to target communications.
9. High level of information targeted to defined audience.
10. Lack of coordinated and consistent message release on R&D outcomes, however, it is improving.
11. Increased readability of current widely circulated vegetable industry publications (eg WA Grower and WA VegeLINK).
12. Face to face communications needs to be carefully managed due to distance.
13. Very difficult to have research information that is produced in eastern states communicated to the Western Australian industry.
14. Poor quality of grower workshop and meeting presentations.

Goal

The primary goal of the communication strategy is to increase the uptake and adoption of R&D project outcomes by communicating better with Western Australian vegetable growers.

Objectives

1. Improve grower awareness levels with the information received on AUSVEG levy funded projects.
 - a. Improve grower awareness by 5% on sources of information on the AUSVEG levy funded program.
 - b. Maintain and improve WA vegetable levy payer database with at least 90% of growers listed.
 - c. Increase the amount of relevant and useful information to growers.
 - d. Improve feedback mechanisms for growers to choose the way they want to receive information.
 - e. Ensure 70% of information released to growers is in an easy to understand format.
 - f. Maximise readability levels of communication materials by 40%
2. Reduce the level of apathy among the majority of vegetable growers which leads to a low activity level to seek out information.
 - a. Ensure communication mediums and messages are appropriate for the audience.
 - b. Encourage national communication program to improve quality of grower workshop and meeting presentations by researchers
 - c. Identify opinion leaders in the industry.
 - d. Move at least 5% of growers to more active communication participation, preferred growers in the innovative large group.
3. Improve knowledge that the AUSVEG Levy funds R&D program
 - a. Improve grower awareness by 2% that they pay a levy on vegetable sales that supports the National R&D program.
 - b. Insure there is minium confusion on which projects/ activities are funded by the national vegetable levy.
 - c. Improve grower recall of a vegetable R&D project by 5%
 - d. Maintain decision making expectation so that growers are not disappointed when project funding expectations are not meet (Need to improve awareness of when growers 'have a say' it is about the levy funded R&D process).
 - e. Improve awareness on the many positive outcomes derived from the AUSVEG Levy funded R&D program.
4. Increase access from eastern state R&D programs to Western Australian Growers.
 - a. Encourage R&D providers to hold workshops and provide relevant information to targeted growers in WA
 - b. Work with National Communication Strategy to ensure procedures are considerate of WA requirements

Key Messages

The broad key messages for the communication strategy are:

11. Your National Vegetable levy is a worthwhile investment.
12. Research & Development can directly benefit your business if you use the information.
13. The National Vegetable levy funds your Research & Development program.
14. Research and development aims to keep the vegetable industry globally competitive.
15. Research & Development investment benefits are better achieved as a group, by pooling resources
16. The vegetable industry Research & Development investment (National Vegetable Levy) is matched by the Australian Government through Horticulture Australia
17. Australian vegetable businesses have received benefit from the National Vegetable Research & Development program.
18. There is a lot of Research & Development information available and it is easy to access.
19. Growers make the decisions on where the National Vegetable Levy is spent. Those that pay have the say.
20. You can have your say.

Target Audiences

The key communication audience in the Western Australian Vegetable Industry have been identified and divided into four groups. The first group is the primary and most important target, the fourth group is the least important target.

Group 1	Group 2
Growers (Levy Payers) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Crop and size of crop* - Crop and interest groups - Regions - Industry Leaders - Size of business - Areas of interest - Markets (export, domestic, food services) - Industry representatives - Special interest groups - Preferred communication channels - Ethnicity or language* - Active/ Passive growers* - Opinion leaders* Rural suppliers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Level of industry involvement - Support level to growers (eg sales, advice) - Regional influence Consultants/ agronomists <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Level of industry involvement - Grower support level - Regional influence Department of Agriculture and Food WA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agreement to work together on a range of industry development issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Communication, technical transfer, strategic priorities 	Researchers Departments of Agriculture vegetablesWA AUSVEG Horticulture Australia Ltd Vegetable IDO's Other WA IDO's Industry associations (eg, KPIA, CGA etc.) Media Exporters Wholesalers/Packers Processors Seed companies Nurseries Retailers Other growers (non-levy payers)
Group 3	Group 4
Education/training organisations Government departments Machinery suppliers State Government Regulatory authorities Other horticultural industries Transport companies Machinery contractors	Banks/financial institutions/other Business support Federal Government Local Government Employment agencies (labour contractors) Community interest groups Rural communities Urban communities Other agricultural industries Consumers

Strategy

The communication activities for Western Australia are developed utilising target methods.

Communication Strategy	Audience Reached	Audience segment	Effect on audience segment	Effect on industry	Communication Resources Allocated
Visual identity	100%	All	Small to Medium	Small to Medium	10%
Face to face	20%	Opinion leaders Industry leaders Early innovators Significant growers	Very Large	Large	25%
Publications	90%	All	Medium	Small to Medium	10%
Direct Mail	2 to 80% (70%)	Required Target audience	Large	Medium	10%
Media	15%	All	Small	Small	5%
Electronic	35%	Early innovators Technology adopters Greenhouse growers Young growers	Large	Medium	10%
Personal communication	20%	Service industry	Large	Medium	20%
Other	10%	Knowledge seekers	Large	Small	10%

Table: Relative effect of the various communication activities on industry.

The following outlines the key areas for the overall strategy.

Visual identity (Branding)

The development of a national identity for the Australian vegetable industry will affect the way growers receive information and thus knowledge of research and development. The IDO needs to assist the delivery and development of the national identity for the vegetable industry.

To ensure WA vegetable growers and industry are able to gather on ground support and provide feedback to the national vegetable R&D program the awareness and public face of the IDO position and role needs to be communicated and held at a high level. To achieve this, the recognition levels of the IDO position and role within the national visual identity program needs to be highlighted.

Since the introduction of the WA Fee for Service the two visual identities have been delivered in a consistent method to ensure that the brands work cohesively together. This needs to be continually monitored so that they are clearly communicated and distinguishable for vegetable growers.

Face to Face

Face to face communication in WA is a critically important and necessary tool, however, it is a costly communication method due to distance for the WA IDO and growers. The importance of face to face communication is due to grower apathy and passive members in our industry as well as main opinion leaders in the industry not being involved in the R&D program.

Face to face communication is the most effective to achieve change and due to time and distance restrictions needs to be targeted. Therefore in Western Australia the strategy for face to face communication will be as follows:

- Focus on significant passive growers to create more involvement in industry.
- Focus on significant innovative growers that have the greatest effect on industry.

- Focus on opinion leaders, regional representatives and industry representatives to promote issues and knowledge throughout Western Australia.
- Focus on active grower groups and organisations (vegetablesWA, regional association, regional opinion leaders) that will enhance information flow.
- Workshops will be restricted to those issues of greatest importance to growers taking into consideration external environmental factors.
- Limited visits and tours of successful operations and practices.
- Annual schedule of regional meetings organised.

Note: Significant growers are producers that effect the industry by the businesses they operate. They can be large, niche operators, unique attributes, etc.

