

**Fresh Produce Watch
building consumer
confidence in
Australian
horticultural produce**

Frances Warnock
Australian United Fresh Fruit
& Vegetable Association Ltd

Project Number: HG04030

HG04030

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FINAL REPORT

AUF FRESH PRODUCE WATCH PROJECT

HAL Project Number: HG04030

AUF Fresh Produce Watch – “Building consumer confidence in Australian horticultural produce”

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Purpose of the report

This Final Project Report provides an overview of the strategic communications work and project activities undertaken by *Fresh Produce Watch* between July 2004 and June 2007 on behalf of the Australian Horticulture Industries to enhance consumer confidence in the safety, cleanliness and wholesomeness of Australian fresh produce.

Sponsors and Funding Sources

- Adelaide Produce Markets Limited
- Association of Australian Banana Wholesalers
- Apple and Pear Australia Limited
- Australian Chamber of Fruit and Vegetable Industries:
 - New South Wales
 - Fresh State
 - South Australia
 - Newcastle
 - Western Australia
 - Brismark
- Australian Mango Industry Association
- Australia United Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Association
- AUSVEG Limited
- Brisbane Markets Limited
- Horticulture Australia Limited
- Melbourne Market Authority
- NSW Farmers Association
- Perth Market Authority
- Sydney Markets Limited

Date: 30 June 2007

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MEDIA SUMMARY

Fresh Produce Watch (FPW) is a unique and original program within the Australian horticulture landscape, with strong brand recognition as a direct consequence of this project. FPW was first established in 1991 as a project of the Australian United Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Association Ltd (AUF) to promote the clean and healthy image of fresh fruit and vegetables. Besides this proactive role, FPW has taken an active stance to defuse and reduce the negative effects of adverse media reports. This project is supported 'whole of chain' by industry sponsors with matching funding from the Australian Government through Horticulture Australia Ltd (HAL).

The overall aim of FPW is to enhance consumer confidence in the safety and wholesomeness of Australian fresh produce. FPW seeks to:

- Reassure consumers about the safety and quality of fresh produce.
- Foster the adoption of appropriate risk management strategies and best practice management systems by Australia's fruit and vegetable industries, especially in the areas of pesticide use and microbiological food safety.
- Inform consumers of the positive actions taken by the Australian fresh produce industry to achieve responsible chemical use, improved food safety, the implementation of ecologically sustainable farming practices and the application of biotechnology in horticulture.

Key outcomes from this project include:

- A stronger presence for *Fresh Produce Watch* among national television media, with opportunities to inform and reassure Australian consumers about the safety and wholesomeness of fresh fruit and vegetables.
- Better involvement of industry in dealing with key government stakeholders to manage foodborne illness incidents linked to fresh produce, especially risk communications.
- Higher profile for *Fresh Produce Watch* among industry, the media and government nationally and recognition of FPW as an 'independent' authoritative voice for the horticulture industry on food safety and risk communications.

It is highly recommended that recent success attained by *Fresh Produce Watch* in the national media be further built upon. Furthermore, the critical role played by FPW in food safety issues and crisis management needs to be continued. This will require ongoing industry support and financial investment in FPW. Returns on this investment are clearly demonstrable - enhanced consumer confidence in the safety of fresh produce and continued purchasing and increased consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables.

1. INTRODUCTION

Background

Fresh Produce Watch (FPW) was established in 1991 as a project of the Australian United Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Association Ltd (AUF) to promote the clean and healthy image of fresh fruit and vegetables. Besides this proactive role, FPW has taken an active stance to defuse and reduce the negative effects of adverse media reports. This project is supported ‘whole of chain’ by industry sponsors with matching funding from the Australian Government through Horticulture Australian Ltd (HAL).

Overall Aim and Objectives

The overall aim of *Fresh Produce Watch* is to enhance consumer confidence in the safety and wholesomeness of Australian fresh produce. FPW seeks to:

- Reassure consumers about the safety and quality of fresh produce.
- Foster the adoption of appropriate risk management strategies and best practice management systems by Australia’s fruit and vegetable industries, especially in the areas of pesticide use and microbiological food safety.
- Inform consumers of the positive actions taken by the Australian fresh produce industry to achieve responsible chemical use, improved food safety, the implementation of ecologically sustainable farming practices and the application of biotechnology in horticulture.

