



TOMATO TOPICS



Know-how for Horticulture™

NEWS and INFORMATION
FOR THE PROCESSING TOMATO INDUSTRY

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2007/08 Processing Tomato Season

Once again drought conditions have impacted on the processing tomato industry. Irrigation allocations on the Murray system commenced in August at 5%, an all time low. Currently irrigation allocations are at the following levels:

Goulburn system at 20%

Victorian Murray at 10%

Campaspe at 0%

NSW Murray at 0%, (with 25% of the water taken from farmers last year being available)

Inflows into both Lake Eildon and the Hume were significantly lower than the long term average during the month of August. Inflows into Lake Eildon have also decreased during the past week, this will impact upon further allocation announcements for the Goulburn system.

As a result of the low water allocations and high prices for temporary water a large number of growers have this season opted out not to grow processing tomatoes. The total industry tonnage this season is currently expected to be at a similar level to last season, with some growers being able to secure access to bore water.

The impact of the current ongoing drought is this season being felt across the whole Murray-Darling Basin. In the previous season the impact of the drought was greater on irrigators in the Goulburn system where the irrigation allocations were reduced to 29%. During that period the

Victorian Murray system was at 95% allocation. This season both the Goulburn and Murray irrigation systems are affected. As a result of this all horticultural industries along with the dairy and grain industries in the region are greatly affected by the low irrigation water allocation.

The federal government has this week made additional announcements regarding Exceptional Circumstances assistance and programs to assist irrigators in the Murray-Darling Basin. The details of these additional funding measures and assistance are expected to be finalised in the coming weeks.

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Screen Crop Protectant – Climate Control for Your Crops

Nick Phillips – Marketing Manager Crop MicroClimate Management (USA), Chuck Kupatt – R&D Manager Crop MicroClimate Management (USA) & David Bell – Agricultural Consultant, David J Bell & Associates, Australia.

Heat and Light Stress

Heat and light stress are economically important problems in agricultural production, as they reduce yield and fruit quality. The most commonly observed symptoms are wilted or otherwise unhealthy looking plants and physical injury to limbs, leaves and fruits. Stress exposure results in decreased vegetative growth, lower fruit loads due to flower and fruit abortion, smaller fruit and in its later stages “sunburn”. Losses occur from damage to the photosynthetic apparatus, followed by damage to other tissues.

Water Stress

Water stress is complex as it is not only a stand alone problem but it is intricately involved with heat and light stress. Shortage of soil water can initiate and exacerbate heat and light stress. When soil moisture is limiting a plant’s ability to cool itself through transpiration is impaired. Stomata are closed and leaf temperature increases. The photosynthetic machinery closes down and the plant is no longer able to process the light energy entering its cells. This leads to photoinhibition, a build up of free radicals (oxidants) and ultimately to tissue destruction and cell death ie. the symptoms of heat and light stress damage.

Crop leaf and fruit temperatures can be as much as 10°C above ambient air temperatures. Exposed to high temperature a plant will attempt to cool itself by means of increased transpiration. Once the soil moisture becomes limiting the same sequence of events as described above will take place.

Screen Crop Protectant

Screen Crop Protectant developed by Crop Microclimate Management and made in Australia is the latest generation development in Particle Film Technology (PFT) with formulation advancements resulting in improved foliar and fruit cover to protect crops from heat and light stress and sunburn. Screen also keeps crops cooler which can reduce water use and increase water use efficiency and therefore crop productivity.

Screen is a cost effective new tool that allows growers to make the most of each litre of water, as well as reducing overall water requirements, while producing a quality fruit crop.

Screen Particle Film Cools Crops – Cooler Crops Use Less Water

Scientists and growers have looked at the role particle film technology may play in reducing crop water requirements. These films selectively reflect radiation, including ultraviolet and infrared wavelengths that are absorbed by plants.

Screen is a mineral-based product that produces a particle film for reflecting harmful radiation, while allowing the crop to maintain photosynthesis.

Research has shown that a well-applied Screen film can reduce canopy temperatures as much as 5 to 8°C and reduce net radiation 20 to 30%, resulting in 30 to 40% reductions in potential water use.

University research and real world examples prove that particle films like Screen can reduce water usage, and increase water use efficiency.

In Australia, CSIRO studies show that wine grape water use efficiency has also been improved with particle film technology. The daily leaf water potential in treated plants was shown to be more favorable than in untreated plants.