Publication

Publications are an important strategy because they are capable of reaching all industry members and convey information and messages that the industry is trying to deliver to the industry. The publication strategy includes:

- Maintain and improve current communication publications being WA Grower and WA VegeLINK.
- Take advantage of national publications including 'Vegetables Australia' and 'Good Fruit and Vegetables'.
- Ensure Western Australian grower issues and research is well represented in all national communication tools.
- Ensure the WA Grower receives all relevant R&D material in a format that can be utilised.
- Ensure case studies and testimonials featuring WA growers and researchers need to be developed and promoted on a national level.
- Maintain and enhance a photographic library of WA growers and vegetable images.

Direct Mail

Letters, email, newsletters and material are targeted on an as needs bases defined by the material to be sent to industry. The WA Vegetable Industry Database has been developed to achieve this objective. This development should continue and be maintained and the full capabilities of the industry database should be used to achieve this objective.

Media

To use media where appropriate to communicate national R&D outcomes and promote communication activities. A more defined media strategy needs to be developed with a national media strategy.

Electronic

Electronic communication reaches 25% of WA vegetable growers. These growers are generally the early innovators of the industry, young growers or greenhouse growers. The strategy is targeted and active. Email is the main method of communicating electronically through the WA IDO program.

The development of the vegetablesWA website provides another access point for electronic media. This promotes the need to improve the electronic details on the WA vegetable industry database.

The use of SMS messaging is another important tool for the industry and this will be developed and trialled in the life of this communication plan.

Personal communication

IDO network

- State horticultural network
- National vegetable network

vegetablesWA

Potato Growers Association of WA Ltd

Department of Agriculture and Food WA

Horticulture Australia Limited

Rural Suppliers

Other

Continue to develop and maintain grower resource library

Tools

WA Grower

WA VegeLINK

WA VegeNEWS (email Service)

vegetablesWA website

Direct mail

- Targeted
- Newsletters
- Information bulletins
- Reports

Face to face

Workshops

Internet

Priority setting flyer

Minor use update

Crop updates

Interest Groups

Official grower groups

Grower visits

Media (radio, print, television)

Timing

Activity	2008												2009					
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Visual identity																		
Integrate vegetable identity and vegetablesWA brand into communication activities																		
Continue WA Grower style to include national visual identity																		
Continue WA VegeLINK style to include national visual identity																		
Ensure branding for R&D throughout publications																		
Face to Face																		
Ongoing farm visits																		
Supply chain bus tour																		
Grower meetings/ workshops																		
State regional industry meetings																		
State R&D planning meetings																		
Grower groups																		
Publication																		
WA Grower																		
WA VegeLINK																		
Vegetables Australia																		
Good Fruit and Vegetables																		
Direct Mail																		
Crop Updates																		
Chemical Updates																		
Project newsletter																		
Meeting notifications																		
R&D information																		
Media																		
Ongoing																		
Electronic																		
WA VegeNEWS (Email)																		
Innovation video (Awards Diner)																		
Mobile phone SMS news																		
vegetablesWA Web news																		
Personal Communication																		
Ongoing																		

Key Deliverables

Key Deliverables	2008
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Evaluation

- Use national survey to review progress in two years.
- Undertake independent review of IDO project.
- Use action research model to continually provide feedback and guidance

APPENDIX 2 Sample of Work Plan for the Western Australian Vegetable Industry Development Officer – Stage 2

**Work Plan for the Western Australian
Vegetable Industry Development Officer
– Stage 2**

Work Plan		Due Date	Communication Plan
1	Project Establishment	1/07/2004	
2	Communication Plan and Work Plan Completed	31/12/2004	
3	Needs analysis of WA Vegetable Industry	1/07/2005	
4	WA Export Development Group	31/12/2005	
5	Information Directory / Database	3/07/2006	
6	Export Development Plan	29/12/2006	
7	Review of the needs analysis of WA vegetable industry	2/07/2007	
8	Review of Communication Plan	31/12/2007	
9	Project evaluation	1/07/2008	
10	Review export group plan	31/12/2008	
11			

WORKPLAN 1 Project Establishment

Objectives	Completion	Indicative Budget
Research Agreement Signed	✓	
Project Officer employed	✓	

WORKPLAN 2**Industry contacts established**

Objectives	Completion	Indicative Budget
Communication Plan Completed and review by key industry members **	✓	
Work Plan completed for the next six months	✓	
R&D Committee review new R&D priorities and take WA recommendations to National R&D meeting	✓	
Hold regional workshops		
1. Update on research findings and outcomes that are important to the growers in local region	✓	
2. Establish updated priorities for local industry	✓	
WA VegeLink Newsletter produced	✓	
HAL Final report library updated	✓	
Regular 'WA VegeNEWS' email service	✓	
Undertake Targeted R&D information mail outs as required	✓	
Assist with researchers organisation of R&D Tech Transfer meetings as appropriate.	✓	
Respond to grower enquiries	✓	
Continue to submit minor use priorities	✓	
Update WA Vegetable Industry database with grower and industry contact details	✓	
Attend and participate in appropriate industry meetings (eg CARD, Warren Cauliflower Improvement Group, Health Department 5 veg, 2 fruit strategy meetings, etc)	✓	
Work with Australian Vegetable Industry Development Officer Group on joint projects	✓	
Meet with Researchers to obtain research updates		
1. Assist with research direction	✓	
2. Plan communication activities	✓	
3. Brief R&D delegates and industry	✓	

WORKPLAN 3

Needs analysis of WA Vegetable Industry

Objectives	Completion	Indicative Budget
Review communication plan with information on the national communication survey and national communication plan. **	✓	
Hold meeting with new management group to include input from AUSVEG and develop work plan to reflect national initiatives **	✓	
Produce draft needs analysis which will be completed by work plan 4 **		
Work Plan completed for the next six months and draft 12 month plan produced	✓	
Hold regional workshops <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update on research findings and outcomes that are important to the growers in local region Establish updated priorities for local industry 	✓	
WA VegeLink Newsletter produced	✓	
HAL Final report library updated	✓	
Regular 'WA VegeNEWS' email service	✓	
Undertake Targeted R&D information mail outs as required	✓	
Assist with researchers organisation of R&D Tech Transfer meetings as appropriate.	✓	
Respond to grower enquiries	✓	
Continue to submit minor use priorities	✓	
Update WA Vegetable Industry database with grower and industry contact details	✓	
Attend and participate in appropriate industry meetings (eg CARD, Warren Cauliflower Improvement Group, Health Department 5 veg, 2 fruit strategy meetings, etc)	✓	
Work with Australian Vegetable Industry Development Officer Group on joint projects	✓	
Meet with Researchers to obtain research updates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist with research direction Plan communication activities Brief R&D delegates and industry 	✓	

WORKPLAN 4**Innovation Video**

Objectives	Completion	Indicative Budget
Produce industry technical transfer video for industry **	✓	
Project manage new project on web based irrigation management system **	✓	
Focus Group: Identify labour saving tools for selected vegetable products **	✓	
Form WA Chemical Group to address minor use issues and strategic chemical management **	✓	
Produce final WA needs analysis **	✓	
Work with industry to conduct National Vegetable conference. **	✓	
Involvement with national communication campaigns **	✓	
Work with National R&D system	✓	
Work Plan completed for the next six months and draft 12 month plan produced	✓	
Hold state regional workshop <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on research findings and outcomes • Establish updated priorities for local industry 	✓	
WA VegeLink Newsletter produced	✓	
HAL Final report library updated	✓	
Regular 'WA VegeNEWS' email service	✓	
Undertake Targeted R&D information mail outs as required	✓	
Assist with researchers organisation of R&D Tech Transfer meetings as appropriate.	✓	
Respond to grower enquiries	✓	
Update WA Vegetable Industry database with grower and industry contact details	✓	
Attend and participate in appropriate industry meetings (eg CARD, Warren Cauliflower Improvement Group, Greenhouse group, irrigation steering group, Waterwise, etc)	✓	
Work with Australian Vegetable Industry Development Officer Group on joint projects	✓	
Meet with Researchers to obtain research updates	✓	

