

Horticulture Innovation Australia

Final Report

**Driving awareness and adoption of the citrus
industry R and D program through targeted
communications**

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Citrus Australia

Project Number: CT13024

CT13024

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Summary

This project built on the activities of the previous national citrus communications program project CT10024, and operated during the period 1 August 2013 to 6 December 2015.

Citrus Australia worked with specialist communication consultants Currie Communications and AgriHort Communications to develop and deliver on a range of communication outputs and outcomes reported against annual operating plans and a communications strategy.

The main communication outputs included the industry's flagship magazine *Australian Citrus News* produced quarterly and mailed to 1,800 levy payers for free; monthly practical production-oriented e-newsletter *Season Update* and the fortnightly industry e-newsletter *Citrus E-news*.

Communication/media support was also provided for technical/R&D related national and regional events such as the 2014 Citrus Technical Forum & Field Days and numerous regional forums held annually in citrus growing regions.

Quarterly evaluation reports by Currie Communications provided quantitative and qualitative data analysis for the website and e-newsletter usage and media coverage with recommendations for ongoing improvement.

A mid-term review utilising an on-line survey and phone interviews, including recommendations for improvement, was completed by Currie Communications in March 2015.

The independent mid-term communications review report 2015 stated that satisfaction with communications activities provided by Citrus Australia is high. Respondents generally feel the organisation delivers valuable communications content that helps them when making business decisions.

Respondents felt that Citrus Australia is a reliable source of information. The content distributed helps to keep industry up-to-date on market opportunities which assist them in making important business decisions. In addition, they value receiving insight into local issues and grower experiences.

Recommendations for future R&D-funded communications are:

1. Include a grower/packer/industry profile in every Australian Citrus News magazine to highlight key achievements and/or practical applications of new research outcomes and programs. These profiles should also be communicated in Citrus eNews. Growers like to read stories about their peers and are more likely to adopt new techniques and/or research if it is proven by their peers to benefit operations.
2. Increase content in Australian Citrus News on levy-funded projects and the potential benefits of outcomes to growers. Expand content by providing options to view more scientific and statistical data on the Citrus Australia website.
3. Strengthen the science/R&D content in Australian Citrus News. In addition, include more international R&D projects and outcomes.
4. Include content on juice, lemon and limes in each issue of the Australian Citrus News to improve reach and increase the value of the publication.
5. Develop an electronic template for Season Update to allow greater accessibility and to provide analytics on which content is being read.
6. Draft Season Update content to be less retrospective and more focussed on what growers/packers should be considering for the coming season. The addition of a market report, video diaries/webinars and current prices would increase value.
7. Alert industry of upcoming events and key diary dates via SMS.
8. Source and include more content on the Citrus Australia website on R&D, planting statistics and growers' profiles to ensure it is a more valuable tool for industry (this content can be source from the magazine). In addition, more resources are required to ensure content is up-to-date. This is particularly relevant in the 'events section' as it was cited in survey as the main reason for visiting the website.
9. As social media is of limited interest to growers, the emphasis should be on using social media at events and when engaging with wider industry and media.
10. To increase the use and relevance of the Citrus Australia website (and therefore increasing traffic to the site) offer expanded information on articles that appear in the Australian Citrus News magazine. This could include full interviews, statistical data and scientific information relating to R&D content, and video content such as webinars or interviews with those featured in articles
11. Horticulture Innovation Australia and Citrus Australia to review the communication service providers and arrangements to continue and further

improve communication outcomes for the Australian citrus industry.

Introduction

This project built on the activities of the previous national citrus communications program project CT10024, and operated during the period 1 August 2013 to 6 December 2015.

The Australian Citrus Strategic R&D Plan 2010-2017 (Horticulture Australia Ltd, Citrus Australia Ltd 2011) identified four Objectives & Key Strategy Areas.

Objective 1: Develop and Maintain Market Opportunities

Objective 2: Increase Product Value

Objective 3: Improve Efficiency and Sustainability

Objective 4: Provide a Supportive Operating Environment

This project was specifically designed to address Objective 4.1 Information & Communication.

Citrus Australia worked with specialist communication consultants Currie Communications and AgriHort Communications to develop and deliver on a range of communication outputs and outcomes reported against annual operating plans.