Researchers at the University of California at Davis have demonstrated reduce water use with particle films in almonds. In a three year study, water status has been consistently improved with particle films, measured as leaf water potential.

Citrus studies have demonstrated reduced leaf reflectance, lowered leaf temperatures, and increased water use efficiency, particularly at midday, when stress is generally the greatest. University of Florida researchers showed that “midday water use efficiency (WUE) of kaolin sprayed leaves was 25% higher than that of control leaves.”

The Bottom Line: Screen can be a valuable tool for water use management, as Screen cools crops and cooler crops use less water

Tomato Trial Results

An Australian replicated trial to evaluate Screen was initiated in Victoria on a commercial farm in December 2006. Heinz 9614 tomatoes were planted on November 10, 2006 under drip irrigation, and grown under standard grower practices. Screen applications commenced just prior to flowering. A total of eight applications of Screen were made at rates of 50 kg/ha with subsequent applications at 25 kg/ha and 25 kg/ha with subsequent applications at 12.5 kg/ha over the growing season beginning at the commencement of flowering. Applications were made at 7 to 16 day intervals depending on growth dilution, rainfall and pending hot temperatures. During periods of rapid growth dilution early in the season intervals were generally shorter (7 to 8 days) whilst towards the end of the season intervals tended to be longer (10 to 14 days).

Plots were evaluated for phytotoxicity, *Heliothis spp.* damage, sunburn damage, and yield of red, green and sunburned tomatoes. Soluble solids were also measured by an independent entity.

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Summary of Data

Crop Safety – There was no observed phytotoxicity on either crop foliage or fruit. The crop was disease free and did not show signs of inadequate nutrition.

Heliothis Control - Under very low *Heliothis spp.* pressure, Screen did not provide control different from the untreated check.

Sunburn and Tomato Yield

Total red tomato yields from plots treated with Screen were significantly higher than the untreated check. The actual yield of usable red tomatoes was 68.2 t/ha for the check, compared with 72.7 and 72.4 t/ha from the plants treated with Screen at their respective rates. This was most likely due to a significant reduction in sunburned tomatoes from 6.0 t/ha for the check and 2.2 t/ha for the Screen treated crop.

Table 1. The Effect of treatments on tomato yield

Assessment			RED Tomatoes	Green Tomatoes	Sunburnt Tomatoes	Total Yield
Rating Date			23/02/2007	23/02/2007	23/02/2007	23/02/2007
Trt	Treatment	Kg				
No.	Name	per ha				
1	Untreated Check		68.2 b	2.2 a	6 a	76.4 a
2	Screen	25/12.5	72.7 a	2.7 a	2 b	77.3 a
3	Screen	50/25	72.4 a	2.2 a	2.4 b	77.1 a

Means followed by same letter do not significantly differ (P=.05, LSD)

Soluble Solids (SS)

The levels of soluble solids for harvested tomatoes were measured using a random sample of 10 fruit per treatment. The levels of soluble solids from the Screen -treated crop were 0.7 percent higher (at 5.9 %) than those from the untreated, which measured 5.2 %. When the percentage of soluble solids was calculated per hectare using the yields of ripe tomatoes, the check provided 3.5 Mt/ha of total soluble solids. This contrasts with 4.2 t/ha from the Screen-treated tomatoes and represents an increase of 20 %.

Table 2. Treatment effect on % Soluble Solids and on total yield of Soluble Solids per hectare.

Assessment			% Soluble Solids	Soluble Solids
Rating Date			23/02/2007	23/02/2007
Trt	Treatment	Kg		
No.	Name	per ha		
1	Untreated Check		5.2 b	3.5 b
2	Screen	25/12.5	5.9 a	4.3 a
3	Screen	50/25	5.9 a	4.3 a

Means followed by same letter do not significantly differ (P=.05, LSD)

Conclusions

A review of the literature shows a robust body of research regarding heat stress impacts at various stages of tomato development. Among the points impacted are vegetative development, flowering, fruit set, fruit development, maturity, and quality.

- **Manage Heat Stress:** The trial results presented here demonstrate that growers may have a tool in Screen crop protectant, to reduce the damage heat stress can incur at all these developmental points.
- **Improve Total Yield:** Growers have had to use deficit irrigation to manage soluble solids, for a specified genetic potential. Deficit irrigation runs the risk of reducing total yield. With Screen, we have demonstrated that growers can increase the level of soluble solids without having to resort to practices that might reduce their yields.

