

# **Horticulture Innovation Australia**

## **Final Report**

### **International Potato Group Meeting China 2015**

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AUSVEG Ltd

Project Number: PT14702

**PT14702**

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**Purpose:**

The purpose of this report is to detail the outcomes of PT14702 International Potato Group Meeting China 2015.

**Acknowledgement of funding sources:**

PT14702 International Potato Group Meeting China 2015 was funded by Horticulture Innovation Australia Ltd (HIA) using the Fresh Potato Levy and matched funds from the Australian Government.

**Date:** 30 October 2015

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## Media summary

The International Potato Group Meeting China 2015, held from 25-27 July, provided the opportunity for representatives of the Australian potato industry to meet with their counterparts from around the world to discuss important issues facing the worldwide potato industry.

The Australian potato industry has been a member of the International Potato Group (IPG) for many years now. IPG meetings provide the opportunity for Australia to hear about the challenges other countries are facing and transfer knowledge on best practices utilised by the potato industry internationally.

Held over two days in the Yanqing province of Beijing, the primary aim of the IPG meeting in 2015 was to discuss marketing issues in the potato industry, research and development (R&D), and future governance and membership criteria of the IPG.

Information was provided and discussed by representatives from the Australian, South African, New Zealand, United Kingdom and Canadian potato industries. A key theme throughout the meeting was how the issue of potato consumption can be best addressed and whether or not local marketing campaigns have been successful in addressing the decline in potato consumption, which is an issue in most markets around the world.

After the completion of the IPG, participants attended the 9<sup>th</sup> World Potato Congress, also held in Yanqing. The World Potato Congress is widely acknowledged as the leading potato industry event and provided further opportunity to keep updated on leading international R&D and the latest trends in the potato industry.

Participation in the 2015 IPG meeting and World Potato Congress helped to ensure that the Australian potato industry is at the forefront of developments from around the world and remains an industry leader.

## **Expected outcomes and how they were achieved**

The overall aim of the International Potato Group Meeting China 2015 was for representatives of the Australian potato industry to exchange knowledge on potato R&D and consumer strategies with their international counterparts.

Throughout the two-day IPG meeting and World Potato Congress, there were a number of opportunities to discuss potato R&D outcomes and the latest issues affecting the industry. The IPG meeting in particular provided a rare opportunity to discuss the successes of R&D programs from around the world with their project leaders face-to-face and benchmark local programs.

An outcome of the IPG meeting was the proposed development of an enhanced governance structure and communications model for the group, which will enable regular communication and updates between member countries.

Learnings from the IPG meeting and World Potato Congress will enable participants to consider international R&D and apply successful and relevant outcomes to local R&D projects. Relationships established at the IPG meeting will enable ongoing information exchange and collaboration in relation to R&D and marketing.

## Tour report

The International Potato Group (IPG) was borne out of the World Potato Congress and first met in 2007. The IPG comprised a group of international potato leaders to discuss and consider research and development (R&D) and potato promotion. The IPG Terms of Reference state: *The International Potato Group exists to foster collaborative relationships that deliver synergies and add value to the potato industry.*

Australia has previously participated in a number of IPG meetings, including previous meetings in South Africa in 2010 and England in 2012. The 2015 IPG Meeting was held from 26 – 27 July in the Yanqing province of Beijing, China, prior to the 9<sup>th</sup> World Potato Congress. The meeting was attended by representatives from the Australian, New Zealand, United Kingdom, Canadian and South African potato industries, while the USA who have previously participated in IPG meetings were an apology.

The meeting was broken down into key four sessions. A situation analysis of each country was provided, separate marketing and research and development (R&D) sessions were held, and IPG governance and structure was also discussed. Each participating country provided an update on activities in their local industry in each session.

This report contains non-confidential information from the International Potato Group 2015 meeting that is perceived to be of benefit to the Australian potato industry. Following the IPG there will be ongoing discussions regarding the establishment of a model for ongoing sharing of information between countries that will be mutually beneficial.