FPW will take action as appropriate with respect to food safety issues arising from the importation of fresh produce that have the potential to impact on consumer confidence.

Expected Outcomes

The expected outcomes of the *Fresh Produce Watch* Project as stated in the original project proposal were:

- Enhanced consumer confidence in fresh horticultural produce, thereby underpinning the economic development of Australia’s fruit and vegetable industries.
- Improved industry performance with respect to responsible chemical use, food safety practice and the adoption of sustainable environmental management systems.

It was anticipated that new funding to expand the *Fresh Produce Watch* Project would enable:

- Greater industry and food media accessibility to FPW.
- Increased ability to address issues arising from time to time that impact on consumer confidence in horticultural fresh produce.

- *Fresh Produce Watch* to become more proactive rather than be just reactive.
- The development of better communication through the establishment of information packages, a FPW website and industry newsletter.
- Greater presence in the industry through presentations at conferences and industry seminars.
- The expansion and further development of FPW's educational role in industry, particularly through interfacing with other organisations in support of the adoption of quality management and food safety systems, and managing issues associated with the introduction of new technology, including biotechnology.

Fresh produce safety

Maintaining the positive image of Australian fresh produce as clean, safe and wholesome requires continual efforts by our diverse horticultural industries in applying good agricultural practice (GAP). FPW seeks to support growers by providing up-to-date information on food safety and environmental matters, and helping them to better understand consumer concerns regarding the use of agricultural chemicals and pesticide residues.

The fresh produce industry can be proud of its strong reputation of providing consumers both locally and abroad with safe, clean, quality fresh fruit and vegetables. Residue monitoring surveys conducted in Australia over the past two decades show that compliance with pesticide Maximum Residue Limits (MRL) is around 96 to 97 per cent. Furthermore, a large proportion of fruits and vegetables tested show no presence of pesticides at all.

Australia's track record is in keeping with similar international surveys that consider two to four per cent of samples above the MRL as a benchmark that verifies GAP. Today's producers are applying the latest research to improve pest management skills, reducing broad-spectrum pesticide usage by choosing 'softer' and innovative alternatives, and using natural enemies of pests for biological control.

Although raw, whole fruit and vegetables are generally categorised as low food safety risks, foodborne illness (FBI) can arise from the consumption of contaminated fresh produce. In recent years, there has been an increase in FBI outbreaks linked to fresh produce, both internationally and in Australia (1-7). These events are making an impact throughout the food supply chain. Overseas market research is showing that there is a strong possibility that consumer confidence in fresh fruit and vegetables, and their subsequent purchasing decisions, could be damaged irreparably in the event of a major food safety crisis (8, 9).

Influence of the media on consumer perceptions of fresh produce safety

The media can be a powerful force in shaping public perceptions of food safety issues. While many positive messages about the health benefits of eating more fresh fruit and vegetables are being communicated through mass media, this same media can also fuel controversy and heighten consumer awareness and concern about industry practices, particularly in the areas of chemical use, food safety and environmental issues.

Clearly there is significant potential for the media to inadvertently, and on some occasions intentionally, damage consumer confidence in fresh fruit and vegetables. Therefore, the media need to be closely monitored and professionally managed to avoid unnecessarily prolonged and damaging uninformed public discussion and debate. Presenting technical information and ‘the facts’ on food safety issues may not necessarily allay consumer worry and concern. Media relations, food safety issues and crisis management are highly specialised fields.

It is important for industry to recognise that how the media portrays the industry and how consumers perceive the safety and quality of fresh produce safety is vital, not how the horticulture industry views itself. There can be a significant difference. *Perception* is said to be ‘everything’! Unfortunately good news stories on industry practices to improve food safety and protect the environment generally need to be ‘sold’ to the mainstream media.