** New activities.

WORKPLAN 5**Information Directory / Database**

Objectives	Completion
Refining industry database information to implement the activities outlined in the WA IDO communication plan. Expand industry database information to include opinion leaders, active/passive growers and ethnicity or language background. Information to be used to assist communication plan. Crop information to include hectares produced and staff details. **	
Review Industry Partnership Program strategies and their possible implementation in Western Australia. **	
Conclusion of grower Environmental Assurance certification trial with 5 growers certified. **	
Assist and work with new irrigation officer to establish the web based irrigation management system and other irrigation programs. **	
Work with AUSVEG communication manager to assist with organisation of National Vegetable conference. **	
Involvement with national communication campaigns and R&D activities. **	
Undertake IPDM/ chemical gap analysis. **	
Work Plan completed for the next six months and draft 12 month plan produced	

Hold regional workshops - Update on research findings and outcomes that are important to the growers in local region - Establish updated priorities for local industry	
WA VegeLink Newsletter produced	
HAL Final report library updated	
Regular 'WA VegeNEWS' email service	
Undertake Targeted R&D information mail outs as required	
Assist with researchers organisation of R&D Tech Transfer meetings as appropriate.	
Respond to grower enquiries	
Facilitation of strategic chemical management with WA Chemical Group.	
Update WA Vegetable Industry database with grower and industry contact details	
Attend and participate in appropriate industry meetings (eg CARD, Warren Cauliflower Improvement Group, etc)	
Work with the Vegetable Industry Development Officers, AUSVEG and Horticulture Australia on projects.	
Liaise with researchers to ensure project progress continues to meet with industry needs.	

** New activities.

Objectives	Completion	Indicative Budget
Form Export development working group to review IPP recommendation and start developing WA export development programs. Activities to build on IPP program. **		
Build a WA R&D/ IDO website with links to national initiatives through AUSVEG and HAL **		
Identify new focus group (eg lettuce harvester). **		
Project manage new project on web based irrigation management system and manage irrigation officer.		
Work Plan completed for the next six months and draft 12 month plan produced		
Hold regional workshops <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update on research findings and outcomes that are important to the growers in local region Establish updated priorities for local industry 		
WA VegeLink Newsletter produced		
HAL Final report library updated		
Regular 'WA VegeNEWS' email service		
Undertake Targeted R&D information mail outs as required		
Assist with researchers organisation of R&D Tech Transfer meetings as appropriate.		
Respond to grower enquiries		
Continue to submit minor use priorities		
Update WA Vegetable Industry database with grower and industry contact details		
Attend and participate in appropriate industry meetings (eg CARD, Warren Cauliflower Improvement Group, etc)		
Work with Australian Vegetable Industry Development Officer Group on joint projects		
Meet with Researchers to obtain research updates		

APPENDIX 3 Feedback Form

Take the time to update your details on the WA Vegetable Industry Database.

FAX or Mail

Fax: 08 9481 0024

Mail: 103 Outram Street WEST PERTH 6005

I grow vegetables that are included in the national vegetable levy: Yes / No

I am involved in the Vegetable Industry: Yes / No

If Yes, What is your role? _____

My Details are:

Surname: _____ First Name: _____

Business Name: _____

Mobile: _____ Phone: _____ Fax: _____

Email: _____

Address: _____

Post Code: _____

What is your Communication Preference (please rank 1, 2, 3)

- ☐ Email (WA VegeNEWS)
- ☐ Fax
- ☐ Mail

Areas of Interest (Please tick any area of interest)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Brassica vegetables | <input type="checkbox"/> Processing/ Value adding vegetables |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Leafy vegetables | <input type="checkbox"/> Export vegetables |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Root vegetables | <input type="checkbox"/> Greenhouse |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other vegetables | <input type="checkbox"/> Hydroponics |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cucurbit vegetables | <input type="checkbox"/> Quality assurance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Minor use chemicals | <input type="checkbox"/> Organics |

What Crops do you grow?

- | | | | |
|---|--|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Artichokes | <input type="checkbox"/> Celery | <input type="checkbox"/> Okra | <input type="checkbox"/> Sweet corn |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asian Vegetables | <input type="checkbox"/> Chillies | <input type="checkbox"/> Paprika | <input type="checkbox"/> Squash |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Beetroot | <input type="checkbox"/> Courgettes | <input type="checkbox"/> Parsley | <input type="checkbox"/> Swede |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Beans | <input type="checkbox"/> Cucurbits | <input type="checkbox"/> Parsnips | <input type="checkbox"/> Sweet Potato |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Broccoli | <input type="checkbox"/> Cucumbers | <input type="checkbox"/> Peas | <input type="checkbox"/> Turnip |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Brussel Sprouts | <input type="checkbox"/> Daikon | <input type="checkbox"/> Pumpkin | <input type="checkbox"/> Zucchini |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bunch Lines | <input type="checkbox"/> Egg plant | <input type="checkbox"/> Radish | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cabbage | <input type="checkbox"/> English Spinach | <input type="checkbox"/> Rhubarb | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Capsicum | <input type="checkbox"/> Leeks | <input type="checkbox"/> Shallots | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Carrots | <input type="checkbox"/> Lettuce | <input type="checkbox"/> Silver beet | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cauliflowers | <input type="checkbox"/> Mesclun | <input type="checkbox"/> Spring Onions | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |

APPENDIX 4 WA VegeNEWS email example

Sent: Wednesday, 12 November 2008 1:58 PM
Subject: WA VegeNEWS (1): Website News Update

WA Vegetable Industry News UPDATE.

- Egg Fruit Cat Update
Third edition of Eggfruit Caterpillar Update
For more information visit: www.vegetableswa.com.au In the news section.
- Action – Agricultural Clearance
10am Saturday 15th November (386 Mandogalup Rd Mandogolup)
For more information visit: www.vegetableswa.com.au In the news section.
- Centre pivot course
Opportunity to learn from the expertise of Craig Baillie and Steven Raine –
Irrigation Futures Cooperative Research Centre.
Harvey – November 17th and 18th
Vasse – November 19th and 20th
For more information visit: www.vegetableswa.com.au In the news section.
- Skills passport staff training
vegetablesWA in partnership with Farm Training WA are looking for 6 to 10 growers, who have a reasonable number of employees, to trial the 'Rural Skills Passport' in a pilot project for the industry. The Passport is a way of recognising the current skills and abilities of your staff and provides some ideas of the skills that need to be developed for that employee in the future. Contact Colin Holt on 0418 902 204 or David Ellement 9481 0834
- Thrip numbers on the rise
Early signs show that there is a potential for **VERY** high thrip numbers this season. Please ensure that you have reviewed your pest management programs. Anyone interested in IPM please contact Sonya Broughton or David Cousins from DAFWA (phone: 08 9368 4271)

Regards,

David Ellement

"Your National Vegetable levy at work."