## **Situation Analysis**

### **United Kingdom**

Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) Potatoes updated the IPG on the United Kingdom (UK) potato industry. AHDB Potatoes were recently re-branded from the UK Potato Council, in alignment with branding of other agricultural divisions in the UK.

The UK produces approximately six million tonnes of potatoes each year, and levy income is approximately £6 million, which is raised by area planted and audited by tonnes purchased at the rate of £42.62 per hectare or 18p per tonne.

While there has been a steady decline in recent years of fresh potato consumption through supermarkets, there has been a steady increase in processed potato consumption in the UK. Up to 50 per cent of processed potato production comes from France, Belgium and Germany. It is also understood that UK consumers have not heard of 40 per cent of the varieties stocked.

Due to irregular weather in the UK, production has been down by 25 per cent recently, with growers having issues fulfilling their contracts with wholesalers and retailers. The number of growers in the UK has declined recently, however, hectares sown has remained constant. It is believed that land for potatoes just ends up in fewer hands, with the number of growers diminishing but potatoes still grown across a similar amount of hectares.

AHDB Potatoes' priorities are technical, marketing and corporate affairs. Since the end of 2012, media commitment has increased by 1,400 per cent.

### **South Africa**

Potatoes South Africa provided an overview of the South African potato industry.

Potatoes are the fifth largest industry in South Africa, worth R6 billion at a primary level and R16 at a secondary (retail) level.

80 per cent of potato production in South Africa is under irrigation and input costs are generally very high, at approximately USD \$10,000 – 14,000 per hectare. Electricity costs are particularly high, which significantly impacts pack houses.

Potatoes South Africa has four key priority areas: research, information, transformation, and market development and product promotion, with funding split relatively evenly between each priority area. Information is sent to growers via SMS, email and the Potatoes South Africa website. Production regions are remote, however, and access to internet and mobile phone services can be limited. Transformation programs are focused on getting a greater number of black South Africans involved in farming, and include training and development initiatives.

Living standards have changed in South Africa in recent times, with significant increases in the middle classes, particularly amongst the black population. Due to this, consumption has increased and sits at around 40 kilograms per capita. It is a unique situation in South Africa compared to the rest of the world that potato consumption continues to increase from a very low base. South Africa is probably in a similar situation in relation to per capita consumption as Australia and other developed nations were a few decades ago, before potato consumption per capita plateaued.

### **Australia**



The Australian potato industry was represented by AUSVEG and Horticulture Innovation Australia (HIA) who provided updates. State-based association, Potatoes South Australia, was also in attendance.

Australia is ranked 35<sup>th</sup> in the world for potato production, with an average of 1,197 tonnes produced on each farm annually. In terms of growing practices and R&D, however, Australia is regarded as a world leader. At almost \$700 million, potatoes are worth more than any other vegetable in Australia.

Export is seen as a large opportunity for the Australian potato industry for seed, fresh and processing potatoes. Recent Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with South Korea, China and Japan have opened the door for Australian vegetables. With growing middle classes in Asian countries there is also opportunity for the export of more 'premium' products.

Rising production costs, biosecurity and market access are all seen as issues for the industry. Australia has some of the highest input costs in the world, including hired labour, which is by far growers' greatest cost. Biosecurity is a persistent issue, with pest incursions and changes to disease and virus statuses occurring regularly. It is important that Australia protects its potato production by minimising the risk of pest and disease incursions, such as the Tomato potato psyllid and Zebra chip disease complex.

A comprehensive consumer research project has recently been conducted in Australia in an effort to measure the drivers of potato purchasing and consumption and improve growers' knowledge of consumer trends and behaviours in relation to potatoes. The project measures Australians' knowledge of potatoes and varieties, how regularly they purchase potatoes, why they purchase potatoes, what barriers to purchase exist and how potatoes are prepared.

Potato Tracker has produced a number of insights, including that a key barrier to Australians purchasing more potatoes is that they 'already consume enough for their needs', and that variety awareness is very low.