Food safety communications

Consumers need ongoing reassurance that fresh fruit and vegetables are safe to eat from a trusted source, such as *Fresh Produce Watch*. They also require practical information on how to maintain fresh produce safety and quality. Food safety risk communication highlights that both the benefits and risks of food safety issues need to be communicated, thus enabling consumers to make informed choices (10). This is most apparent from the ongoing controversy and public debate regarding the safety of genetically modified foods and use of irradiation to minimise microbial food safety risks.

It is essential that *Fresh Produce Watch* provide balanced, factual information in its communications with the public to build and maintain credibility. Furthermore, it should be understood by industry that it is not always possible to completely diffuse some food safety issues raised in the media. Consumer research shows that food safety scares can result in long term impacts on consumer purchasing decisions. An online survey conducted by *Harris Interactive for the Wall Street Journal Online* involving over 2,000 American adults, revealed 15 percent of consumers stop eating a product entirely after a food safety incident.

Impediments to achieving consumer confidence in horticultural fresh produce is having access to authoritative information on industry performance and importantly, ensuring

that industry performance indeed measures up to consumer expectations. Hence *Fresh Produce Watch* works consistently with both sides of the equation.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

- ***Industry liaison, consultation & networking*** – with national, state and regional horticulture industry organisations and other relevant government and community groups to develop common understandings on chemical use, food safety, environmental and biotechnology issues. Also, appropriately interface with related programs operated by sister industry organisations.
- ***Strategic planning, desk research & technical support*** - to develop a business plan and draft policy positions on chemical use, food safety and applications of biotechnology for use by horticultural industries.
- ***Communications & media strategy*** – development and implementation of a *Fresh Produce Watch* strategic communications plan to increase understanding by consumers and industry of responsible chemical use, food safety, environmental and biotechnology issues. Development of a FPW website. Build the profile of *Fresh Produce Watch* in consumer media and coordinate food safety issues and crisis management for the industry.
- ***Program management*** – including regular timely reporting against key performance indicators and performing a project evaluation.
- ***FPW Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)*** - the skills and professional experience of the TAC are used to provide ‘expert’ scientific and technical advice. Expertise includes food safety and quality assurance; food microbiology; chemicals and pesticide use/ safety; sustainable agriculture; information, education and communications (IEC); health promotion; and policy formulation.

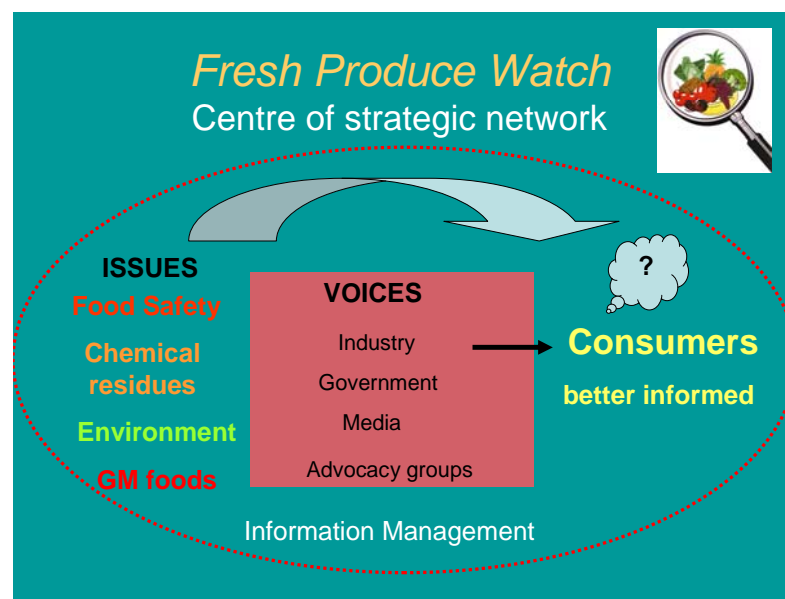
3. RESULTS

Significant progress was made by *Fresh Produce Watch* over the course of this three year project, particularly in the area of strategic communications. There were regular achievements and outputs with some surprising and somewhat unexpected outcomes. A brief summary of the main project activities follows.