David
Vegetable Industry Development Officer (WA)

Ellement

vegetablesWA

WA Vegetable Growers Association Inc.
103 Outram Street, WEST PERTH, WA, 6005

Mobile: 0408 941 318 Phone: 08 9481 0834 Fax: 08 9481 0024
Email: ellement@vegetableswa.com.au
Website: www.vegetableswa.com.au

This e-mail and any attachments are intended solely for the named addressee. Information in this e-mail may be confidential. If you are not the intended recipient, any use, disclosure or copying of this e-mail is prohibited. If you have received this e-mail in error, please notify the Western Australian Industry Development Officer immediately via e-mail at ellement@vegetableswa.com.au. It is the recipient's responsibility to examine this e-mail and any attachments for viruses. No responsibility is accepted by the sender or WA IDO for any damage arising from their receipt.

APPENDIX 5 Sample of Targeted communication



W.A. VEGETABLE GROWERS ASSOCIATION (Inc.)

David Ellement (WA Vegetable Industry Development Officer)

Mail: PO Box 498, West Perth, 6872 Office: 103 Outram Street, West Perth, W.A. 6005
Phone: (08) 9226 0244 Fax: (08) 9226 0344 Mobile: 0408 941 318 Email: ellement@iinet.net.au

WA IDO supported by the AUSVEG R&D Levy and the Commonwealth Government through HAL.



Know-how for Horticulture™

CARROT MINOR USE UPDATE

Wednesday, 1 June 2005

COMPLETED – AUSVEG Minor Use Permits

Crop	Problem	Product	Active Constituent	Permit number	Permit expires
Carrots	Sclerotinia rot	Sumisclex	procymidone	PER8054	31/12/2006

APPLIED – Awaiting response from APVMA

Crop	Problem	Product	Active Constituent	Status
Carrots	Sclerotinia, Alternaria, Rhizoctonia	Amistar	azoxystrobin	APVMA assessing application
Carrot	Not specified	Endosulfan	endosulfan	APVMA finalising new label
Carrots	Alternaria radicina (Black rot)	Rovral Aquaflo or Liquid	iprodione	APVMA assessing application
Carrot	weeds, especially fumitory	Gesagard	prometryn	Permit renewal applied for

IN PROGRESS – Industry collecting application information

Crop	Problem	Product	Active Constituent	Status
Carrots	Nematodes	Furadan	carbofuran	Trials in progress
Carrots	weeds	Afalon Flowable	linuron	Trials in progress
Carrots	Fleabane	Ramrod	propachlor	Trials in progress

Requested Already Registered

Crop	Problem	Product	Active Constituent
Carrots	Cavity rot	Ridomil 50G	metalaxyl

DEFERRED – Grower requests that have been deffered

Crop	Problem	Product	Active Constituent	Status
Carrots	Sclerotina	Terraclor	quintozene	Deferred
Carrots	Specific problem weeds	Carrotex or Dosanex	metoxoron	Deferred
Carrots	Nermatodes	Rugby	Cadusafos	Deferred
Carrots	Nematodes	Mocap	ethoprophos	Deferred
Carrots	Weed	Kerosene	Not specified	Deferred

REJECTED and STOPPED Permits Applications

Crop	Problem	Product	Active Constituent	Status
Carrots	Growth retardant	Maelic hydrazide	maelic hydrazide	Stopped
Carrots	Fleabane	Lontrel	clopyralid	Stopped due to crop damage

APPENDIX 6 Sample of Management Meeting

WA IDO Management Meeting

Location: Horticulture House
Time: 4:00 to 6:00pm
Date: Friday, 6 June 2008

Attendance:

David Anderson (vegetablesWA President) (AUSVEG Board Member)
Maureen Dobra (vegetablesWA Vice President)
Jim Trandos (AUSVEG Board Member)
Figaro Natoli (Grower, vegetablesWA) – Apologies
Clive Stevens (Grower, vegetablesWA)
David Ellement (Industry Development Officer – WA)

ADENDA

- Introduction
- WA IDO Update on previous twelve months activities
 - Environmental Assurance
 - BMP Project
 - Irrigation projects
 - Strategic Plan
 - Training Needs Analysis
 - Workplan progress and Issues
 - Innovation video
 - Retail Tour
 - Chicken Manure
- National development review, project management and organization structures.
- Review milestone and progress on activities
- Discuss and develop workplan for next 6 and 12 months
 - Irrigation Officer
 - Extension Officer
 - State industry extension roadshow
 - WA IDO Project review
 - Harvesting developments (Broccoli)
 - Supply Chain Tour 2 – Vicount plastics and processing
 - Website management

- Write new Industry development proposal
- National Activities and Communication
 - PMA Tour
 - LOTE Growers
 - National responsibilities
- National IDO issues
- Performance and Salary Review
- Other issues

APPENDIX 7 Western Australian Vegetable Priorities September 2005

Western Australia Vegetable Priorities September 2005

Outcomes from the WA Vegetable Industry Regional Workshop
Held on: 12th August 2005

Research & Development Issues	Score
Soil Health	15
Increase compliance costs and increasing compliance obligations	12
Value adding (Product / Industry)	10
Lettuce aphid quarantine	10
Environveg (Environmental management/ system/ assurance/ compliance)	10
New export market development (Collapse of cauliflower export industry)	9
Chemical registration (Minor use review and new committee with WA IDO.)	8
Supply chain involvement (Need to investigate value adding to product/ packaging/ self market/ involvement in supply chain)	6
GM products	6
IPM development (IPM consultant adding value to greenhouse growers. Less chemical and using predators)	4
White blister rust management	4
Equipment development (labour - available and cost, competing with low cost countries, etc)	3
Irrigation and scheduling improvement (Water costs and government compliance)	2
Cool Chain development and information transfer	1
Business management issues and training course	0
Silver leaf white fly management	0

General WA Vegetable Industry Priorities

Market Development

- Opportunities and requirements to supply new markets via international supply chains.
- Niche markets – product markets / differentiation. Develop niche markets, new products and/or product differentiation
- New Market Development.
 - New technology development with cauliflowers has opened opportunities to new markets through increase in product shelf life. Investigate Middle East markets for cauliflower, broccoli and carrot products.
- Understanding customer requirements.
 - Develop an improved understanding of customer requirements and determine domestic and export market segment opportunities and growth areas.

Sustainability

- Chemical information
 - Access to information, resistance, application technology, application methods, new chemical notification, minor use updates.
 - “Video” using chemicals correctly. (Best spray practice; Getting the most out of our spray unit)
- Chemical permits and control program for Western flower thrips
 - Seeking substitute to the use of current chemical practices for lettuce. The registration of Nitifol for Western Flower Thrips (WFT) on lettuce at early stage of production or other chemical to control WFT on young crop.
- Developing and communicating strategies for controlling virus diseases of cucurbits

Supply Chain Development

- Determine the most effective supply chain structures in the vegetable industry (domestic and export).
- Provide industry with a detailed analysis of the supply chain cost structure.
- Equipment Development / Labour saving / Mechanical harvesting
 - Labour availability and improving farm efficiency can be addressed by automation and harvester development.

