

# **Growers Study Tour- PMA/USA 2010**

Richard Mulcahy  
AUSVEG Ltd

Project Number: VG10092

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USA Grower Study Tour  
2010

13 -24 October 2010

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Project Number: VG10092

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## **Abstract**

The 2010 Grower Study Tour to America saw eight Australian growers and Horticulture Industry member, Kyle Steinhardt visit Florida, Washington and California for 12 days.

Growers hailed from QLD, NSW and WA, travelled from their home states to Orlando, Florida on 13 October.

Led by AUSVEG Communications Coordinator, William Churchill, the growers spent their first night in the United States of America in Orlando. Three days were spent attending the PMA Fresh Summit Expo from 15 – 17 October.

Over the remaining days, the growers visited the DuPont Headquarters in Wilmington, Delaware, and then travelled to Washington DC where growers were fortunate enough to be briefed by US Senator John Cornyn's Agricultural Adviser at his Senatorial office.

After the visit to Washington DC, AUSVEG Chairman John Brent and AUSVEG CEO Richard Mulcahy separated from the group. The Grower Study Tour then continued to San Francisco, where they enjoyed farm visits in the San Luis Obispo County and the Salinas Valley.

The tour overall was successful.

## Introduction

The Australian vegetable industry's strategic plan, VegVision 2020, includes five pillars which outline the priority areas for R&D to build and strengthen the industry into the future. Pillar five, "Strengthen the enabling environment, industry capacity, motivation and commitment to meet the VegVision 2020" is concerned with leadership and change.

To support VegVision, the AVIDG commissioned a study in 2007 to investigate the training requirements of Australian vegetable growers. The report concluded that vegetable growers require more leadership and business management skills and that these skills should be firmly tied to the profitability of the business.

People development needs which were identified included improving business management skills based upon:

- business evaluation and planning
- understanding costs of production and financial reports
- better communication
- developing negotiation and conflict resolution skills
- improving decision making and managing change
- creating marketing opportunities

The vegetable industry has therefore clearly identified "leadership and people development" as a priority area for investment in order to build capacity, ensure sustainable and profitable business practices are implemented, and to create future leaders. Numerous strategies have been employed in recent years to meet these people development needs through various "Industry Development" projects.

It has been widely recognised that study tours are an important and effective industry development project, providing individual capacity building and the creation of new learning outcomes. Australian vegetable growers have been visiting the USA on study tours for years with great success. With support from the National Vegetable Levy, growers have taken the annual tour to expand their knowledge and build relationships between the Australian and American vegetable industries.

The purpose of the 2010 tour was to provide opportunities for growers to undertake formal development programs and build their skills and knowledge so that they may assist in the advancement of the Australian vegetable industry in the future. In order to achieve this goal, nine growers from across Australia were taken to America, visiting seven operations across the horticulture industry including vegetable growers, merchants, packers, research facilities, marketing co-operatives, and attending the PMA Fresh Summit Convention in Florida.

The 2010 tour provided the opportunity for participants to form relationships, develop personal skills, identify alternative business management practices and compare production systems (including costs and profit) with their American counterparts. Field

growers were also introduced to protected cropping principles and vice versa, while attending the conference allowed the participants to explore the differences between the American and Australian vegetable industries.

AUSVEG Communications Coordinator William Churchill assisted participants throughout the tour. Members of the group evaluated the tour throughout the trip with evaluation forms submitted at the tour's conclusion.

## Acknowledgments

The 2010 USA Grower Study Tour, including farm visits, attending farmer markets, accommodation, and most meals were arranged with the assistance of AgroTours.

Thanks must go to the many growers and business managers that showed participants through their operations and enlightened them with their business skills and knowledge.

*The tour was facilitated by HAL in partnership with AUSVEG and was funded by a combination of Voluntary Contributions and the National Vegetable Levy. The Australian Government provides matched funding for all HAL's R&D activities.*

## Tour Participants

State	Name	Crops
QLD	Greg Lerch	Beetroot
QLD	Linda Lerch	Beetroot
QLD	Lorelle Niebling	Beetroot
QLD	Trevor Niebling	Beetroot
QLD	Kyle Steinhardt	Elders
QLD	Tony Gibb	Celery, broccoli, lettuce and cabbage
NSW	Peter Grech	Pumpkin
WA	Robert Kuzmicich	Capsicum, eggplant, cucumber and pumpkin
WA	Peter Bellini	Baby leaf lettuce, spinach, Swiss, tason and rocket