The main communication outputs included the industry's flagship magazine *Australian Citrus News* produced quarterly and mailed to 1,800 levy payers for free; monthly practical production-oriented e-newsletter *Season Update* and the fortnightly industry e-newsletter *Citrus E-news*.

Communication/media support was also provided for technical/R&D related national and regional events such as the 2014 Citrus Technical Forum & Field Days and numerous regional forums held annually in citrus growing regions.

Quarterly evaluation reports by Currie Communications provided quantitative and qualitative data analysis for the website and e-newsletter usage and media coverage with recommendations for ongoing improvement.

A mid-term review utilising an on-line survey and phone interviews, including recommendations for improvement, was completed by Currie Communications in March 2015.

Citrus Australia and Horticulture Innovation Australia completed an open tender process for the citrus publications in September 2015 and Citrus Australia participated

in a communications planning day on 26 October with the successful service provider Currie Communications.

CT13024 ceased on 6 December 2015 and Horticulture Innovation Australia commenced new contractual arrangements on 7 December 2015.

Methodology

Citrus Australia prepared annual operating plans listing communication approaches; outputs and outcomes; and KPI's/progress reports. The communication supported by this project included events (national and regional industry events and forums); magazine; grower case studies; website; other publications (e-newsletters, media releases etc) and enhanced technology (email, mobile, smartphone etc).

Citrus Australia maintained a database including levy payers, research and extension personnel and supply chain participants and provided access to this database for communication purposes.

Regular project team meetings were held for planning, delivering, monitoring, evaluation and improvement purposes.

Regular reporting was delivered to Horticulture Innovation Australia and levy payers via Citrus Australia's national and regional events.

Industry magazine: *Australian Citrus News*

AgriHort Communications were contracted to publish the quarterly magazine. The editor worked closely with Citrus Australia, Horticulture Innovation Australia, citrus researchers and industry personnel to plan, develop and write articles relevant and topical to the industry.

Articles included updates on: crop manipulation; biosecurity; new varieties; market access; export trends; Australian Citrus Quality Standards; grower case studies; agrichemical updates; pest and disease management; study tour learnings; plantings statistics; event learnings; fruit fly research and management; and new technologies.

A complete index is available in [Appendix A](#).

The magazine was mailed to approximately 1,800 levy payers free of charge.

Website: www.citrusaustralia.com.au

The website was regularly updated with research fact sheets; articles, stories, event details/presentations and media releases. Some industry and technical information is available only to Australian levy payers and associated industry stakeholders in password protected areas on the website.

The website also acts as the entry point for InfoCitrus and the online export registration system developed through projects CT13037 Market intelligence and

CT12005 Market access.

Website visits and page views were monitored monthly and reported quarterly.

Monthly newsletter Season Update

Citrus Australia and Currie Communications worked together with expert content contributors to publish a monthly practical production-oriented Season Update.

The contracted contributors included: NSW DPI, DAFWA, Qld pest consultants and a juice analyst/consultant.

Season Update includes: seasonal outlook, phenology, maturity, weed, pest & disease updates and management options; research updates (for Qld, NSW, Vic, SA and WA); and juice/processing sector update.

Season Update is emailed out to approximately 500 grower and industry recipients.

Fortnightly Citrus e-news

Citrus e-news is a fortnightly electronic newsletter that is emailed out to approximately 600 grower and industry recipients.

Citrus e-news provides more timely, regular and succinct updates on research outcomes, events, and industry updates. It provides links and references to additional information in the *Australian Citrus News*, Season Update, Citrus Australia website, Horticulture Innovation Australia website and other appropriate sources.

Events

This project supported the communication of relevant national and regional events with a research or technical focus including the 2014 Citrus Market Outlook Forum and 2015 Citrus Technical Forum & Field Day and multiple regional forums in citrus growing regions during 2014 and 2015.

Media

This project enabled technical industry updates and media releases on topics including export market access; research outcomes; regional specific information; events; quality and safety and cultural best practice advice.

The aim is to target rural and regional media (print, audio, video and online) to assist grower awareness and adoption rates.