Summary of Outputs / Outcomes

Strategic Communications, Issues and Crisis Management

- Development of a detailed *Business Plan* for *Fresh Produce Watch* and related promotional brochure, which was distributed to Project Sponsors, horticulture peak industry bodies and the wider industry.
- Development, ongoing updating and promotion of the *Fresh Produce Watch* website: www.freshproducewatch.com.au
- Development and implementation of a national *Strategic Communications Plan* for *Fresh Produce Watch*. Major communication tools included:
 - FPW website
 - Regular contributions to the *AUF Fresh News* industry newsletter (14 issues).
 - Writing and the publication of several feature articles addressing microbial food safety, responsible chemical use and the application of gene technology to horticulture, in prominent horticulture industry magazines.
 - Production of consumer information materials on fresh produce safety and a pamphlet on the role of gene technology in fruit and vegetable production.
 - Development of a working model featuring the key communication and coordination functions of FPW (see below) and its widespread promotion to industry and key government stakeholders.



Television interviews

- *Fresh Produce Watch* was interviewed on the high rating consumer current affairs television program, *Today Tonight*, Channel 7 (19/2/07) and effectively turned around a potentially damaging story regarding detections of *E.coli* bacteria and pesticides in bagged salads, to a story focussed on consumers' need to thoroughly wash fresh fruit and vegetables before eating to maintain safety.
- *Fresh Produce Watch* presented on the popular national morning television program *Sunrise*, Channel 7 (13/5/07) to talk about risky food handling practices and provided consumer tips on how to reduce the estimated five million cases of food borne illness each year in Australia.

Challenging tabloid media

- *Fresh Produce Watch* responded promptly to correct misinformation regarding the safety and quality of fresh fruit and vegetables in the national media – both television and print media. Notable were the swift actions taken to correct inaccurate television reporting on *A Current Affair*, Channel Nine and *Choice Magazine* - each on two occasions during 2006. A 'name and shame approach' was used by FPW in showing our letters of complaint on the FPW website home page. This action seems to be an effective deterrent, with fewer bad news stories and better researched articles now being disseminated to the Australian public.
- Liaison with *Media Watch ABC Television* regarding the ongoing negative media reporting on the safety of fresh produce by *A Current Affair*, Channel 9 during 2006.

Issues and crisis management

- *Fresh Produce Watch* provided leadership within the horticulture industry to coordinate and effectively manage the risk communication activity to minimise the impact of two independent *Salmonella* food poisoning outbreaks linked to fresh fruits (rockmelon and papaya) during 2006/07. FPW worked directly with the Chairs of the peak industry organisations, Melons Australia and Papaya Australia, guiding their approach to managing the media and communication on these incidents.
- Drafted a Position Paper for the industry outlining the *Role of FPW in Crisis Management* and summarised responsibilities of key government agencies and industry groups in product recalls and major emergency situations.

Industry networking, liaison and consultation

- *Fresh Produce Watch* built strong networks and alliances with industry and key government stakeholders to:
 - Encourage and enable better public communications on fresh produce safety matters, especially information presented to the public in consumer fact sheets and through media releases.
 - Improve and strengthen processes for responding to food safety issues and crises linked to fresh fruit and vegetables.

Key government agencies that FPW collaborated with included NSW Food Authority, Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ); Federal Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF); and the Australian Pesticide and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA).

- *Fresh Produce Watch* had input into the development of a brochure on “*Fresh food safety*” produced by Melbourne Markets and reviewed the content of a consumer information fact sheet on the safety of rockmelons drafted by the NSW Food Authority (2007).
- *Fresh Produce Watch* presented papers at national industry conferences, workshops and forums. Noteworthy was the prominent role played by FPW at the Australian Institute of Food Science and Technology (AIFST) *Fresh Produce Food Safety Summit* (April 2007) and the National AUF *Fresh Produce Watch Road Show*, which travelled to four Australian states during 2006.