## Itinerary

Date	Travel	Activities
Day 1 – 13 October	Sydney – Los Angeles - Orlando	Tour participants flew from Sydney to Los Angeles to Orlando.
Day 2 – 14 October	Orlando, Florida	Day off for recovery and personal sightseeing.
Day 3 – 15 October	Orlando, Florida	Breakfast at the hotel. Today growers attended the PMA Fresh Summit Convention at the Orange County Convention Centre. Schedule: 7:30am – 12:30pm: Retail Produce Tour 1:00pm – 2:30pm: Lunch General Session 2:45pm – 4:00pm: Workshop Series 1 6:00pm – 8:00pm: Welcoming Reception
Day 4 – 16 October	Orlando, Florida	PMA Fresh Summit Convention at the Orange County Convention Centre. Schedule: 7:30am – 9:20am: Breakfast General Session 9:30am – 10:30am: PMA FIT 9:35am -10:50am: Workshop 2 10:00am – 2:00pm: PMA FIT 11:00am – 5:30pm: Exposition
Day 5 – 17 October	Orlando, Florida	PMA Fresh Summit Convention at the Orange County Convention Centre. Schedule: 7:30am – 9:00am: Breakfast General Session 9:15am – 10:45am: Workshop 3 10:00am – 2:00pm: PMA FIT 11:00am – 5:30pm: Exposition 5:30pm – 7:30pm: International Partners Reception
Day 6 – 18 October	Orlando – Philadelphia- Washington DC	The group departed Orlando and flew to Philadelphia. From Philadelphia they travelled to by mini bus to the DuPont headquarters in Wilmington, Delaware.  They then continued to Upper Marlboro, Maryland for a tour of Clagett Farm, after which they continued to Washington DC to check into the hotel.
Day 7 – 19 October	Washington DC	Tour members met with US Senator John Cornyn’s Agriculture Advisor at his Senatorial office in Washington DC.
Day 8 – 20 October	Washington DC – San Francisco – Pismo Beach	The group departed Washington DC and flew to San Francisco. Upon arrival, they met with Deborah Huth, and travelled in a private minibus to San Luis Obispo County.



		<p>California grows more than 350 different crop types and has an annual income of more than \$380 million.</p> <p>The group then continued on to the hotel.</p>
Day 9 – 21 October	San Luis Obispo County	<p>Growers spent the morning at San Ysidro Farms, a 1600 acre vegetable operation in Guadalupe.</p> <p>The tour then travelled to the POVE Facility, which specialises in Asian vegetables.</p> <p>They then returned to the hotel.</p>
Day 10 – 22 October	Pismo Beach – Salinas Valley – San Francisco	<p>The group checked out of their hotel and travelled to the Salinas Valley. Due to the intensity of local agriculture in the area, it has earned itself the nickname, ‘America’s Salad Bowl’.</p> <p>Arriving at Earthbound Farm in Carmel, the group toured the large organic farming operation with farmer Mark Marino. Their vast array of products includes; beets, bell peppers, broccoli, carrots, cauliflower, celery, cucumber, zucchini, garlic, onions, herbs, lettuce, potatoes, tomatoes.</p> <p>At 3:00pm they then toured the Seminis research station in San Juan Bautista, led by Raquel Salati, a research scientist in plant pathology.</p> <p>The group then continued on to Fisherman’s Wharf in San Francisco.</p>
Day 11 – 23 October	San Francisco	<p>The tour visited the Ferry Plaza Farmers Market, after which they had the afternoon free to explore San Francisco.</p>
Day 12 – 24 October	San Francisco – Australia	<p>The group departed America for Australia.</p>

## **Tour Report**

The following report is a collation of the information collected on the tour during farm/merchant visits, the conference, and from the participants' evaluation of the tour.

### **Farm, merchant & related activity reports**

The tour moved through various farms, packing facilities, merchants, markets and cooperatives in Delaware, Maryland and California for six days with a visit to the PMA Fresh Summit Convention at the beginning of the trip.

The tour, which was 12 days long, included many valuable and informative visits, as well as networking opportunities for the tour participants.

## **PMA Fresh Summit International Convention and Exposition 2010**

### **Conference program:**

#### **Day 1 –Friday 15 October**

The first day of the conference included:

##### **Retail Produce Tour**

- Tour stops included Freshfields Farm, Publix Super Markets, Wal-Mart Supercenter, and Winn-Dixie Stores, Inc.