## **New Zealand**

Potatoes New Zealand provided an update on their local industry, noting that the New Zealand potato industry has a value of NZD \$143 million at the farm gate, with production averaging 50 tonnes per hectare across the seed, fresh and processing sectors.

New Zealand's potato levy collects 85 cents for every NZD \$100 at the first point of sale. This levy covers R&D projects, marketing, export development and seed certification.

Key targets for Potatoes New Zealand are: Increase productivity per hectare by NZD \$150 per hectare over 10 year period, double value of fresh and processed NZ based exports by 2025 and enhance the value of the domestic market by 50% by 2025 – this implies value growth on stable volumes above CPI. R&D priority areas include: foliar, pest and disease management, soil-borne diseases, yield and functional foods.

Consistent with the UK and Australia, awareness of varieties in New Zealand is low amongst consumers. There are approximately 50 varieties grown in New Zealand.

## **Canada**

Canada was represented by the Canadian Horticultural Council, whose Canadian Potato Council is made up of member organisations from eight provinces. These provinces have the ability to impose a levy, and the provinces can then add funds to a national pool.

Growers and industry contribute a portion of funding into research programs, along with universities and other industries.

A full biosecurity plan for potatoes has been developed by industry and government, with a voluntary standard set for growers. Biosecurity is seen as a priority for Canada, especially considering it is relatively Potato cyst nematode (PCN) free.

Canada's Plant Breeders' Rights (PBR) Act was amended recently to match the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV) 91 Standard. Six Canadian varieties have since been granted UPOV 91 protection and PBR rights in Canada currently last for 20 years.

## **Marketing Session**

A key discussion point of the 2015 IPG meeting was whether or not marketing campaigns can be effective in increasing consumption of potatoes amongst consumers. Marketing campaigns have been ongoing in the UK, South Africa and New Zealand and have had varying results.

### **United Kingdom**

The UK has seen a steady decline in the consumption of fresh potatoes since 1942, which is the largest sector of the potato market ahead of crisps and processed potatoes. AHDB Potatoes believes that there are a number of contributing factors to this, including preparation time of potatoes and health perceptions. It is believed that consumers are more inclined to purchase 'super foods', such as coconut and beetroot which have experienced boosts in sales.

AHDB Potatoes has used a marketing campaign to educate consumers about potatoes and their nutrition, versatility and convenience. This includes targeting 'tomorrow's consumers', promoting growing and cooking your own potatoes with the takeaway message that potatoes are good for you.

While AHDB Potatoes are persisting with generic marketing campaigns, they have admitted that education can be hard to validate and there is little research to show that it is effective in increasing consumption. It is difficult to prove whether or not a primary school student becomes a potato consumer in a decades' time as longitudinal research is prohibitively expensive.

AHDB Potatoes says that consumption has not re-entered growth since the introduction of its marketing campaigns, and that it is difficult to ascertain if the decline in potato consumption would have continued if marketing programs were not undertaken. It is believed that marketing has potentially addressed the decline in consumption but that there is no hard data to show improved growth in potato sales.

It is expected that communication of a marketing campaign will cost around £760,000 (approximately \$1.75 million AUD) per year.

### **South Africa**

Potatoes South Africa has implemented a generic market development and product promotions strategy that aims to convert non-consumers into consumers.

The socio-economic status of many South Africans has improved in recent years, with 23 per cent now living below the poverty line, comparatively smaller than 51 per cent just a few years ago. As the middle classes grow and South Africans have a higher disposable income, demand for potatoes has grown as they are seen as a replacement for other commodities.

Consumer research has also revealed positive results for the potato industry, with most consumers finding potatoes to be versatile and healthy, while very few consumers found them to be expensive.

The aims of Potatoes South Africa's marketing campaign revolve around consumer and trade education. This includes positioning potatoes as being good for you and educating consumers on different varieties and their uses, so that potatoes are prepared properly and consumers get the best experience possible.

In-store campaigns are used periodically to drive consumption, especially when there is a surplus of potatoes, which results in increased sales. It has also been found that while sales drop post-

promotion, they do not fall to the same level as prior to the promotion. 'Free media' is also utilised by Potatoes South Africa, which uses press releases to drive exposure.