Promotion of appropriate risk management strategies to industry

- *Fresh Produce Watch* drafted a suite of targeted technical briefing papers to support coherent policy positions for the horticulture industries with respect to responsible chemical use, improved food safety and the applications of new technologies, such as gene technology (refer Appendix 8.1). The expectation was that Sponsors and peak industry bodies would use this information and disseminate it to their constituents. The extent to which this happened unfortunately is not known.
- *Fresh Produce Watch* participated in state and national seminars and workshops on risk management and risk communication on fresh produce safety and chemical matters.

Project Management

- Formal evaluation of the *Fresh Produce Watch* Project was undertaken in the second year. While the number of respondents was low, information gathered through the questionnaire provided useful feedback on progress being made and areas for consideration and future action. Overall, the *quality* of work performed by FPW was rated as 'good' to 'excellent'.
- *Fresh Produce Watch* consulted with the Technical Advisory Committee to draft a new project proposal seeking continued funding and sponsorship for its important work from industry and HAL through the VC process. Unfortunately, this was not successful due to the level of funding requested to extend the FPW project for a further three years.

4. DISCUSSION

Fresh Produce Watch Strategic Communications

Fresh produce is an essential component of a healthy diet and the fresh produce industry is a vital component of Australia's agriculture. As we strive nationally to increase consumption of produce in general, we have to ensure that they are as safe as possible with regard to food safety hazards.

The essence of *Fresh Produce Watch* is communications on food safety matters of significance to the Australian fruit and vegetable industries that may impact on consumers' confidence in fresh produce. The main objectives of this project were to:

1. Reassure consumers about the safety and quality of fresh fruit and vegetables.
2. Inform consumers, the media and government of the positive actions taken by our horticulture industries to ensure food safety and protection of the environment.
3. Promote to industry the adoption of appropriate risk management and best practice management systems.

Key outcomes

Enhanced consumer confidence in fresh horticultural produce, thereby underpinning the economic development of Australia's fruit and vegetable industries.

- ***National television interviews***

Perhaps the greatest gains and achievements of *Fresh Produce Watch* were made during the final six months of the project. Through media contacts of *Growcom*, FPW was fortunate to negotiate interviews on the high profile, popular national television programs *Sunrise* and *Today Tonight*, Channel 7. The viewing audiences of these programs are in excess of 1.3 million people. FPW exerted influence to alter the focus of these stories on fresh produce safety from potentially damaging segments about contaminated fruit and vegetables to more positive and informative pieces addressing consumer tips on food safety and hygiene.

The media profile of *Fresh Produce Watch* and its credibility was raised significantly through these national media performances. Positive feedback was thankfully received from the television program producers, industry and NSW Food Authority. Good media spokespeople ('talent') are favourably viewed by the media and routinely called upon to give interviews in their field of expertise.

A major barrier to *Fresh Produce Watch* achieving prominence in the media earlier on in the project was the lack of financial resources available for a press release program, media monitoring and public relations.

- ***Issue and crisis management***

The increased media coverage of several major foodborne illness outbreaks linked to fresh produce in Australia and overseas during 2006, heightened industry awareness that food safety was an important issue. These unfortunate events, particularly the *E.coli* 0157:H7 bagged spinach food poisoning outbreak in the United States affecting more than 200 people, changed the way that industry generally regarded the issue of fresh produce safety (11).

We learnt during 2006 that there are flow on effects for the whole industry following major food poisoning scares, with potential loss of consumer confidence in fresh produce. *Fresh Produce Watch* acted responsibly in raising industry awareness about the need to take appropriate pre-emptive action and prepare for a major food safety incident linked to fresh produce. Discussions to develop and pilot an up-to-date emergency and crisis communications plan for the horticulture industry began late in 2006. This important activity is yet to be completed.

Failure to manage the risk communication effectively during a food safety crisis can be detrimental to the industry, with loss of consumer confidence in fruit and vegetables. It can also have long lasting effects on some consumers who may stop purchasing the product. Clearly this situation needs to be avoided at all costs.

As highlighted in the results section on issues and crisis management (page 9), *Fresh Produce Watch* played a central role in supporting the Australian rockmelon and papaw

industries and coordinated food safety risk communication activity during recent food poisoning scares. Steps taken by FPW are outlined in a Case Study (Appendix 8.7).