##### **Lunch General Session**

- Proctor and Gamble: Lessons in Innovation from a Global Leader
  - A.G. Lafley, CEO and Chairman of Proctor and Gamble, discussed branding, leadership, and innovations, and revealed the secrets behind P&G's transformation. Attendees of this session discovered how to apply the same ideas and process to their organisation's business strategy.

##### **Workshop Series 1**

- Food Safety: Are your Business Practices Putting Your Company at Risk?  
Food safety is the most critical issue facing our industry and the profitability of our businesses. This session provided participants with a chance to better assess their company's risk, and identify where critical gaps could exist in their operations.
- Traceability in the Real World
  - Some companies have already implemented the Produce Traceability Initiative (PTI) with great success. This session revealed these pioneering companies' experiences, feedback and insight. An entire supply chain panel shared insights and what industry members can expect as the industry works toward adoption of the initiative.
- Watching the World: A Global Economic Forecast
  - The health of the global economy has an enormous impact on the produce industry, with many indicators that can directly influence businesses. This

session provided a review of historic and current global trends, a detailed forecast for the future of the global economy, and what that forecast means for the business decisions that will be made in the next year and beyond.

- Consumer Behavior: What's Next?
  - The economic environment has caused consumers to change their purchasing behaviour. This session explored the potential scenarios for consumer spending in the next few years with a focus on how these scenarios would impact the produce industry and industry business models.
- Making Smarter Choices with Strategic Decision Making
  - This session explored the value and best practices of strategic decision making, plus provided confidence and insight to participants to be able to assess and frame complex issues, recognise common thinking traps, and balance short- and long-term goals to consistently make winning decisions.
- The Truth About Pesticides
  - Consumer confidence in the safety of fresh produce has been adversely affected by some groups communicating information based upon incomplete data on pesticide residues. The Alliance for Food and Farming (AFF) provided a scientific analysis of the actual risk and potential impact on health caused by the most commonly-used pesticides. In this workshop, these findings were reviewed and participants were helped to understand the real impact of pesticides on fresh produce, providing them with the information needed to strengthen consumer confidence and reduce safety concerns.

#### Receptions

- PMA Foundation for Industry Talent Young Professionals Reception
  - This reception was geared towards dynamic young professionals 35 and under and was a speed-networking activity, hosted by the PMA Foundation for Industry Talent.
- President's Invitational Reception
  - A special reception for PMA volunteer leaders, Gold Circle contributors, new members, new member sponsors, and PMA Foundation for Industry Talent contributors.
- Welcoming Reception
  - The PMA Fresh Summit Welcome Reception.

USA Grower tour participants attended the retail produce tour visiting a range of supermarkets and convenience centers. For participants this was the first real exposure to how the American retail market works and the beginning of understanding why marketing is so vital to a grower's business.

A number of speaker sessions were held over the day and the lunch addresses were also attended. Many of these presentations were followed by walks through the Trade Show looking at new packaging ideas for products. Some of the participants noted that a significant amount of the PMA's show content wasn't specific to growers and more exhibitors selling products to growers would have been better ie. Farm Machinery, new seed varieties and crop protection products.



(The Mexico exhibit at the PMA Trade Show)



USA Grower Tour Participants at the Welcome Reception

## Day 2 – Saturday 16 October

The second day of the conference included:

### Breakfast General Session

- A Fresh Outlook on the State of the Industry
  - The President and CEO of PMA Bryan Silbermann addressed delegates,

discussing the challenges, trends, and successes of the past year, as well as the issues that would affect delegates' business' in both the short- and long-term future. Topics included food innovation, consumer trends, labor, food safety, private labeling, ethical consumerism, and organics.