Industry communication

- Knowledge collection, transfer and dissemination.

APPENDIX 8 TNA – Kimberley Vegetable Growers



KIMBERLEY VEGETABLES GROWERS

TRAINING NEEDS ANALYSIS

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SUMMARY

This project has been undertaken to identify learning or training that would support Kimberley vegetable growers to be more effective and / or efficient within their enterprise and industry.

The Kimberley growers grow a diverse range of produce, with very few of them relying on vegetables as their sole source of income. The growers themselves are also very diverse, but due the pioneering nature of the industry in this region there are some common characteristics that most of them share:

- They are generally well organised.
- They have well developed management and operational skills.
- They are self directed, independent learners.
- They have fairly well developed independent research skills.

This project was undertaken for Vegetables WA, the overall industry body, with the aim of giving some ‘best bet’ training topics and delivery methods that will meet the learning and development needs of the members.

Recommendations

Table 1 outlines the findings of the training needs analysis.

While the table gives some hierarchy of importance of subject areas, Vegetables WA should also consider other factors when co-ordinating the delivery of training. These factors could include:

- The priority of the training topic (how important is it?).
- Ease of delivering the information (can the knowledge or skill be easily transferred?).
- Amount of resources and funding required (is it costly to delivery the training and how will it be funded?).
- Availability of skills and knowledge within or external to the group to provide the training (is the expertise readily available?).
- Method of engagement or training delivery that meets the training objectives.

Training Methods

As stated earlier the vegetables growers of the Kimberley are quite self directed, independent learners. As they often have unusual (and tropical) crops, southern WA information sources are not highly regarded. Currently there main ways of gathering information and/or skills are:

- many accessed Qld DPI for advice.
- one accessed NT DPI, others searched.
- the internet for relevant international information.
- reading relevant publications often sourced from interstate (Queensland) and sometime internationally.

- attending local, specialised training courses when offered. Programs mentioned were provided by Jabiru Human Resource Services and Resource Consulting Services, both Queensland based training providers.

These methods of gathering information will continue to be important and future information/skill transfer should consider utilising these methods. Making credible information available should be a key strategy for learning.

To facilitate this process the following should be considered:

- Credible information on a website and links to other credible information sources.
- Grower magazines with articles and information relevant to the audience.
- Personal communication from expert speakers in short sessions delivered within the region.

The group also expressed a desire for some sort of group interaction with other growers and/or experts. This could be delivered in a number of ways:

- Local events that facilitates grower interaction using visiting specialists as a catalyst for attendance.
- Study tours with a theme that is relevant and the timing is at the right time of the year, with March – April possibly the best time.

There was also a strong request for a local advisor, horticultural extensionist or industry development officer to provide the following services:

- searcher/conduit/interpreter of information.
- Seek out and organise relevant specialists for local interactions.
- Researching appropriate technologies and future possibilities.
- Provide a service to help growers problem solve enterprise and industry issues.

Recommended Training Subject Areas

High Priority	
Produce value adding	The focus was not really on what to do, but more on the lines of support in developing or accessing technical solutions to assist in value adding e.g. pulping equipment on the right scale for these crops? Also support in developing a shared or community value adding process e.g. a community pulping plant.
Farm Safe	Guidelines or a checklist to address any issues as a result of Farm-safe audits
Scanning for opportunities	There are two sides to this topics: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Developing information and research abilities among growers to identify and assess opportunities relating to mechanisation information, new crop and varieties and potential new industries. 2. An external group, individual or source, researching and facilitating information exchange to improve grower access to relevant information (in the past this was done by Industry development officers and the department of Agriculture and Food).
Marketing	Keeping up with market trends and understanding markets for improved matching of production to demand. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Developing skills in growers skills to do their own market research. 2. Facilitating information exchange by providing expert opinions to highlight future market trends (given the demand on grower's time this approach may provide greater outcomes).
Medium Priority	
Pest and pathogen identification and management	Most growers would prefer to have access to expert pathology and pest management advice. However due to geographical isolation and the current low levels of support from government agencies (like the WA Department of Agriculture and Food), it is probably important that the growers themselves develop these skills and knowledge.
People Management	Understanding the legal requirement of employing staff and the new workplace laws. Understanding Occupational Health & Safety legislation and legal requirements.
General Business Management	There was limited interest from growers in learning more on farm and business planning, financial management, risk management or succession planning as much of this expertise is sourced from specialists such as accountants and financial planners. However external advisors, to the business identified this as important. Perhaps the approach should be to increase awareness that these business management concepts are important. In essence to build the relevancy of these courses.
Personal Attributes	Personal health and looking after themselves within the business including handling stress, conflict and pressure positively.
Low Priority	
Production management	Knowledge on seeds and growing technology tends to come directly from commercial suppliers and so is seen as a low priority for group learning.
People management	Dealing with staff turnover and casual employees.
Natural Resource Management	Environmental Management and EMS. Nutrient conservation.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

This project has been undertaken to identify learning or training that would make vegetable growers in the Kimberley region of WA more effective and / or efficient. As part of this project, suggested training priorities and alternative methods of delivery have been identified and recommended.

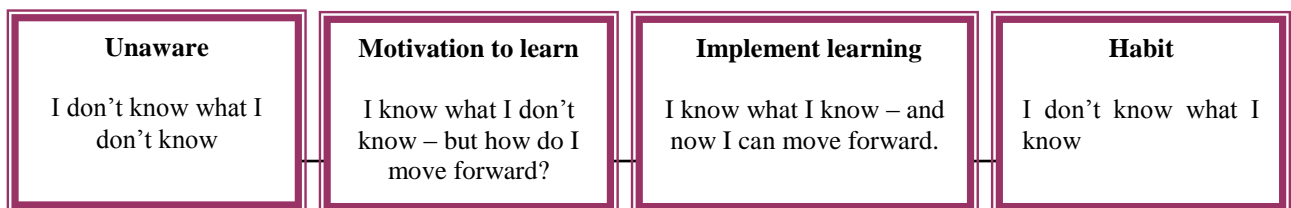
Background to the Project

This Training Needs Analysis examines the learning and development needs of individuals and the Kimberley Growers as a whole. The aim is to ensure that training addresses existing issues and is tailored to the growers needs and objectives. Consultants were engaged to identify the type and level of training required; and to analyse the best method of delivery.

To ensure a cycle of continuous improvement, it is important that training is undertaken on a regular basis to keep up to date with industry developments, to take advantage of emerging trends, and to positively react to consumer and market trends.

Following on from the needs analysis is the implementation of training to provide new skills and heighten awareness and understanding of the skills that growers already have. Once these skills are used repeatedly and become common practice, growers will forget that they actually have these skills as they become habits.

The idea is to continue this cycle of discovering learning and development needs, with the aim of spending most time in the 'motivation to learn' and 'implementation of learning' areas. This keeps growers aware of the need to continually learn and keep abreast of industry changes by seeking information from a variety of sources.