Fresh Produce Watch has now successfully positioned itself within the industry and among key government stakeholders as the lead agency addressing food safety risk communications. FPW has supported our Australian horticulture industries well throughout these past three years. It has developed and delivered effective public communications and provided sound management of food safety issues to avoid loss of consumer confidence in fresh produce.

The role that FPW plays for the industry in the public eye is unique and should not be downplayed, nor misconstrued, to become a political voice for the horticulture industry in the media.

Improved industry performance with respect to responsible chemical use, food safety practice and the adoption of sustainable environmental management systems.

Fresh Produce Food Safety Summit

A *Fresh Produce Food Safety Summit* was held in April 2007 to improve the risk management and risk communication activities surrounding foodborne illness outbreaks linked to fresh produce (12). It was facilitated by the AIFST (www.aifst.asn.au) with *Fresh Produce Watch* playing a prominent role at the Symposium by participating on the planning committee, delivering a power point presentation on, “*Are we communicating effectively on food safety*”, and Chairing a Workshop on, “*What do consumers need to hear to maintain or enhance their confidence in fresh produce? How can we work in partnership to better address this need?*”. Some 80 stakeholders from along the fresh produce supply chain (many from industry) came together with regulators and scientists to discuss trends in produce related food safety, and what actions are needed to ensure Australian fresh produce is as safe as possible for our consumers.

Fresh Produce Watch is a unique and original program within the Australian horticultural landscape with strong brand recognition among the industry, a growing profile in the media and recognition by key government stakeholders as an authority on food safety risk communications. Through this project, FPW has developed a reputation for taking action as appropriate to address complex food safety issues, thereby protecting the reputation of our fresh produce industry.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS – SCIENTIFIC & INDUSTRY

1. Continuation of *Fresh Produce Watch* to maintain positive momentum and build upon outstanding recent success by appearing on popular national television programs.

2. It is essential that *Fresh Produce Watch* is well supported and financially sustained by the horticulture industry in the future to ensure it has the capacity, capability and readiness to respond in the event of a major food safety crisis. There is no other existing organisation, or agency, equipped to perform this critical communications role.

3. *Build and strengthen national and international networks.* *Fresh Produce Watch* should continue to expand its strategic networks with industry and key government stakeholders to ensure early warning of emerging issues and better management of food safety issues/ crises. FPW to act as a ‘broker’ for the horticulture industry with government food safety and health agencies.

4. *Consumer education campaign on fresh produce safety.* Undertake consumer market research to provide an evidence-based approach to food safety education and relevant information to formulate targeted messages to address risky food safety practices/ behaviours. We know little about Australian consumers’ attitudes and concerns regarding fresh produce safety. There is a paucity of data available on consumers’ knowledge and practices, and factors influencing their selection, storage, preparation and handling of fresh produce.

Information from the consumer market research also needs to be communicated back to peak industry bodies, retailers and growers in a timely manner, to assist with continual improvements in good agriculture practice (GAP), good hygiene practice (GHP) and good manufacturing practice (GMP).

6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Special acknowledgements:

- Lawrie Greenup – Consultant to *Fresh Produce Watch* (July 2004 – October 2005)
- Col Scotney – Secretary of *Fresh Produce Watch* and National Executive Officer of AUF (July 2004 – July 2006)
- Tony Gietzel – Secretary of *Fresh Produce Watch* and General Manager AUF (July 2006-June 2007)
- Graeme Forsythe & Associates Pty Ltd for the development of the *Fresh Produce Watch* Website
- *Edenbridge* Consulting Services for the development of the ‘Business Case’ for *Fresh Produce Watch*

***Fresh Produce Watch* Technical Advisory Committee**

(Serving Members between July 2004 and June 2007)