#### Workshop Series 2

- From Research to the Real-World: The Best of Food Safety Innovations
  - There is no shortage of research being done on food safety, but the truly valuable research is that with real-world impact. This session explained the progress of the CPS's food safety research and the business implications. The expert panel broke it all down in layman's terms, review practical applications for participants' operations, and help them understand how this research would protect their customers and their bottom line.
- From the "How" to the "Why": A New Look at Traceability
  - For years, the produce industry has worked together to find the best ways to implement supply chain traceability – but there has not been much focus on the "why." This session aimed to answer the "why": why is traceability so important and why are the benefits significant?
- Small Business, Big Thinking: Effectively Managing Your Finances in Any Economic Climate
  - From meeting costly government requirements to facing economic downturns, managing a business of fewer than 100 people presents its own set of unique financial challenges. This session for small business owners was designed to provide insight and advice on sound financial practices and the best methods of incorporating these practices into small business environments. From farmer to store owner, this session provided techniques specially created for small business owners, teaching them the benefits of proactive planning vs. reactive repair, and showed how to incorporate better financial insight into both their strategic and tactical planning.
- From the Front Lines: How Produce Managers Connect with the Supply Chain
  - Retail produce managers are an unbeatable source of insight on the day-to-day knowledge of produce and consumer trends. Retail specialist Harold Lloyd explored trends ranging from packaging to the economy to locally grown in this session, leading a panel of produce managers to examine the challenges and best practices of working together with suppliers to best serve consumers. Participants discovered how to sell more produce by better connecting with their supply chain partners and consumers.
- Cream of the Crop: Recruiting and Retaining Top Talent
  - Being able to identify, attract, motivate, and retain the very best talent is essential to the success of your business. This session explained the most effective strategies for recruiting and retaining top talent, and how to motivate teams to do whatever is needed to achieve business goals.
- Bringing More Produce to More People
  - The produce industry is discovering new ways to make fresh produce more accessible to more people. The result has been increased consumption

leading to more sales and higher profits. Participants learned what has been happening, how they can get involved, and how incorporating these ideas into their merchandising and marketing strategies can improve their bottom lines.

#### The Power of PMA: How to Put it to Work for You

- This session explained how PMA connects industry members and their staff to what matters most: the people, information, solutions, services, leadership, and insights that can help people's businesses thrive in today's competitive environment.

#### PMA Foundation for Industry Talent Career Headquarters

#### Exposition

#### Food Safety Solutions Center

- Interactive Q&A Session: Pass with Flying Colours: The Value of Product Testing
  - Moderated by Bob Whitaker, PMA Chief Science and Technology Officer, and with panelists including: Jim Gorney, FDA Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition Senior Advisor for Produce Safety; and Drew McDonald Taylor Farms / Taylor Fresh Foods Vice President National Quality Systems.

#### Receptions

- Food Safety Solutions Center Reception
- Floral Networking Reception
- PMA Volunteer Leadership Reception

USA Grower Tour participants spent the day attending sessions and visiting the Trade Show. Notable addresses for the day included the PMA "State of the Industry" by Bryan Silbermann.



(View of the PMA show floor)





(Grower Tour Participants Robert Kuzmicich and Peter Grech at the PMA Trade Show)

### Day 3 – Sunday 17 October

The third day of the conference included:

#### Breakfast General Session

- Beyond the Business Card: How to Create and Grow Strategic Business Relationships
  - This session explored the secrets of Relationship Economics, founded by social networking strategist David Nour, including how to invest in people for extraordinary return.

#### Workshop Series 3

- Keeping it Local: The Pros and Cons of Local Sourcing
  - There are numerous benefits, from savings to safety, and risks, associated with local sourcing. This panel discussion took a frank look at the good and the bad of local sourcing, including identifying the right local partners, calculating potential savings, and meeting quality and safety standards.
- Market Watch: The Impact of China
  - The full market potential of China has yet to be realized. This session took a thorough investigation of both opportunities and challenges of the growing Chinese marketplace – from China's economy, consumer attitudes, and behavior to infrastructure, food safety, and domestic produce competition.
- Labelling for Success
  - Today's innovative labeling techniques can play a major role in the success

of virtually any produce item. Great labels not only provide information, they can make your product stand out from the competition, catch a consumer's eye, inspire impulse purchases, and create a connection between your brand and the customer. This session explored how some innovative companies were employing unique labeling concepts as a business strategy for capturing market share.

- **Going Back to the Well: Techniques for Facing Water Challenges**
  - A number of regions around the world are facing serious water crises. Water shortages can be disastrous for the produce industry. This workshop helped participants understand the warning signs as well as the politics of apportioning water. It provided participants with various water management techniques and constructive steps that could be taken to deal with a shortage if it strikes. The panel discussion featured produce industry members who have experience water shortages in regions such as California, Australia, and Israel.
- **What's Your Story? Communicating With Consumers to Create More Customers**
  - Produce companies in all segments of the supply chain can increase sales by effectively communicating with consumers and changing any negative perceptions of our industry. This session helped companies of all sizes to better understand what motivates consumers, and how to connect with them to increase consumption and profits. Participants discovered how incorporating marketing and merchandising practices from the locally grown movement can help them create more loyal customers and more sales.
- **Listen Louder: The Business-Building Power of Social Media**
  - Companies of all types and sizes are using social media to engage with customers, suppliers, investors, and the media... and enjoying increasingly positive results. This session exposed participants to a variety of global best practices to incorporate social networking into their key strategic initiatives.