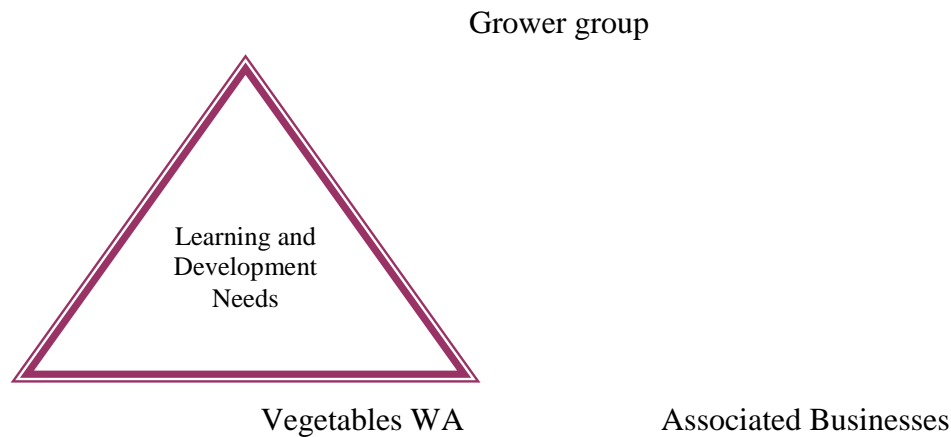
Methodology

A range of methods have been used to collect information regarding the learning and development needs from the Kimberley growers.

A written survey was posted or emailed to all growers as a means of collecting information and alerting growers to the project. Collection was via fax, post or an online survey.

Due to the relatively small number of growers in the Kimberley, a high percentage were contacted to be interviewed. The survey provided a basic framework for discussions, although the interviews were of an informal nature so that other topics could be explored, providing richness to the results.

Selected businesses associated with the industry were approached and interviewed regarding their perceptions of the learning and development needs of the grower group. Where possible, information was sourced from supermarkets, marketing agents, agronomists and other key players. This gave an outside perspective of training and development needs and provided a triangulation of responses.



Key Findings

Trends identified through the survey process

With a relatively low response number (2 respondents of 12 growers), the survey results (appendix 1) can not fully be relied upon to indicate grower training needs. However it does compliment the information gathered through the interview process.

Some training needs highlighted in the survey results are:

Marketing

- Responding to market trends.
- Value adding.

Production Management

- Integrated management.

People Management

- Dealing with staff turnover and casual employees.
- Occupational health and safety.
- Leadership skills.

Natural Resource Management

- Environmental Management and EMS.
- Nutrient conservation.

Personal Attributes

- Handling stress, conflict and pressure positively.

Findings from the interview process

A number of growers generously gave up their time to be interviewed. This process highlighted the wide diversity of growers, the different produce grown and the difference in scale of production.

With so few growers and the diversity of enterprises, and different levels of experience and knowledge, common priorities in training and learning needs was a little more difficult to identify. However there was some indication of priorities for training.

General Business Management

There was limited interest in learning more on farm and business planning, financial management, risk management or succession planning. Much of this expertise is sourced from specialists such as accountants and financial planners.

Marketing

Keeping up with market trends for improved matching of production to demand.

- Is it a question of giving the growers skills to do their own market research or is the approach more of periodically providing an expert's view to highlight future trends (given the demand on grower's time the latter option may provide greater outcomes).

There was a great deal of interest in value adding

- The focus was not really on what to do, but more on the lines of support in developing or accessing technical solutions to assist in value adding e.g. pulping equipment on the right scale for these crops?
- Also support in developing a shared or community value adding process e.g. a community pulping plant.

Production Management

Knowledge on seeds and growing technology tends to come directly from commercial suppliers and so is seen as a low priority for group learning.

There was limited interest in learning more on pest and pathogen management. However they would prefer access to expert pathology and pest management advice.

Keeping up to date Mechanisation information, new crop and varieties, potential new industries and opportunities.

People Management

Occupational health and safety

- Farm-safe have recently completed some on-farm safety audits with the Kimberley vegetable growers. The growers now require some guidelines or a checklist to address any issues raised.

Employment conditions and Workchoice

- The topics that should be covered in this section include pay rates, general employment conditions and discussing options with employees. A guide for pay and conditions specific to horticulture would be a useful tool.

Growers currently (or historically) obtain most of their information through the following avenues:

Important sources:

- Seed merchants and commercial suppliers.
- Industry magazines such as Vegetables Australia magazine, 'The Furrow' - a Vanderfield brochure (local John Deere dealership), rural newspapers, PROFI, a UK/European machinery, plant, equipment magazine.
- Local TAFE which meets obligatory training requirements for horticultural workers including forklift driving and ChemCert.
- The internet is a very important source.
- An Industry Development Officer working in Kununurra (KPIA or Vegetables Australia) (no longer available).
- Personal contact with industry experts such as Terry Hill (DAFWA), Queensland DPI, NT DPI Staff, other growers.

Other sources

- Department of Agriculture and Food field days (less common now).
- Conferences and events in Queensland and Perth.
- On farm experimentation.

The growers were asked about ways they would prefer to learn or receive information in the future. The following is a summary of the responses

A good Horticultural Extension/Industry Development Officer based in the region:

- As an information broker.
- To assist with face to face learning.
- To assist with problem solving.
- To organise workshops.

Conferences/study tours

- Need to be at the right time of the year, probably March and April.
- District/interstate study tours (facilitates the exchange of information among growers). One idea was 'opportunity matching' study tours. For example Kununurra lettuce growers could visit drought stricken lettuce growers in New South Wales to look at ways they might be able to support each other. This could include Kununurra growers stepping in quickly to meet market demand when drought stricken farmers couldn't. They would need equipment lending arrangements.
- International study tours and Expos.

Findings from Associated Businesses and Advisors

Due to the relative infancy of the industry in the region, the climatic conditions experienced and the challenges with pests and pathogens, the Kimberly growers are seen as dynamic, highly skilled and successful.

Ideas for training gained from interviewing associated business and advisors include:

- Business and succession planning – succession planning will become more important as these first generation farmers near retirement or exit from the industry (next 4 to 5 years).
- Financial planning with a focus on cash flow budgeting, asset and machinery costs and replacement, and financial decision making.
- Research and decision making skills for crop and rotational opportunities for their business.
- Personal health and looking after themselves within the business.
- Skills on how to plan, undertake and evaluate on- farm research.
- Increased knowledge of pest and disease identification and skills to manage the risks and outbreaks including Integrated Pest Management.

Unexpected Findings – other than training needs

In spite of the remoteness of the growing region (from Perth) some growers do not feel isolated from information and training opportunities. Many of them have ‘trained’ themselves to find and access the relevant information that they need.

There is an uncertainty surrounding the development of Ord Stage II. As a result, future planning and possible expansion is restricted.

There were a couple of comments by growers not getting much value for their vegetable levee.





David Hanlon from Rural Consulting Services (Qld) has run courses in Kununurra previously and were well received. The courses helped growers think outside the square and to think a bit differently about their businesses.

Jabiru Human Resource Services (QLD) is another regional training provider and recently delivered a Myers-Briggs Type Indicator workshop. They have been working in the area for 10 years and only require a phone call to set up the delivery of any of their courses.

FarmBis Supported Training

Activities supported under FarmBis must focus on enhancing the capacity and skills of primary producers to manage their business, natural and human resources. Such activities include strategic natural resources management, business and financial planning, business performance benchmarking, leadership development, quality assurance, whole enterprise management etc.

