



Horticulture Australia

FINAL REPORT
HAL project number AH13014 (11 April 2014)
Horticulture for Tomorrow review and upgrade

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HAL Final Report: PROJECT AH13014: HORTICULTURE FOR TOMORROW REVIEW AND UPGRADE

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Purpose of the report: To summarise the activities completed during the successful delivery of project AH13014: Horticulture for Tomorrow review and upgrade between August 2013 and March 2014.

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Summary

The revised *Guidelines for Environmental Assurance in Australian Horticulture (Second Edition)* and associated website www.horticulturefortomorrow.com.au were extensively revised over nine months and successfully launched in 2014.

The first edition of the guidelines was launched in 2006 with funding from the Natural Heritage Trust. Since that time, there were advances in the environment field, including the development of tailored industry systems, such as EnviroVeg and Banana BMP, changes to relevant Government funding programs, retailer activity and increased understanding and appreciation of the importance of best practice as a means of addressing climate variability and future climate change.

The horticulture Across Industry Committee agreed that these developments needed to be incorporated within the guidelines and, consequently, HAL commissioned a review. The revision was conducted between July 2013 – March 2014 and included consultation with existing system owners, industry stakeholders and relevant experts.

Of note, a new section on Climate Adaptation has been added within the second edition, which outlines the potential impacts of climate change, the potential approaches for adaptation and highlights further resources that growers can access in order to consider their adaptation options.

About the project

The across-industry committee¹ engaged the consultant, Alison Kelly, to review and update the Horticulture for tomorrow *Guidelines for Environmental Assurance in Australian Horticulture* (EA Guidelines) and website www.horticulturefortomorrow.com.au.

The EA Guidelines and website were launched in 2006 and had become outdated – with information on the website either missing or files unable to be opened, while the EA Guidelines required updating to be relevant to the current day.

The revision of the EA Guidelines was undertaken in three stages:

1. *Initial scoping of guidelines review (August-October 2013)* – initial stakeholder and guidelines review to ascertain areas for revision.
2. *Revision of guidelines (October 2013-March 2014)* – revision of guidelines content via peer review.
3. *Production of guidelines (March-April 2014)* – formatting of revised guidelines for publication and incorporation of revised version within the updated Horticulture for Tomorrow website.

The website upgrade was conducted separately, but concurrently, to this project. An external designer was engaged to undertake the design and lay out of the revised guidelines. Both external subcontracts were managed by HAL.

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Activities completed

The project was successfully delivered July 2013 – April 2014.

The consultant delivered the following activities:

Stage 1 – Background analysis and initial review of EA Guidelines

- Undertook a background analysis of the Horticulture for Tomorrow program in order to understand the drivers behind the initial development of the EA Guidelines 2006 and help to form recommendations for the revision of the Guidelines.
- Met with key stakeholders who have a vested interest in horticulture environmental guidelines to ascertain areas of need and revision within the current Horticulture for Tomorrow guidelines.
- Reviewed the current Horticulture for Tomorrow Guidelines against 12 existing/current industry standards. A summary of this analysis has been provided in Table 1.
- Submitted a project milestone report, which outlined the process and timeframe for the revision in the EA Guidelines.

Table 1: Summary of existing environmental systems considered within this review.

| System | Version | Tier* | Training | Certification | Branding | Online Tool |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|-------|----------|---------------|----------|--------------------|
| EA Guidelines | 2006 | BMP | No | No | No | PDF only |
| Freshcare Env | 2011 | EMS | Yes | Yes | Yes | No |
| Banana BMP | 2013 | BMP | Yes | No | No | Yes |
| EnviroVeg | 2011 | Both | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes (members only) |
| Freshcare Winery/Vit | 2011/ 2013 | BMP | Yes | Yes | Yes | No |
| Certified Land Management | 2013 | EMS | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes (members only) |
| Cotton Best Management Practice (BMP) | 2013 | EMS | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| DairySAT | 2012 | BMP | No | No | No | Yes |
| ISO14001 | 2009 | EMS | Yes | Yes | Yes | No |
| GlobalGAP | 2013 | EMS | Yes | Yes | Yes | No |
| LEAF | 2012 | EMS | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes (members only) |

*Key:

BMP – Best management practice – industry or regional self-assessment tool

EMS – Environmental Management System – environmental certification through third party audit

Stage 2 – Review of the EA Guidelines

- Implemented the full review of the content within the EA guidelines – all chapters, sections and references were reviewed/assessed/updated. A number of external experts were consulted for additional clarification and/or input into the review.
- Survey questionnaire for an industry development officer (IDO) survey regarding the EA Guidelines and website was developed. The HAL project manager distributed the survey to IDOs in mid-November and results were collected via Survey Monkey.
- Submitted a project milestone report, with the revised EA guidelines as attachment, to HAL, noting that there were still some additional elements of the review to progress.
- Note that at this point, there was a change to the HAL project manager for this project. Consequently there was some delay to the initial timeline for implementation of Stage 3 and the addressing of the additional elements of the revised EA Guidelines. A revised contract was negotiated as a result.