Per capita consumption in South Africa has increased from 20 kilograms to 42 kilograms per capita in the past 12 years, however, it is believed that this is due to societal changes rather than solely attributable to marketing campaigns. The direct effect of the marketing campaigns is difficult to measure.

### **Australia**

While it is believed that consumption in Australia is declining, there is no national marketing program in place to address this. A marketing program has been established in Western Australia, however, there are serious doubts that levy payers have received a profitable return on investment. The prevailing view in the Australian industry is that a national generic-marketing program should not be implemented if a return could not be guaranteed for growers.

Consumer research has been conducted at a national level to ascertain what drives potato purchase and consumption, with results communicated to industry in an effort to enable growers and retailers to tailor products to consumer wants and needs.

Other avenues are being explored by the Australian industry to increase sales and reduce supply surpluses. In addition to exporting, value-added products are also being developed that will attempt to reduce the wastage of potatoes, which currently sits at around 20 – 40 per cent.

### **Canada**

Nutritional facts have recently been included on potato packaging where possible, which is being used by the Canadian potato industry in an attempt to promote the health attributes of potatoes. Some health claims cannot be made, however, such as mentioning calories which is different for each variety. Advertising in print media has also been undertaken in Canada, with over four million people reached.

A feasibility study is also currently being undertaken to determine the potential success of a National Promotion and Research Agency (NPRA) for potatoes. The NPRA would aim to expand markets and increase sales through generic advertising and researching potential new products.

### **New Zealand**

An education and marketing program has been established in New Zealand to address the decline in potato consumption. It is believed that younger generations perceive potatoes to be inconvenient and difficult to prepare.

Working with a low budget, the program uses key influencers such as dieticians, food writers and educators as leverage to promote potatoes. Themes of the campaign revolve around convenience of potatoes, nutrition, versatility and sustainability.

Education programs target three primary segments: 5 – 12 year old primary school students, 13 – 17 year old secondary students and tertiary students.

Further methods of increasing consumption and the profitability of the industry discussed in the meeting included developing value-added products and products that use potatoes usually destined for waste.

While a number of potato bodies around the world are attempting to increase consumption through the use of marketing campaigns, there is not a lot of evidence available to show that it is working, except in South Africa where there are unique socio-economic dynamics in play. The consensus is that while marketing campaigns may be slowing the decline in consumption, they are not improving profitability for growers and the net return on investment is difficult to quantify.

A key outcome from the marketing session was that each member would prepare and share with the group an informative document summarising successful marketing and consumer-focussed projects.

## **R&D Session**

Research and development (R&D) issues were also discussed at the meeting, with Australia, Canada, South Africa and the UK all discussing local R&D and summarising key learnings for all participants.

### **Australia**

Major Australian potato research programs were discussed, including outputs from APRP2, the Potato Industry Extension Program, Potato Industry Communication Strategy, Potato Tracker and the Potato R&D Gap Analysis.

APRP2 outcome, PreDicta Pt, was discussed as one of Australia's most promising recent R&D projects. The DNA-based soil testing service identifies whether particular soil-borne pathogens will pose as a risk to growers, enabling them to plan and prepare prior to planting.

Results from consumer-research project Potato Tracker were discussed, including that ease of preparation and taste are the main drivers for consumption and that provenance is important for consumers.

Approximately 30 per cent of consumers are unable to name a variety of potato, however, while the largest barrier to purchase is Australians believing they already consume enough for their needs.

### **Canada**

The Canadian Potato Council has five strategic priorities:

- Variety development
- Pest and disease management
- Production management and agronomy
- Communication and extension
- Market research and consumer education

Current projects are researching identification and management techniques for PVY, wireworm, Tomato potato psyllid and Zebra chip, and verticillium. The use of nitrogen for improved yield, quality and profitability is also being investigated, while a national variety evaluation program is also being undertaken.