The following table outlines the core farm business administration/management skills that FarmBis may support.

Course Code	Course Name	
Group 1.	People Management	
101.	Human resource workplace management, development and change management (including personal development, time and stress management)	
102.	Retirement and succession	
103.	Industrial relations	
104.	Occupational health and safety	
105.	Negotiation and conflict resolution	
106.	Communication, selling, meeting and decision making skills	
107.	Leadership	
108.	Skills analysis, needs analysis, competency assessment	
199.	Other human capital management.	
Group 2.	Financial Management	
201.	Taxation, tax reform	
202.	Book keeping and reconciliation	
203.	Financial statements, profit and loss, gross margins, cash flow and budgeting	
204.	Loans, mortgages, leverage and leasing	
205.	Insurance and funds management (including superannuation and investment)	
206.	Financial risk management	
299.	Other financial management	
Group 3.	General Business Management	
300.	Information technology and its application	
301.	Business and systems analysis	
302.	Purchasing and inventory management, input/output analysis	
303.	Strategic planning, change and business risk management, scenario planning (includes GMO's, fire, flood, climatic risk)	
304.	Business/project/holistic/whole "farm" planning	
305.	Laws, contracts, licensing	
306.	Quality Assurance, HACCP, Total Quality Management	
307.	Benchmarking	
399.	Other general business management.	
Group 4.	Marketing	

401.	Supply chain management
402.	Market access requirements and market planning
403.	Market/consumer research and analysis
404.	Value addition/product modification/new product development
405.	Market competitiveness
406.	Consumer and whole of chain client interaction, exporting
499.	Other marketing.
Group 5.	Production Management 
501.	Integration of new techniques/industries for sustainable production (includes organic farming, crop rotations, grazing practices/systems, greenhouse, farm forestry)
502.	Integrated management (includes fisheries, other industries)
503.	Risk management in relation to production systems (includes pastures, crops, livestock and other produce)
504.	Managing plant, animal, fish and insect resources in production
505.	Managing pests and pathogens (includes IPM, weeds, disease, feral pests)
506.	Plant / animal nutrition
599.	Other production management.

All courses are mapped to RTE03 Rural Production or SF104 Seafood Industry, Level 4 competencies or above. (To be signed off by the State Planning Group.)

Activities that *will not* be supported under the program include:

- Conferences and study tours;
- On-going secondary and tertiary education;
- The provision of professional advice;
- Stand-alone technical/operational training activities;
- Specific training activities that are required to be undertaken to satisfy Government regulatory and statutory obligations; and
- Training activities that are cross subsidised by other government programs or agencies.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Success in your Industry Survey Results – online survey

Number of responses = 2

Q1. General Business Management

	1 low priority	2	3	4 high priority
Whole farm planning and management	0	0	2	0
Strategic planning	0	1	1	0
Business planning	0	1	1	0
Risk management	0	0	2	0
Quality Assurance	1	0	1	0
Laws, legislation, licensing	1	0	0	1
Succession planning	1	1	0	0
Managing business relationships	0	1	1	0
Co-operatives	0	1	1	0
Company Director training	0	2	0	0

Q2. Marketing

	1 low priority	2	3	4 high priority
Supply chain marketing	0	1	0	1
Market access requirements	0	1	0	1
Market / consumer research and analysis	0	0	2	0
Negotiation with supermarkets	0	1	1	0
Negotiation with overseas buyers	1	1	0	0
Innovation in exporting and marketing	0	1	1	0
Global awareness	0	2	0	0
Niche marketing	0	0	2	0
Responding to marketing trends	0	0	1	1
Value adding	0	0	1	1

Q3. Production Management

	1 low priority	2	3	4 high priority
New technologies and processes	0	1	1	0
Integrated management	0	0	1	1
Disease identification	0	1	1	0
Managing pests and pathogens	1	0	1	0
Nutrition and shelf life effects	0	1	1	0
Organic management	0	1	0	1
Genetics and GMO's	1	1	0	0
New varieties - integration into existing systems	0	2	0	0
Rotation management of new varieties	0	0	2	0
Weed control	0	0	2	0

Q4. People Management

	1 low priority	2	3	4 high priority
Dealing with staff turnover and casual employees	0	0	1	1
Self employing or outsourcing to contractors	0	0	2	0
Training new employees	0	2	0	0
Compliance with the law	0	0	2	0
Work Safe and Workers Compensation	0	1	1	0
Communication and decision making skills	0	0	2	0
Negotiation and Conflict Resolution	0	1	1	0
Occupational Health and Safety	0	0	1	1
Stress management	1	0	1	0
Leadership Skills	0	0	1	1

Q5. Natural Resource Management

	1 low priority	2	3	4 high priority
Environmental Management and EMS	0	0	1	1
Water quality and management	0	0	2	0
Soil Health	0	1	0	0
Nutrient Conservation	0	0	1	1

Q6. Financial Management

	1 low priority	2	3	4 high priority
Financial statements, profit and loss	1	1	0	0
Book- keeping and reconciliation	0	2	0	0
Computerised book- keeping	1	0	1	0
E-Commerce	0	1	0	1
Cash flow budgeting	1	0	1	0
Insurance	1	1	0	0
Taxation	1	0	1	0
Financial Risk Management	0	1	1	0

Q7. Personal Attributes

	1 low priority	2	3	4 high priority
Planning how to achieve my personal goals	1	0	1	0
Understanding myself and other people	0	1	1	0
Handling stress, conflict and pressure positively	0	0	1	1
Contributing positively to group goals	0	1	0	1
Effective meeting skills	0	1	1	0
Balancing work and home life	0	1	0	1
Developing positive work relationships	1	1	0	0
Developing leadership skills	0	1	1	0

APPENDIX 9 WA Vegetable and Potato Industry Strategic Plan 2008 and beyond

Planning for the Future

WA Vegetable and Potato Industry Strategic Plan – 2008 and beyond

To assist growers, industry and government in the development of a profitable, sustainable, viable vegetable industry. There are four steps to the plan to ensure we are working towards a common purpose.

These include:

- > Vision
- > Goals
- > Strategies
- > Actions

APPENDIX 10. The Final Stages of the WA IDO Program.

Georgia Thomas, Program Manager, vegetablesWA

The WA IDO of 10 years, David Ellement, resigned in November 2008. As such, David completed this Final Report to clearly describe his activities and ensure that there was no major loss of information in the transition. As it was, I was employed in mid-February and spent around 4 months winding down the IDO project and bringing myself up-to-speed with the vegetable industry in WA.

The following activities were carried out in accordance with the objectives of the WA IDO project and its milestones.

WA IDO Activities – The Final Four Months

Vegelink Newsletter:

2 more issues of the Vegelink Newsletter were completed and included in the WA Grower magazine that is distributed to all vegetable growers in Western Australia. The editorial section of Vegelink focused on advising growers of the changes in staff and the impending changes to the delivery of Industry Development services nationally (see attached).

Grower Visits:

The Program Manager and the Field/Extension Officer continued to roll out research findings and other relevant information to growers through regular face to face meetings on-farm. There were around 6-10 visits made per week in different growing regions. Additionally, growers were quizzed about their thoughts toward R&D priorities and any other relevant industry issues.

