

Mushroom Strategic Investment Advisory Panel meeting summary

Attendance:

SIAP	Chair
Tim Adlington	Michael Worthington
Matthew Fensom	
Sally Heukers	Hort Innovation (ex Officio)
Elisa Siliato	Monique Emmi
Mick Surridge	Neil Burgess
Kevin Tolson	John Vatikiotis
Steven Willemse	
Invited Guests	Minutes
N/A	Marilyn Hill

Apologies: Trevor Jordan; Neal Marland; Anthony Kachenko

Overview

The SIAP was held on the 6th of December. A number of items were covered during the day, focusing on the sessions highlighted below.

Marketing Update

- Hort Statistics Handbook. There was discussion around the data provided in the handbook, which is production focussed. The data used for *marketing* is the Nielsen Homescan data, which is consumer facing data and is the one relied on by retailers. It is not possible for the two sets of data to correlate exactly.
- It was suggested that it may make more sense for industry, whose primary requirement is per capita consumption information, to choose one or the other data source to work with consistently.
- Summer radio burst. Monique Emmi will provide the frequency details to the SIAP, as the Marketing Manager for mushrooms.
- It may be worth in considering ambassadors/ influencers for the different market segments.

Three-year Planning & Advice

- The hoped-for outcome of the discussions is an agreement on the split for the next three years, to allow Monique Emmi to develop a draft three-year program. Neil Burgess advised that there should be more focus on the outcome, rather than the dollars, as, following the meeting, the budget will be reviewed based on new information provided, and potential scenarios developed to reflect potential additional income.

- AMGA is working towards the completion of its crisis management processes. Sally Heukers requested to be provided with clear definitions of the criteria for accessing the reserve, so that it can be built into the processes.

Foodservice Sector

- **ACTION:** Further review the scope the food service strategy -
 - Within foodservice, who comprises the target market that the industry believes should be educated or trained.
 - Utilise the learning's from previous experience (enlisting the participants in the farm tours across four states—80 people—as advocates).
 - What is the gap or opportunity?
 - Who are the key influencers driving that market opportunity?
 - Desktop research in the global activity and trends.
 - What tools are required to deliver?
 - Rather than spreading the effort too thin, identify two/three sectors to focus on initially for educative purposes to build capacity.

R&D Program Update

- A summary of the R&D programs underway had been circulated and are available as per the latest edition of Hortlink - <http://horticulture.com.au/hortlink-2017-edition-4/mushroom/>
- The Chair invited SIAP questions on MU16000 Food Safety and QA Risk Management, MU16004 Marsh Lawson Mushroom Research Centre (MLMRC), and MU16005/MU16003 Food Safety for the Australian Mushroom Industry.
- John Vatikiotis noted apologies from Anthony Kachenko in being unable to attend today, and advised that Sally Heukers is very engaged and kept up to date with how the projects are progressing in the interval between SIAP meetings.

Hort Frontiers Update

- Sharyn Casey joined the meeting to provide an update on opportunities that may be available in the Hort Frontiers Leadership Fund.
- Background: In addition to strategic levy fund investment, Hort Innovation has also developed a further co-investment model known as the Hort Frontiers strategic partnership initiative. Here, Hort Innovation co-invests government money in collaborative cross-sector R&D projects that aim to solve major problems facing the future of Australian horticulture. This model is divided into seven investments representing key areas, including a leadership pillar.
- The SIAP had been provided with a copy of the Leadership Ladder that plots the current investment against different levels of leadership, to provide a brief overview of the opportunities that are available for the mushroom industry to invest in.

Hort Frontiers Leadership Fund investments

Masterclass in Horticultural Business

- This investment is going well. The first intake was on 13th of February 2017. There are three face-to-face components comprising on-farm visits throughout the program; the rest is online learning. The nine-month program has been set up as a mini MBA and is a mix of online and face-to-face learning with a time investment of approximately 20 hours per week.
- The learning modules cover entrepreneurship and innovation, governance and risk, supply chain management. The end-assessment is a business plan that has been developed for the business the student works in currently or for a business they would like to set up. The outcome is an accredited diploma in horticulture.
- The participant contribution of \$10,000 is eligible for HECS, but industry can elect to commit levy funds to sponsor a candidate. Hort Innovation has invested in this program for five years. After that time Hort Innovation steps back and the University of Tasmania, the delivery partner, is free to commercialise the program.
- This year there were 27 applications for 30 positions, with 21 people completing the course. Advertising for 2018 has already attracted 37 applications for 30 positions.

Graduate Engagement Scheme

- This program is run by Rimfire. It is a two-tier program in which final year students undertake a paid (\$8,000 scholarship funded through their university) internship with the host business. The business arranges for the intern to work on project related to the business, for which it currently does not have the resources. Phase 2 of the program encourages the business to employ that person. Part of this investment is a five-day leadership program, which is being run by the Rural Leadership Foundation.
- Advice has been provided to Rimfire to vary the targeted interns away from only agriculture and include a much broader scope, e.g. IT, marketing, accounting. Additional advice to Rimfire will be to ensure that where required, businesses are guided and supported, perhaps by the development of a template, around the internship framework, especially for, say, the first twelve weeks. This will be designed to ensure that both the intern and the business maximises the outcome of the opportunity.

Women in Leadership

- There are, overall, 20 scholarships run through a Service Provider called Women in Leadership Australia. There are a range of scholarships for women working across horticulture, suitable for different entry points. This a four-month course for emerging leaders targeting mid-tier and beginner level managers. The individual pays a proportion of the cost (\$2,000). The course is predominately online with minimal face-to-face engagement, making it more time realistic.
- A second program available which is run over nine months, it is slightly more expensive to the individual, however Hort Innovation and Women in Leadership contribute approximately 60%. As people advance in experience and leadership, there is also a twelve-month program.

PhD Scholarships

- This program is targeting the new generation of researchers in the industry. A coordinated scholarship program has been set up, led by the University of Tasmania, who will work with other Australian universities to find quality PhD students. These students will be required to take on a project, the parameters of which are tight, must have the capacity to benefit multiple commodities, and must be blue sky. The aim of the investment is to attract people from e.g. robotics. Student can receive a stipend of up to \$35-\$40,000 per annum.
- An important element of this investment is that students come together for a biennial conference, which is an industry embedded conference, so the students are not working in isolation but part of industry and a broader group.

Churchill Scholarship

- Commencing 2018 there is investment for three scholarships per year, for five years, with Churchill as the co-investor. There are three fully paid scholarships for 2018.
- While the horticultural industry has supported Nuffield Scholarships, it is felt there is a lack of understanding around the Churchill opportunity, the difference being it is not just agriculture. The similarity with Nuffield is that international travel is involved and take on a research task. With Churchill the applicant has to come up with the research question and outline what is the research question, and why this requires international travel. Once completed the information must be brought back to, and disseminated within, Australia.
- The travel component for Nuffield is for up to six weeks at a time over two years travelling with a cohort. The travel component for Churchill is twelve weeks, individually.

Next steps

Next SIAP on the 16th of February 2018

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