For further information on Screen™ visit www.agricrop.com.au or Phone David Bell 0417-501503 or Jim Lyons 0418-831910

2007 World Processing Tomato Council China Study Tour

From the 5th to the 11th August 2007 World Processing Tomato Council organised a tour through China focused on the processing tomato industry. Seven Australian growers participated in this tour, (Louis and Geraldine Chirnside, Ray Sellwood, Gino Gugliotti, Roger Nolan, Lyndon Wakeman and Michelle Harman) along with a 40 other people associated with the World Processing Tomato Council.

The tour commenced with a symposium in Beijing. At this symposium Chinese ministry leaders, the China Commodity Inspection Bureau and the Chairman of the COFCO spoke on the Chinese processing tomato industry, including the development of Chinese agriculture, investment policy, food safety and the Chinese market environment.

The Chinese tomato growing region is spread across Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia and Gansu. The annual rainfall in the Inner Mongolia region is 100 mm, and Xinjiang around 140 mm. Abundant irrigation water obtained from snow melt is delivered to farms via a system of pipes and channels. In 2006 4.3 million tonnes of tomatoes were processed into paste, whole peeled, crushed, ketchup, tomato powder and lycopene etc. Currently there is surplus processing tomato capacity within the country as the supply of raw tomatoes is unable to keep up with the factory requirements.

COFCO is the largest oils and food importer and exporter in China and has consistently ranked as one of the world's top 500 enterprises according to Fortune magazine. COFCO Ltd. is the major shareholder of the company COFCO Tunhe which focuses on tomatoes, sugar and fruit processing. COFCO Tunhe has 22 factories with a daily fresh tomato capacity of 56,000 tonnes (an annual aseptic paste capacity of 500,000 tonnes), an annual processing capacity of 53,000 tonnes canned tomato paste, 3,000 tonnes of tomato powder and 10 tonnes of natural lycopene. They are expected to process 50% of the total processing tomato crop during 2007.

Chalkis, another company based in Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, Gansu, Tianjin and Farnce is primarily focused on processing tomato production. They have a total processing capacity of around 640,000 tonnes, processing 440,000 tonnes into paste and 200,000 tonnes into canned product. As a company they are very supportive of innovation.

Fresh tomato consumption in China accounts for 25% of the total global consumption, while processed tomato consumption per capita is less than 5 kg. Hence during the coming years as the standard of living increases and with a change in eating by the younger generation this level of consumption is expected to increase.

Quality is considered extremely important by the Chinese government with any company who fails to meet the appropriate requirements being blacklisted from export. COFCO has a number of management systems in place including HACCP and ISO14001:2000 and also meets the quality requirements to supply Heinz and Unilever. In addition they

also have in place a system to limit pesticide residues. Farmers are firstly provided with training in chemical use. Soil and irrigation water is regularly monitored, along with seedlings in the nursery and crops in paddocks. Records on chemical usage are also maintained, and traceability of product from paddock to factory occurs.