R&D Priorities

No R&D Priorities were reported to HAL from vWA as we did not receive any suggestions for novel research. However, growers reported a need for continued translation of existing research for local use and an improved marketing and promotion program on behalf of industry. vWA has taken these issues on board and is responding with relevant projects and activities accordingly.

Grower Meetings/Field Days:

The Program Manager and Field/Extension Officer were able to be involved in various grower meetings and field days from February to June. These activities were in liaison with existing projects and partners, such as the Department of Agriculture and Food, Caring for Our Country demonstration sites, rolling out the Vegetable Irrigation Scheduling System, the Skills Diary project and others.

Participation in these activities has ensured that the vWA network and database have been maintained and improved in line with requirements of the WA IDO project.

WA Vegetable Industry Database

All staff at vegetablesWA have contributed to the maintenance of information in the WA vegetable industry database since David's departure in November 2008. As such, this has remained a highly useful resource for the organisation.

A review of the WA vegetable industry database and IT systems in the vegetablesWA office was conducted in March 2009. While the information maintained in the organisation is of a very high standard, there is a need to upgrade systems to allow better functionality for future use.

The decision was made to upgrade the office servers and database program. This has been funded internally. The new server is going to be integrated in August 2009 and the database system will be upgraded subsequently.

Communication Planning

WA IDO Communication Strategy activities were carried out for the last 4 months of the project, including, face to face, publications, direct mail, media, electronic and personal communication.

In light of the finalization of the IDO program on June 30th 2009, a new Communication Strategy was developed over the last few months of the project to ensure that growers would continue to receive a high level of service from vegetablesWA. The new strategy is inclusive of the activities at Horticulture House (vegetablesWA and Potato Growers Association) and will flow on from the previous strategy reported against by David in this Final Report.

IAG Meeting in Sydney

In line with the requirements of the WA IDO role, I attended and provided secretariat services for the Consumer and Market IAG in Sydney in March. This was an excellent networking and learning opportunity.



Allow me to introduce myself...

My name is Georgia Thomas and I am a Perth girl who loves food and everything to do with it. After finishing my degree in Natural Resource Management at UWA and working for 6 years at the Department of Agriculture and Food I decided to move on from WA and have spent the last three and a half years living and working in London while travelling extensively through Europe. It's a great pleasure to be back in Perth and its sunshine and warmth and I am thrilled to be working with the Western Australian vegetable industry to face the challenges that await.

There is now less than 6 months left of Horticulture Australia's Industry Development Officer project, and in a short time a new format will be upon us. As I begin to orientate myself in the new role of Program Manager, I will be looking for the best ways to continue to provide support and information to all our growers throughout Western Australia.

In maintaining the high standards of this organisation we are aware that communication is the key. My team will be continuously investigating the best ways to communicate relevant information to growers and at the same time encouraging you to communicate with us. Our new Field Officer Tim Aldridge is committed to giving you his time and bringing your ideas, thoughts and issues back to the office so we can do our best to meet your needs. We will also be assessing new technologies and methods to keep the communication flow moving and keep you involved.

Marketing and promotion is as important as ever in these difficult economic times. We need to keep positive messages about the benefits of vegetables high in consumers' minds as they purchase their weekly groceries with ever-tighter funds. I will be working with various partners to put together strategic marketing plans for both Western Potatoes Pty Ltd and vegetablesWA, with emphasis on collaboration and efficiency.

Finally, please feel free to get in touch with comments, suggestions and questions. Over the next few months I will be working hard to secure funds and develop strategic plans of action. Additionally I will be aiming to speak to as many key contacts and industry stakeholders as possible. As such, I look forward to meeting you all in the near future and learning about you and your business.

Georgia Thomas

WOMEN IN HORTICULTURE - Call for expressions of interest

The role of women in horticulture is many and varied, as well as being much more hands-on than often given credit for. With record numbers of girls enrolling in agricultural studies (ref: Countryman, Feb 12th, page 3), a fabulous new winner of the Rural Woman of the Year in Western Australia and a brilliant female president of VegetablesWA, the time has come to support and nurture the role of women in horticulture.

If you are interested in linking with other women from your community and further afield to learn from each other, give support and make useful business contacts please write me an email with your name, business details, contact information and any ideas you may have for useful activities at programmng@vegetableswa.com.au. In the coming months I will investigate the level of interest and work towards a program of relevant activities for later in the year.

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Vegetable IDO Program Ends – June 30

The Vegetable Industry Development Officer program is officially ending on June 30th 2009. The program has been in place for around 10 years with positive results in Western Australia thanks to the work of David Ellement (now CEO of the Wine Industry Association of WA).

Over the years, IDO's have provided a local link for growers, a contact point for associations and government departments, and have assisted with HAL's Industry Advisory Committee which advises the direction of future research and activities.

A recent HAL review has indicated that a new, national approach to industry development was needed (in place of the local approach). As such, the change will take place in the new financial year. IDO contracts

will effectively end and a new mode of service delivery will take over.

The new Vegetable Industry Development Program has been touted as an innovative, synergistic and coordinated approach to the delivery of services to industry. The key aim of the program is to "inform and empower those in horticulture to make better business decisions".

The new program has already been put out for tender, with applications closing on the 18th of May. The Program Coordination role and four sub-programs, including Knowledge Management, People Development, Consumers and Markets and Local Information and Farm Productivity, were open for proposals. The tender is expected to be highly competitive as the stakes for leading Australia's

Vegetable Industry Development Program are high.

vegetablesWA have been highly active in the HAL process and are working hard to ensure that WA growers will be represented and serviced to the highest possible standards going forward. The tender process is highly confidential, and as soon as any winners are announced we will communicate outcomes with growers.

For further information, please email or call:

Georgia Thomas
Program Manager
Phone: 9481 0834
E: programmgr@vegetableswa.com.au

Georgia Thomas

New project on bean root diseases has commenced

Andrew Watson (NSW DPI) and Hoong Pung (Peracto-Tasmania)

A project to examine the extent and control options of Aphanomyces root rot and black root rot on green beans has begun. The project has developed from a previous project on beans that identified Aphanomyces root rot on beans in Tasmania for the first time. Black root rot is also of some concern to growers. Both display similar symptoms with brownish to black discoloration at the lower stem, main and finer roots. Black root rot is much darker than Aphanomyces root rot. Both diseases are caused by fungi Aphanomyces root rot caused by Aphanomyces euteiches and black root rot by Thielaviopsis basicola.

Roots infected by these two pathogens were found to be prone to further damage by other soilborne pathogens such as Pythium, Rhizoctonia and Fusarium species. Both Aphanomyces and Thielaviopsis can survive for many years in soil. There are currently no effective chemicals registered or cultural methods of managing ARR and BRR.

This project will look at the extent of the diseases in Tasmanian bean growing areas and examine rotational options to control the diseases. Varietal differences to disease expression and the use of fungicides to control the disease will be examined.



Aphanomyces root rot (left) on showing brown discoloration of the lower stem and the darker brown to black colour of black root rot (right).

Any growers who may have seen these diseases and consider them to be an issue in their crops are asked to contact the research team.

For further information on the project contact Andrew Watson on 0269512611.

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