### **South Africa**

Potatoes South Africa's priority areas focus on the below:

- Identification of best adapted cultivars
- Soil health: improvement & natural resource conservation
- Seed quality
- Virus and aphid control
- Water use and quality
- Cultivation practices
- Integrated management of soil-borne diseases

Common scab, Powdery scab and Soft rot are key soil-borne diseases being researched in South Africa, with Potatoes South Africa investing more money into this research than any other priority area.

Virus and vectors, technology transfer (communication) and cropping systems are also being highly invested in.

### **United Kingdom**

AHDB Potatoes' chief aim is to make the potato industry more competitive and sustainable. Key research priorities addressing this include:

- Exploiting new markets by promoting health and quality
- Managing endemic threats, such as PCN, blackleg and blight
- Soil, water and crop nutrition
- Precision agriculture and innovative engineering
- Storage management for maintaining quality and reducing waste
- Horizon scanning, legislation and skills

AHDB Potatoes have also been investing in future knowledge and skills, facilitating studentships and fellowships to ensure there is not a skill shortage in the future. 10 new PhDs have recently been made available to train young researchers in the potato industry, while fellowships to more established researchers have been made available, focussing on agronomy, nematology and storage.

A common theme from the R&D session was that soil health is a key priority area for each country and that there are knowledge gaps in this area. Australia's PreDicta Pt test was noted as a positive development for the industry, while biofumigation and seed research were listed as potential areas of interest for future R&D.

## **IPG Governance and Structure**

With the IPG currently meeting only once every three years, and communication slowing between each meeting, there was discussion surrounding governance and the future structure of the group.

The prevailing view from IPG participants is that the group is beneficial and that it is very useful to hear from each country about their R&D successes, but that meetings should be held more regularly and communication increased through a more formal Secretariat arrangement.

A number of potential initiatives were discussed, including annual conference calls, meetings every 18 months with additional industry tours and grower visits alongside the formal IPG meeting, and regular newsletters to facilitate information sharing.

IPG administration is currently conducted by AHDB Potatoes, however, it was recommended that a more dedicated funded secretariat be elected to increase and improve IPG communications. It was proposed that this role be undertaken by Potatoes South Africa, as they would be able to do the job on a cost effective basis.

It is believed that the IPG has great potential to act as an information source and sounding board for each country regarding potato R&D and best practices, but that better governance structures need to be implemented to fully realise this opportunity. It was discussed that for the group to be beneficial there needed to be an increase in communication and collaboration between meetings. A formal part-time secretariat function, funded on a cost effective basis, was agreed as the preferred option.

It was unanimously agreed that the IPG membership should be restricted to the English language, non-competitive, contributing, non-commercial nationally mandated agencies, but that discussions must be respectful of relevant anti-trust and competition laws.

The responsibilities of the new Secretariat were agreed as follows:

- Annual conference call
- Arranging meetings every 18 months to cover core issues and facilitate collaboration (with the option of complementary farm and production system site visits in the host nation)
- Triennial meeting preparation
- Preparation of the quarterly newsletter

It was agreed that Potatoes South Africa would produce a costed proposal to undertake the Secretariat function and would circulate this to participating countries for their consideration.



## World Potato Congress

Attendance at the World Potato Congress provided the opportunity to hear directly from some of the world's leading potato researchers and industry experts.

Keynote presentations at the congress covered topics including China's potato production and market potential, China's potato R&D and food security. Technical sessions included discussion on the health characteristics of the potato and strategies for managing diseases and viruses including common scab, powdery scab, nematodes and late blight.

The World Potato Congress is regarded as one of the leading international horticulture events and draws together the entire industry, including researchers, key opinion leaders, growers and processors.

A large Trade Show occupied an area of 10,000 square metres. The key trend at the trade show was potato product development. A variety of new uses of potatoes as an ingredient for food and cooking products was evident. It was unclear, however, the extent to which this product development had been subsidised by the Chinese government. Some examples of the different product types on display are included in the photographs below. Examples included potato drinks, potato cookies and potato biscuits.





The congress also included an industry tour that featured visits to a Chinese potato research centre and a large-scale mini-tuber production site.