#### Food Safety Solutions Center

- **Interactive Q&A Session: Successfully Navigating Food Safety Audits**
  - Moderated by Bob Whitaker, PMA Chief Science and Technology Officer, and including panelists: Johnna Hepner, PMA Director, Food Safety and Technology; and, Jorge Hernandez US Foodservice Senior Vice President Food Safety and Quality.
- **Interactive Q&A Session: Your Role in Traceability**
  - Moderated by Ed Treacy, PMA Vice President, Supply Chain Efficiencies, and including panelists: Tom Casas Tanimura and Antle Vice President, Information Technology; Steve Arens GS1 US Director, Strategic Partnership; Teri Miller Food Lion, LLC, Produce Category Manager; and, Angela Paymard N2N Global Chairman.

#### Receptions

- **International Partners Reception**



## **General observations from the PMA Fresh Summit Convention from Grower feedback forms:**

- “The tour of the supermarkets was very interesting, especially seeing how they presented their food, making it eye catching.”
- “Speeches on marketing made some very interesting points.”
- “Gave me greater insight in regards to the marketing side of business.”
- “I found lots of stuff applicable to my production system.”
- “Retail Tour was a highlight for me, with the fresh field farms being the standout with a farmers market/barn style theme.”
- “Made important contacts for my business and the industry.”
- “Excellent, it was very interesting to see what consumer demands are in America.”
- “The Trade show is huge. There are some good ideas”
- “Good. There is so much to see, some good and some not so good.”

## Stine Research facility- DuPont R&D HQ, Delaware. 18 Oct



(USA Tour participants with David Leva from DuPont far left)

The tour of the Stine research facility was the DuPont world HQ for research and development. At the facility DuPont leading researchers informed growers on the lengthy process required to isolate molecules that can be used to one day create crop protectants. The process can take up to 10 years to develop a molecule and bring it to market with the financial investment being in the vicinity of 100 million dollars before making any sales.

The tour was conducted by Dr David M Leva who is the manager of Plant Science Research Biology and Application at the facility. Throughout the facility we were shown the sheer number of test trials required to identify and isolate specific chemical compounds. Of particular note was the area where these trials were done. Mechanisation has been employed at the DuPont facility by the use of a mechanical arm to do individual tests which has replaced staff labour of approximately 30 people.

## Meeting with the Office of Senator Cornyn- Senator for Texas.19 Oct



(AUSVEG Chairman John Brent and QLD grower Tony Gibb meeting with Senator Cornyn's agricultural advisor Keith Franks)

The meeting with the US Senator's office discussed agricultural issues common to both Australia and America including legislative change, growing conditions in America as well as future outlooks from a governance perspective.

## San Ysidro Farms, (San Luis Obispo County) California 21 Oct



(USA Tour Participants with San Ysidro Farms manager (centre))

San Ysidro farms is a family owned farm over a 1600 acre property. The farm demonstrated to growers how to operate on a massive scale such as this and how to manage it effectively. Staff at the farm had a strict knowledge management routine that commenced every day with a 20 minute briefing in the staff house. Any changes to the program were broadcast across the radio channels for each manager so everyone would always know what others were doing.



(Seedling Transplanter at San Ysidro Farms)

The most impressive piece of technology was the seedling transplanter. Because of the scale of the operation San Ysidro has its own seedling nursery and transplanter. Although they use the transplanter to apply the seedlings, wages in the USA are so much cheaper that it still remains cheaper to have migrant staff plant each seedling individually rather than pay for the additional piece of equipment to have the seedlings planted automatically.

For growers on the tour this started several discussions about economies of scale in vegetable growing as well as how to manage labour costs on their own farms.





(Growers inspecting Drip Tape at San Ysidro farms)

### **POVE (Pismo Oceano Vegetable Exchange) Facility, California**

The tour then moved on to POVE (Pismo Oceano Vegetable Exchange) where we were met by Dan Sutton the General Manager of the facility. POVE is a co-op of approximately 12 different farms with each farmer paying a membership to POVE and have their products marketed as a collective.