Outputs

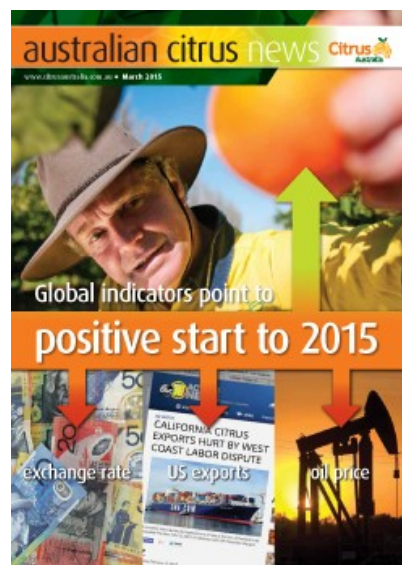
Planning, monitoring and reporting

- Communications Plan 2013
- Annual Operating Plan 2013-14; 2014-15
- Quarterly evaluation reports & recommendations: Oct 2013; Jan 2014; April 2014; July 2014; Oct 2014; Jan 2015; Apr 2015; July 2015;
- Mid-term communication review report March 2015
- Communication planning workshop October 2015
- Horticulture Innovation Australia milestone and final reports.

Industry magazine: *Australian Citrus News*

Nine quarterly editions, full colour, up to 40 pages:





Website: www.citrusaustralia.com.au

The website is regularly updated with the latest research and event information. This includes access to InfoCitrus and the online export registration system developed in conjunction the Australian Government Department of Agriculture and Water Resources.

The website includes a Levy Payer login area enabling the ongoing development of a national levy payer payers' database as well as allowing secure and restricted access to research outcomes and technical data. An e-marketing module enables the distribution of branded e-newsletters that can be targeted to all or selected groups of Levy Payers.

Monthly newsletter Season Update

Season Update continues to be well received due to its practical, production-oriented content and the technical expertise of its contributors. It is published monthly by Citrus Australia, hosted on the industry web site and promoted to eligible subscribers via the site's e-marketing module.

Archived editions of *Season Update* can be viewed on the website:

<http://www.citrusaustralia.com.au/news/season-update-archive.htm>

Fortnightly Citrus e-news

Citrus eNews is a fortnightly electronic newsletter compiled by Currie Communications and Citrus Australia that is emailed directly to approximately 600 addresses. It is a direct publication to growers on current industry research updates, market information and events and is not intended for the media.

There were 56 newsletters created and distributed electronically with over 200 unique articles.

Many of the public e-news articles can be found here:

<http://www.citrusaustralia.com.au/news/Industry%20News/industry-news.htm>

Events

Communication support was provided for the following events:

- Citrus Market Outlook Forum, Sydney, 11-12 March 2014
- Citrus Technical Forum and Field Day, Mildura, 16-17 March 2015
- 2014 Regional forums: QLD, Gayndah, 12-13 February
 NSW, Griffith and Barham, 7-8 April
 VIC, Mildura, 10 April
 SA, Waikerie, 14 April
 WA, Moora, 7 May
- 2015 Regional forums: QLD, Gayndah, 24-25 February
 SA, Waikerie, 8 April
 NSW, Griffith, 15 April
 VIC, Mildura, 17 April
 WA, Manjimup 7-8 May

This included coordinating technical presenters; making presentations available on the website; developing articles for e-news and *Australian Citrus News* and managing evaluation surveys of delegates.

Media

A number of industry updates and media releases were distributed on a range of topics and issues including market access achievements; HLB/Biosecurity; NRS results; gall wasp research; tree census; high pressure washing manual; health benefits of juice; pilot Diploma of Horticulture (Citrus); and the Horticulture Innovation advisory panel and investment process.

Many of these updates and releases can be obtained from the website:

<http://www.citrusaustralia.com.au/news/Industry%20News/industry-news.htm>

Outcomes

The independent mid-term communications review report stated that satisfaction with communications activities provided by Citrus Australia is high. Respondents generally feel the organisation delivers valuable communications content that helps them when making business decisions.

Respondents felt that Citrus Australia is a reliable source of information. The content distributed helps to keep industry up-to-date on market opportunities which assist them in making important business decisions. In addition, they value receiving insight into local issues and grower experiences.