Further information on the World Potato Congress can be found in the final report for *PT14701: 2015 Potato Leadership and Development Mission*.

## Implications for Australian horticulture

Participation at the 2015 IPG meeting has allowed the Australian potato industry to be updated on developments in the international industry that can help shape local R&D initiatives. Importantly, the IPG also assists in maintaining healthy relationships with other potato bodies around the world, which will be beneficial when addressing issues of international significance, including possible future collaboration on R&D programs and information exchange.

The 2015 IPG meeting provided the following benefits for the Australian potato industry:

- Information on marketing campaigns from around the world attempting to increase potato consumption.
- Updates on successful R&D programs and knowledge transfer.
- Benchmarking of local practices and performance against those of our international counterparts.

The IPG meeting has shown that some of Australia's R&D, particularly PreDicta Pt, is world class and that the industry should continue to encourage the uptake of these outcomes to local growers. Australia's communication programs were also noted by other participating countries as being of a high quality, including *Potatoes Australia* and digital communication platforms.

## **How the information gathered will be disseminated**

In addition to information being published in this report, outcomes from PT14702 International Potato Group Meeting China 2015 that are of benefit to Australian potato growers and not confidential to the IPG have been communicated through AUSVEG's communication channels, including and not limited to *Potatoes Australia* and in the media. Please see the Appendices.

## Itinerary

Date	Location	Activities
Day 1 Friday 24 July 2015	Australia - Beijing	Travel from Melbourne to Beijing, arrive in Beijing at 10:30pm.  <b>Accommodation:</b> Traders Hotel by Shangri-la, Beijing.
Day 2 Saturday 25 July 2015	Beijing	Travel from central Beijing to Yanqing County, Beijing.  International Potato Group (IPG) welcome dinner.  <b>Accommodation:</b> Holiday Inn Resort, Beijing Yanqing.
Day 3 Sunday 26 July 2015	Beijing	IPG meeting day one including welcome and IPG update, marketing information session and R&D session.  <b>Accommodation:</b> Holiday Inn Resort, Beijing Yanqing.
Day 4 Monday 27 July 2015	Beijing	IPG meeting day two including continuation of marketing and R&D sessions and governance and structure discussion.  World Potato Congress registration.  <b>Accommodation:</b> Beijing Jinyu Badaling Spa Resort.
Day 5 Tuesday 28 July 2015	Beijing	World Potato Congress.  <b>Accommodation:</b> Beijing Jinyu Badaling Spa Resort
Day 6 Wednesday 29 July 2015	Beijing	World Potato Congress.  <b>Accommodation:</b> Beijing Jinyu Badaling Spa Resort.
Day 7 Thursday 30 July 2015	Beijing	Official World Potato Congress led tour of agricultural and potato R&D sites.  <b>Accommodation:</b> Beijing Jinyu Badaling Spa Resort
Day 8 Friday 31 July 2015	Beijing - Australia	Transfer from Yanqing county to Beijing, fly from Beijing to Melbourne.
Day 9 Saturday 1 August 2015	Beijing - Australia	Arrive in Melbourne at 8:00am.

## Recommendations

It is recommended that Australia continue to be a member of the IPG and attend all future meetings, as it is seen a highly beneficial tool to learn about potato best practices from the world's leaders and benchmark our own programs.

For the IPG to progress and reach its potential, it is also recommended that the following be implemented:

- Potatoes South Africa should be elected as the Secretariat for the group, pending funding consideration based on a quote to be provided by Potatoes South Africa for the consideration of each participating country.
- The IPG should meet every 18 months, with one meeting held in between the triennial World Potato Congress.
- An annual conference call should also be organised by the new Secretariat, pending confirmation of funding from each country.
- A quarterly newsletter updating the group on international R&D and industry information from each member. This should be compiled by the secretariat and will provide an avenue for information exchange and collaboration.

Due to the lack of success that generic marketing and health promotion programs have had in increasing the consumption of potatoes internationally, it is recommended that no such program be implemented in Australia . It is apparent that there is no evidence showing that a marketing program would increase consumption, nor provide a return on investment that would justify the additional levy money that would need to be collected.