- Richard Bennett - QA & Food Safety Portfolio Manager, HAL
- Martin Clark - Executive Officer, Australian Chamber Fruit & Vegetable Industries (Chair TAC 2005)
- Tony Demeijer - Chairman AUF (Chair TAC 2006)
- Dr Robert Premier - Section Leader, Plant Physiology & Food Science DPI Victoria (Chair TAC 2007)
- Louise Blackett - Technical Manager, *One Harvest*
- Allison Clark - Quality & Innovation Manager, *Houston’s Farm*
- Scott Coleman – Bundaberg Fruit & Vegetable Growers
- Luke Jewell - Senior Policy Analyst, Horticulture NSW Farmers Association
- Brad Latham – Sydney Markets Limited
- Tracey Leo – Northern Territory Horticultural Association
- Cedric Smith - WA Chamber Fruit & Vegetable Industries
- Mary Stewart - Business Development Manager, Melbourne Market Authority
- Bronwyn Vorpapel - Regulatory Affairs Manager, Crop Care Australasia

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- (4) http://www.hunter.health.nsw.gov.au/HPH/ozfoodnet/HPH_Garlic_for_Salmonella.pdf
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- (7) http://www.health.wa.gov.au/press/view_press.cfm?id=630
- (8) An online survey conducted by *Harris Interactive for the Wall Street Journal Online*, November 2006.
- (9) *Public Response to the Contaminated Spinach Recall of 2006*. Food Policy Institute Rutgers, February 5, 2007; State University of New Jersey.
- (10) *Food Safety Risk Communication: The message and motivational strategies*. Proceedings of the Two Day International Conference, Gothenburg, Sweden (May 2005); EU-RAIN.
- (11) *Investigation of an Escherichia coli O157:H7 Outbreak Associated with Dole Pre- Packaged Spinach*, Final Report March 21, 2007. Prepared by: California Food Emergency Response Team, U.S. Food and Drug Administration.
- (12) *AIFST Fresh Produce Food Safety Summit Meeting Summary*, April 2007 (www.aifst.asn.au)

8. APPENDIX

8.1 TECHNICAL BRIEFING PAPERS & INFORMATION SHEETS FOR INDUSTRY

- Dieldrin Residues (2004)
- Chlorine in Fruits & Vegetables – Use, Regulation, Safety (2005)
- Mirex – Chemistry and Uses (2005)
- Wax on Apples – Summary of use and safety factors (2005)
- The significance of residues in fresh fruit and vegetables (2006)
- Microbiological safety of fresh fruit and vegetables (Draft 2006)

8.2 FEATURE ARTICLES PUBLISHED FOR INDUSTRY INFORMATION & EDUCATION

- “*Ensuring fruit and vegetables pass the consumer test!*” (2004)
- Gene Technology Update: “*New Consumer Research on Gene Technology Public Awareness*”(2005)
- “*Clean, safe, fresh fruit and vegetables...but could we be doing better?*” (2006)
- “*Fresh versus processed fruit and vegetables: Who’s driving the current debate on quality and safety issues?*” (August 2006)

8.3 MEDIA CONTRIBUTIONS THROUGH AUF

- ***Fresh News*** – Distribution 1,000 copies

Content of the publication focuses on AUF material and is supplemented by member articles and appropriate industry news articles. Distribution is to AUF Members, industry associated business and individuals along with regional, state and national industry organisations. *Fresh Produce Watch* articles appeared in the following issues.

2004 - JULY, OCTOBER, DECEMBER

2005 - MAY, JUNE, JULY, SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER

2006 - APRIL, AUGUST, SEPTEMBER, NOVEMBER

2007 - FEBRUARY, MAY

- ***Horticulture Today*** – Distribution 2,000 copies

The magazine is a quality publication with *Fresh Produce Watch* articles appearing in the following issues.

2004 - AUGUST, NOVEMBER

2005 - FEBRUARY, MAY, NOVEMBER

2006 - FEBRUARY, DECEMBER

2007 - MARCH, JUNE

- ***Australian Horticultural Yearbook*** - Distribution 2,000 copies. This annual publication is unique in that it encompasses the whole fresh fruit and vegetable chain, and is a 'one-of-a-kind'. *Fresh Produce Watch* articles appeared in the following issues: 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007
- **Industry E-mail Distribution** - 117 Regional, State and National Horticultural Organisations and contacts. Media releases are directed through AUF Communications, an arm of AUF.