Though difficult to quantify it was pleasing to see how the Australian Citrus News is utilised and displayed to significantly widen the audience reach. The following quotes are taken from the 2015 communications survey:

- *"The mag is a way of communicating...not everyone has access to the info particularly our employees and gives them the chance to see what's going on."*
- *"We quite often talk over different articles or aspects of it over lunch."*
- *"I like to have something to display on our industry in the office."*

It was also useful to discover how growers valued networking as a way of sharing information and learning.

Evaluation and Discussion

An independent review conducted by Currie Communications in January 2013 as part of CT10024 National citrus communications program resulted in 24 recommendations for future communication work in the Australian citrus industry. These were used in developing the 2013 communications plan and subsequent annual operating plans used in this project.

Project evaluation tools and performance monitoring included:

- Quarterly evaluation reports & recommendations
- Website visits, location, most popular pages
- E-news open rate and most popular click-through stories
- Season Update open rate
- Media monitoring
- Event surveys
- Independent communication review 2015 - "2015 communications survey report"

Industry magazine: *Australian Citrus News*

Almost 90% of respondents in the 2015 communications survey report felt *Australian Citrus News* was valuable to receive, with half stating it was very valuable and 13% stating it was extremely valuable.

Examples of the feedback given from positive respondents included:

- The mag is a way of communicating...not everyone has access to the info particularly our employees and gives them the chance to see what's going on
- It's good to see stories about new varieties and workshops
- It keeps you up to date with what Citrus Australia is doing...provides contacts and has results from R&D
- Gives me an idea of what is going on around Aust...export markets
- It gives an indication of where R&D is occurring and citrus management trends
- Reports on a lot of R&D stuff that is happening...relevant to me as a grower and a packer...reading stories about other growers.

There has been discussion around reducing the cost of the magazine by producing an e-book (thereby reducing the printing and postage costs) but while more than 55% of survey respondents said they would be willing to receive an electronic copy, however, they would be less likely to read it. Respondents said they value being able to share the hard copy with their employees, display them at their business and read it in their downtime.

Website: www.citrusaustralia.com.au

Website visits increased approximately 55% between November 2013 and November 2015 with Australia moving to number one position for visitor location (up from second position).

Whilst the website traffic has increased almost 50% of the 2015 survey respondents stated they rarely use the website as an information source, with a further 9% stating they never visit the website. Only 15% of respondents visit the Citrus Australia website more than a couple of times a week and the remaining 29% access the website a few times a month.

The majority of respondents visit the website for general industry information and updates, and to check upcoming events.

Respondents would like to see more information about R&D updates and information; Australia-wide database of plantings; more technical information and biosecurity updates; information targeted to packers; current market reports; pricing and forecasts; information on new varieties; and grower profiles.

Monthly newsletter Season Update

The open rates improved from around 34% in 2013 to 45% in 2015.

Almost all respondents (94%) receive the Season Update with approximately 80% stating the content was valuable. Of that 80%, 34% stated the content was very valuable and 13% said it was extremely valuable. Respondents felt that the content

kept them 'in tune' with the other states. However, improvements suggested included more timely and less repetitive information.

Fortnightly Citrus e-news

The open rates improved from around 35% in 2013 to 40% in 2015.

Overall, 85% of respondents felt the e-news content was valuable. Out of the 85%, 43% stated that content was very valuable and 7% said it was extremely valuable. Respondents overall felt that the content was well written, and provided a regular update on what is happening in the industry and Citrus Australia's activities.

Of the 15% who provided suggested improvements to the content, the consensus was they would like to see more regionally focused content and increased international content.

Events

Almost 80% of respondents stated that they had attended a Citrus Australia forum with majority finding them valuable and a great way to network. Of the respondents that said that they have never attended a forum, the main reasons given were time limitations and travel costs.

Respondents felt that Citrus Australia is doing a great job in organising forums and field days but would like to see more regional forums and rotation through the regions.

Recommendations

1. Include a grower/packer/industry profile in every Australian Citrus News magazine to highlight key achievements and/or practical applications of new research outcomes and programs. These profiles should also be communicated in Citrus eNews. Growers like to read stories about their peers and are more likely to adopt new techniques and/or research if it is proven by their peers to benefit operations.
2. Increase content in Australian Citrus News on levy-funded projects and the potential benefits of outcomes to growers. Expand content by providing options to view more scientific and statistical data on the Citrus Australia website.
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- AgriHort Communications – Katie Fisher
- Currie Communications – Susan McNair

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