The Australian industry should continue to investigate soil-borne diseases and pathogens (and the development of PreDicta Pt) as this appears to be a key issue around the world.

It may also be worth in investigating projects that can improve the knowledge of the industry, similar to AHDB Potatoes studentship and fellowship program. Such a program could excite a new generation of potato-specific researchers and scientists.

## **Acknowledgements**

Participation in the International Potato Group Meeting China 2015 was organised by AUSVEG Ltd.

Arrangements for the meeting itself were made by AHDB Potatoes, whom AUSVEG thanks for its efforts.

The International Potato Group Meeting China 2015 was facilitated by HIA in partnership with AUSVEG and was funded by the National Fresh Potato Levy. The Australian Government provides matched funding for all HIA's R&D activities.

## **Tour participants**

Dr Kevin Clayton-Greene – Biosecurity Consultant and Technical Expert.

Mr Andrew White – AUSVEG Deputy CEO.

Dr Anthony Kachenko – Horticulture innovation Australia R&D Lead (note: funded separately).



# Appendices

## 1.1 – Article in Potatoes Australia magazine – October/November 2015

### Global potato industries unite to discuss key issues

THE INTERNATIONAL POTATO GROUP RECENTLY MET IN CHINA TO DISCUSS SOME OF THE LATEST AND GREATEST POTATO R&D OUTCOMES FROM AROUND THE GLOBE. *POTATOES AUSTRALIA* EXPLAINS THE MAIN TOPICS OF DISCUSSION HELD DURING THE MEETING.

Representatives from Australia's potato industry joined leaders from the United Kingdom, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa at the 2015 International Potato Group (IPG) meeting held in China earlier this year, with each country providing a detailed overview of their local potato industry and R&D processes.

PreDicta PT, an outcome from the Australian Potato Research Program Phase 2 (APRP2), was discussed widely at the meeting and acknowledged as a leading development that could have a real impact for growers. PreDicta PT is a DNA-based soil testing service that identifies whether particular soil-borne pathogens are present, enabling growers to plan and prepare their soils prior to planting.

#### Keeping soils healthy

The IPG identified soil-borne diseases and general soil health as key areas of importance during the meeting. While leading work such as PreDicta

Pt was acknowledged, it was stressed that there are knowledge gaps that should be addressed by the industry.

The UK and South Africa have been conducting some research into soil-borne diseases, with the latter investing more money into this research than any other area. Common scab, Powdery scab and Soft rot in particular are being researched in South Africa.

Additional research in the UK focuses on many areas including precision agriculture, crop nutrition and storage management. A best practice guide has recently been produced to provide store managers with information on how to minimise the risk of damage to potatoes when in storage.

Canada highlighted the importance of communication and extension of all its projects in the potato industry, to ensure that growers have the ability to implement outcomes relevant to their operation. All Canadian research proposals must include

an extension component to enhance the transfer of knowledge to growers.

Australia's extension and knowledge transfer methods of potato R&D were also discussed and widely thought to be successful in the industry. This includes *Potatoes Australia*, and other initiatives such as the Potato Industry Extension Program and digital communication platforms.

#### A global discussion

Following the meeting, participants also had the opportunity to attend the World Potato Congress in Beijing, which provided insight into further R&D from around the globe, as well as the Chinese potato industry.

Keynote presentations at the Congress covered topics including China's potato production and market potential, as well as its potato R&D and food security. The technical sessions included discussions on the health

characteristics of the potato and strategies for managing disease and virus including Common scab, Powdery scab, nematodes and Late blight.

Industry tours were also facilitated by the World Potato Congress.

The IPG currently meets every three years, usually when the World Potato Congress is held. However, the potential for more regular meetings is currently being investigated, as well as opportunities for future collaboration on research programs.

**i** Participation in the 2015 International Potato Group meeting was funded by Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited (HIA) using the Fresh Potato Levy and funds from the Australian Government.