Stage 3 – Finalisation of the EA Guidelines and website

- Facilitated the formatting of revised EA Guidelines for publication. Note: HAL subcontracted another external consultant (Rachel Bennett) to undertake the design and layout of the EA Guidelines.
- Reviewed content for updated Horticulture for Tomorrow website and provided input on the design/layout of the website. Note: HAL subcontracted another external consultant (NetRegistry) to undertake the design and layout of the website.

Outputs

The two outputs from this project are:

1. Second Edition of the Guidelines for Environmental Assurance for Australian Horticulture
2. Updated Horticulture for tomorrow website – www.horticulturefortomorrow.com.au

The Second Edition of the guidelines has been submitted to HAL via the designer.

During the stakeholder analysis there was broad agreement that the First Edition of the EA Guidelines (2006) was still a relatively relevant document, which did not require significant revision, but rather required a ‘fine-tooth-comb’ revision of its references/links/content, with greater emphasis on translating the document into a more user-friendly and accessible tool. This re-affirmed the purpose of the document – to provide environmental information to horticultural producers in a ‘one-stop-shop’ (not about building membership or about third party certification).

The Second Edition improves on the original 2006 version in a couple of ways:

- It is still a freely available resource document for horticultural producers, but it is now more accessible – being available online (where the previous version was hard-copy or accessed via a CD only). The document can be downloaded in full or by chapter/section via the Horticulture for tomorrow website.
- It does not compete with other existing industry systems, such as Banana BMP or EnviroVeg, and indeed links to these systems.
- It is NOT a certification tool, but does not include a legislation section that provides information/links for further legislative and regulation information.
- An additional section on Climate Adaptation has been included. Due to horticulture’s dependence on natural resources, especially irrigation, it is inherently vulnerable to climate change and variability. This new section outlines the potential impacts of climate

change, the potential approaches for adaptation and highlights further resources that growers can access in order to consider their adaptation options.

In association with the EA Guidelines review, the Horticulture for Tomorrow website content was also extensively reviewed and improved (see Figure 1).

The website content has been previously submitted to HAL in word format, while the online profile of the website has been developed and launched by an external consultant (NetRegistry), with the understanding that HAL will manage the website into the future.

The primary audience for the website is horticultural producers/industry members, but also provides content for wider community. The main purpose of this website is to provide a web resource of environmental information and credentials of horticulture. A new section of the website has been added to profile the revised guidelines – which can be downloaded in full or by chapter/section.



Figure 1: Screen shot of home page of revised Horticulture for tomorrow website (launched 2014).

Recommendations

Engagement/communication with retailers

Only one retailer was contacted during the project (Coles, as part of the stakeholder analysis). This is obviously not representative of the retailers that might be interested in the revised guidelines. It was noted that they (Coles) were already engaged in discussions with some industry

sectors on the implementation of on-farm environmental systems and specifically have a formal relationship with vegetable industry on their Nuture initiative. It is recommended that the revised guidelines and website be disseminated to retailers and that any opportunity for ongoing communication/ engagement with retailers on how to streamline environmental reporting and how industry are addressing key environmental areas of concern, such as carbon (not footprinting), energy, fuel, and nitrous oxide efficiency.

Maintain linkages to and support for existing 'systems'

There were 12 existing environmental systems that were considered relevant to the revision of the EA Guidelines 2006 and consequently were considered within this review (table 1). These 'systems' range from best management practices (self-assessment) through to third-party auditable/international standards (see below explanation of the difference between EMS and BMP).

Many of these systems are already being implemented within the industry, including:

- Guidelines for Environmental Assurance in Australian Horticulture (2006);
- Freshcare Environmental Code of Practice (2011);
- Banana Best Management Practice Environmental Guidelines (2013) [currently being trialled for release later in 2013];
- EnviroVeg: The Environmental Management System cycle – Plan, Do, Check, Review – of continuous improvement (Version 3, August 2011);
- ISO14001 (2009);
- GlobalG.A.P. Fruit and Vegetables (Version 4, April 2013); and
- LEAF (Version 10, October 2012).

It is important that the Horticulture for tomorrow website maintains linkages to these existing systems into the future.

Supporting Horticulture for tomorrow into the future

There are currently no plans for activities under Horticulture for tomorrow, in the short term at least (other than HAL hosting and maintaining the website content). However, there is still justification for HAL to continue to pursue the objectives of Horticulture for tomorrow (below) into the future.

Horticulture for tomorrow objectives:

1. Ensure industry ownership and awareness of environmental management
2. Encourage adoption of Environmental Assurance through user-friendly Guidelines that harmonise with existing Quality Assurance and Food Safety systems
3. Ensure industries implement pathways to addressing environmental management issues
4. Emphasise horticulture's role as a responsible manager of resources and
5. Building on knowledge of the industry's responsibility to NRM within a catchment context.

Environmental assurance and management will continue to be an issue for the sector, especially with retailers like Coles interested in ensuring they meet consumer expectations of environmental stewardship of products they supply. HAL is in a unique position to continue to drive the implementation of the above objectives in order to ensure the sector is addressing common environmental priority areas, such as biodiversity and energy efficiency, into the future.