(USA Grower Tour members with Dan Sutton, General Manager of POVE)

Although only a few hours apart the growing conditions for the two areas were vastly different. POVE's specialty was in Asian Vegetables and Napa Cabbage (Wombok in Australia). This preference was a product of two reasons. The historical owners of the land POVE is on were Japanese farmers who migrated before the Second World War only to be interned after the

bombing of Pearl Harbour. The soil in this region was also particularly suited to these vegetables and the tradition and proclivity for growing Asian Vegetables in this area remained long after many of the original Japanese farm owners were bought out by corporate farmers buying into the POVE collective.



(POVE staff harvesting delicate Bok Choy in the field)

Growers on the tour made particular note at POVE about the size of American produce. Unlike Australia the grades required for Bok Choy are much bigger in the USA. Much of what was being harvested at POVE would be rejected in Australian Markets as too big. The flow on in thoughts from these discussions turned to what Americans call “appropriately sized meals” which is significantly larger than in Australia.



## Earthbound Farm, California

Day 10 saw the tour visit “Earthbound Farms” One of the largest organic farms in the Salinas Valley of California. At Earthbound growers got to listen to how effective marketing has changed peoples eating habits. Earthbound farms have 36 thousand acres under its name which dwarfs any farm in Australia. Earthbound have been instrumental with building a community of organic consumers to ensure its client base and release cook books and other media to nurture and grow their client base of consumers.



(USA Grower Tour members being shown a baby leaf lettuce plantation)

Earthbound has also gathered a significant amount of media attention due to its size requiring them to create a media kit to assist with disseminating correct information to the industry. These kits were provided to all growers on the tour.



(Earthbound Farms create a large display outside the Organic Store for children to play made out of pumpkin during the Halloween season. The area also has space for families who wish to picnic. This is another example of how Earthbound market their products as environmentally friendly and family products.)

## **Seminis Research Station, California**

The tour finished at the Seminis research facility in San Juan Bautista with a tour of their plant pathology centre. The tour was led by a Dr Raquel Salati, senior research scientist at Seminis San Juan. The facility is used for testing of plant hybrids and their resistance to disease and other effects. Dr Bautista and her colleagues covered several of the facilities functions and how Seminis and their parent company Monsanto view the future of the industry with much of agriculture wanting to move to Genetically Modified (GM) crops and managing public perception.



(USA Tour participants outside the Seminis research station. Dr Raquel Salati is bottom left)

### **General observations from farm and merchant visits:**

- “San Ysidro Farms gave us a good insight into a large scale farm”.



- “Earthbound Farms was an eye opener for me.”
- “Earthbound Farms was a great lesson in marketing and perception.”
- “Ocean mist farms – large scale operations – found their minimum tillage operation very interesting. The scale of their operation and mechanization was a highlight.”
- “Enjoyed the day at San Ysidro Farms. It was very well organised with everyone knowing their role for the day, and everything flowing smoothly. We found it of great interest and we wanted to see more.”

## **Summary:**

The farm visits and related activities provided the opportunity for the Australian growers to explore new production methods, compare production systems, and build relationships with other growers.

Growers were offered an introduction to production, marketing, and whole supply chain systems operating in a country recognised as setting the benchmark in many vegetable growing and supply chain operations. In addition, growers were able to develop international networks and examine current and future issues common to vegetable growers in Australia and America.

The PMA Fresh Summit Convention provided the opportunity for the participants to better understand the structures in place to manage and lead the American vegetable industry.

The growers noted the networking opportunities offered and were impressed by the American industry’s strategic approach to marketing. Growers felt that the PMA Convention was worth the visit for the packaging and marketing innovations but they were also disappointed by a lack of other elements key to their businesses which they would have liked to see.

## **Participants' comments on the value of the tour and the American vegetable industry:**

- “It is imperative that we have grower study tours like this and improve on them every year.”
- “I don’t think that you will ever be able to keep all the growers happy, but it should be varied to different times of the year so growers from different seasons can attend.”
- “It was great to see how other farmers and other countries operate.”
- “I would recommend the tour for other growers, for no other reason but to experience firsthand the scale of American production.”

## **Recommendations for future tours:**

- 1) The timing of the tour suited some growers, however, a recommendation was put forward that the tour could go to America at different times throughout the year to better suit individual growers.
- 2) Participants felt that the experience was great, however, they would have preferred to visit more farms that directly related to the scale of their farms at home. A recommendation was put forward that the itinerary be set after growers are confirmed for the tour. Although this could be difficult to facilitate.
- 3) Growers felt that the PMA conference focused too much on the rest of the supply chain rather than the growers.
- 4) There would be merit for future USA tours to incorporate a machinery conference or other grower focused event to satisfy the concerns raised that there needed to be more grower focused information.