For more information, please contact AUSVEG. Phone: (03) 9882 0277 Email: [info@ausveg.com.au](mailto:info@ausveg.com.au)

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# Media Release

28 July 2015

For immediate release

## **Australian industry represented during International Potato Group meeting in China**

In partnership with Horticulture Innovation Australia (HIA), AUSVEG representatives attended the International Potato Group meeting in China over the weekend, to meet with representatives from other significant potato growing nations.

Representatives from key potato producing countries including South Africa, New Zealand, Canada and the United Kingdom were present at the meeting, which was held to coincide with the World Potato Congress in China.

“During this important meeting, information was exchanged on a number of international R&D initiatives, and the scope for future collaboration was also discussed,” said AUSVEG Deputy CEO Andrew White.

“Given the extensive potato R&D work that is ongoing in Australia and around the world, the meeting was an excellent opportunity to share ideas and learn from some of the world’s most significant potato producers.”

“Key initiatives discussed included soil diagnostics, soil science, potato nutrition, product development, biosecurity and pest and disease management.”

“AUSVEG looks forward to working with the group into the future, as part of ongoing efforts to ensure Australia remains at the forefront of international potato R&D, and that Australian growers have access to the latest international breakthroughs in potato production efficiencies.”

AUSVEG is the leading horticultural body representing 2,000 Australian potato growers.

“With Australia widely acknowledged as one of the world’s most efficient and innovative producers of potatoes, Australian representatives were well placed to contribute productively to the meeting,” said Mr White.

“By learning from and collaborating with some of the leading minds in the international potato industry, we can ensure Australian growers remain at the forefront of world potato production.”

“AUSVEG appreciated the opportunity to contribute to and participate in the meeting, along with HIA representatives, and looks forward to sharing the knowledge gained with the broader Australian industry.”

Participation in the IPG meeting was funded by HIA using the National Potato Levies and funds from the Australian Government.

## 1.3 IPG Media Coverage



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**Border Watch (Mt Gambier), Mt Gambier SA**  
25 Sep 2015

General News, page 25 - 103.00 cm<sup>2</sup>  
Regional - circulation 5,933 (-TWTF--)

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### Australian potato growers hope to gain world of knowledge at major congress

AUSTRALIAN industry leaders attended the International Potato Group meeting in China to meet with representatives from other significant potato growing nations.

Representatives from key potato producing countries including South Africa, New Zealand, Canada and the United Kingdom were present at the meeting, held to coincide with the World Potato Congress in China.

"Given the extensive potato research and development work that is ongoing in Australia and around the world,

the meeting was an opportunity to share ideas and learn from some of the world's most significant potato producers," AUSVEG deputy chief executive Andrew White said.

Key initiatives discussed included soil diagnostics and science, potato nutrition, product development, biosecurity and pest and disease management.

"With Australia widely acknowledged as one of the world's most efficient and innovative producers of potatoes, Australian representatives

were well placed to contribute productively to the meeting," Mr White said.

"By learning from and collaborating with some of the leading minds in the international potato industry, we can ensure Australian growers remain at the forefront of world potato production."

Participation was funded by Horticulture Innovation Australia using the national potato levies and Federal Government funding.

### Interview with Deputy Andrew White, Deputy CEO, AusVeg, to talk abo...



[3WM, Horsham](#) hosted by [Sandra Moon](#)  
Country Today - 3 mins 50 secs - ID: V00062665894

31 Jul 2015 6:45 AM



Interview with Deputy [Andrew White](#), Deputy CEO, [AusVeg](#), to talk about the 9th World Potato Congress (WPC) in Beijing, China. [White](#) talks about his experience as representative of Australia in China. He mentions there are 100 potato delegates who attended from different countries. He says the key initiatives discuss including how they can coordinate research better than internationally. He says the discussion is all about international research. He mentions that China has the largest potato industry.

[Order presentation file or transcript](#)

#### Keywords

White (2), AusVeg (1), Andrew (1)

#### Interviewees

Deputy Andrew White, CEO, AusVeg

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