8.4 COMMUNICATIONS AND MEDIA STRATEGY

- *Fresh Produce Watch Strategic Communications Plan* (2006)
- *Business Plan for Fresh Produce Watch* (2005)

National Television Interviews

- *Fresh Produce Watch* spokesperson, Frances Warnock appeared on *Today Tonight*, Channel 7 (19/2/07)
- *Fresh Produce Watch* spokesperson, Frances Warnock appeared on *Sunrise*, Channel 7 (13/5/07)

Challenging the tabloid media

- Letter to Executive Producer, *A Current Affair*, Channel 9 television regarding misleading television segment aired on the health risks of fresh fruit and vegetables (10 August 2006)
- Liaison with *Media Watch* ABC Television regarding ongoing negative media reporting on the safety of fresh produce by *A Current Affair*, Channel 9 in 2006.
- Letter to Editor of *Choice* Magazine, Australian Consumers Association regarding inaccurate information in the story on "*Pesticides in fruit and veg: Are they harmless - or is the truth that we really don't know?*" (August 2006)

Print media

- Acknowledgment of *Fresh Produce Watch's* active role in challenging misinformation in the tabloid media: Editorial by John Fitzsimmons, "Vital good news" published in *Good Fruit and Vegetables* magazine (September 2006).
- "Produce Watch challenges tabloid TV" *Good Fruit and Vegetables* magazine (September 2006)
- "Food safety for thought", *The Weekly Times*, (18 April 2007)

8.5 CONFERENCES AND POWERPOINT PRESENTATIONS

- Presentation *Summerfruit* Conference, Melbourne
- Presentation – *Chemcert* Workshop, Dooralong
- *Identifying the hot issues & emerging problems from a produce viewpoint.* ChemCert Conference 2005.

- “*Chemical residues – A quality or consumer issue*”; 6th Banana Congress, Tully.
- “*Identifying the hot issues & emerging problems from a produce viewpoint*”, Cairns (August 2005)
- *Presentation AUF Annual General Meeting* (Brisbane 2005)
- “*Building communication networks to protect the reputation of the fresh produce industry*”, AUF Fresh Produce Watch National Road Show (April 2006)
- “*Fresh Produce Watch: The fresh fruit and vegetable industry’s voice on food safety and environmental issues*”; *Netpro Update 2006 – National Low Chill Stonefruit Industry Conference*, Alstonville, NSW.
- “*Crisis Communications: What is it and why do we need a formal plan?*”(2006)
- “*Are we communicating effectively on food safety?*” *AIFST Fresh Produce Food Safety Summit*, 17 April 2007, Brisbane.

8.6 CONSUMER INFORMATION MATERIALS

- “*Fresh Fruits and Vegetables – Genetically modified or not?*” (Leaflet published 2005)
- “*Consumer fact sheet on fresh produce safety*”(www.freshproducewatch.com.au)
- “*Fresh food safety*”, Melbourne Markets (Brochure produced June 2007 available at www.marketfresh.com.au)

8.7 CASE STUDY: *Fresh Produce Watch’s role in risk communications and national food incident response*

Fresh Produce Watch supported the Australian fresh produce industry with strategic management of food safety issues/crises during 2006-07. Specifically, it provided a coordinated approach to risk communications for two isolated *Salmonella* food poisoning incidents linked to rockmelons and papaw. Key support directly provided by FPW to the industry:

1. *Guided the strategic approach to managing these events* from a communication perspective, and not just focusing on the ‘science’.
2. *Drafted talking points for industry and mentoring potential spokespeople* on how to prepare for media interviews and how to handle possible curly questions (Q&As). Prepared key points for inclusion in a media release outlining the industry position regarding these food poisoning outbreaks.
3. *FPW directly contacted the government agencies involved* in the public health investigations to seek their assurances that industry would receive timely communication on developments throughout these events.
4. *Drafted consumer fact sheet* on fresh produce safety to provide reassurance to consumers. It offers factual information on actions consumers can take to maintain the safety of fresh fruits and vegetables.
5. *Prepared a Power Point presentation on Crisis Communications* for industry information and education.