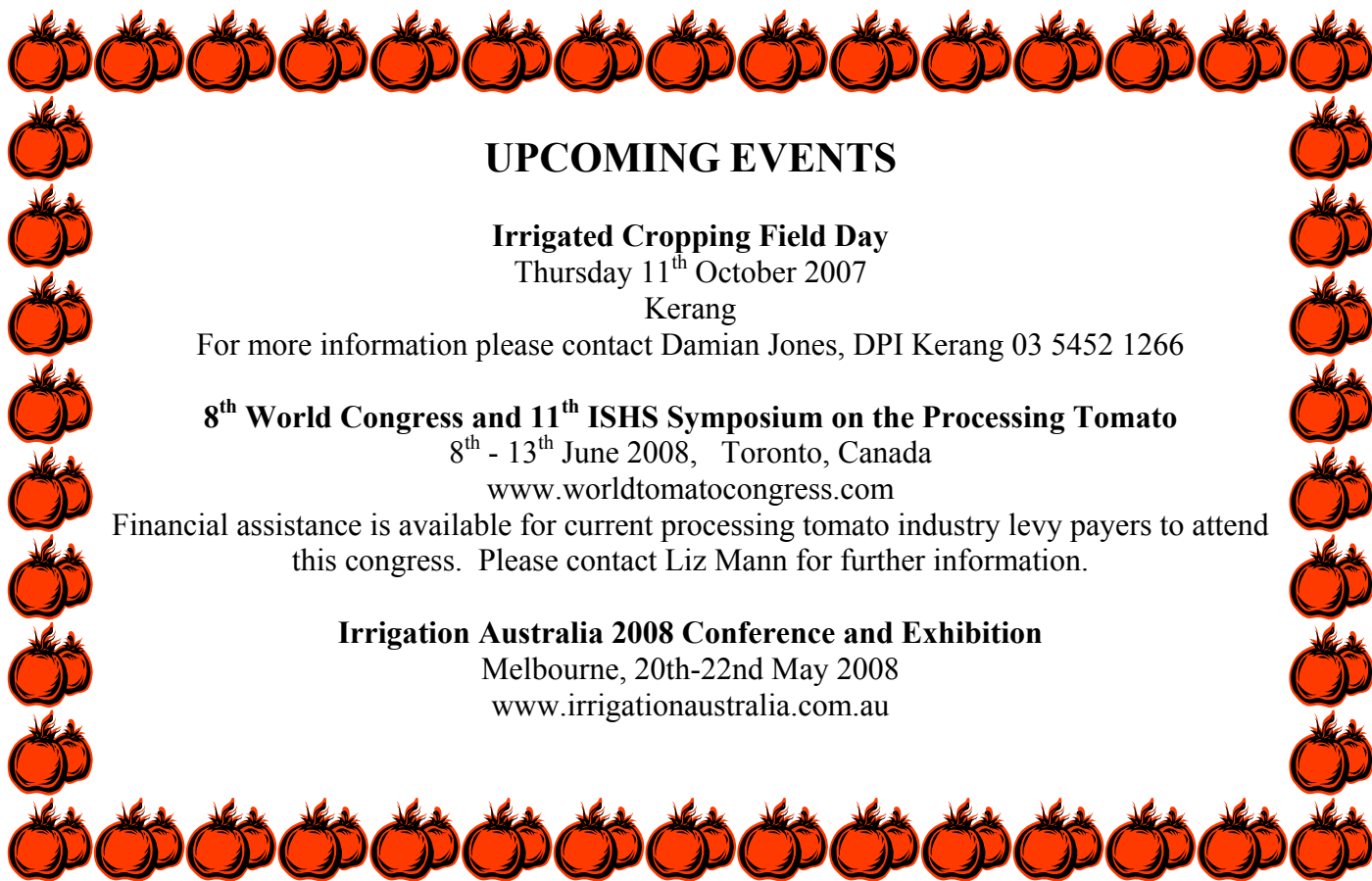
The processing tomato season commences around May 15th, following the last frost, with harvest commencing between the 20th July and the beginning of August and finishing around the beginning of October. The size of farms is measured in the unit "mu", where 15 mu equates to 1 ha. Average crop yields are estimated to be around 40 t/ha, or 2-3 tonnes/mu, although the Heinz varieties may yield up to 5-8 tonnes/mu. Between 70 - 80% of the varieties grown are open pollinated with the rest being hybrids, of which 60-70% are Heinz varieties.

On the 8th August the group toured a number of processing tomato crops in the region. These included a visit to a 20 ha Chalkis farm established in June 2006. This farm was set up with a surface drip irrigation system using layflat to deliver water to the field and plastic mulch on the beds. Open pollinated varieties were grown on this farm. The group also visited a Tunhe farm which was growing a number of Heinz varieties. This farm was mechanically harvested with both the drip tape and plastic mulch going through the harvester. The plastic mulch was not biodegradable. Tomatoes seemed to be only produced on this ground for one year before moving to new ground. On average it appeared that the planted area was around 67 ha. Contracts are typically signed between the village and processor, or through individual producers which may have leased the ground. The contract with the processing company details the area planted and tonnage to be produced, the planting and harvest details and also includes supplying the seed and plant health inputs, to the grower. Predominately crops are irrigated using surface drip irrigation.

On the 9th August the group toured a Heinz demonstration farm. Generally the crop looked good although there was a split set which was a result of problems with the irrigation system at one point of time. The crop was due to be harvested in 10 days time.

Labour was significantly cheaper than in Australia. The wages for field workers ranged between 600rmb to 1300 rmb per month, (A\$ = 6.3 rmb). Factory workers receive around 1500rmb per month, while sales worker receive around 5000 rmb per month, but must have good English, and be a university graduate.

While touring through the region it was noted that all cultivated land was irrigated and sown to summer crops. The predominate crop was cotton, then corn, followed by tomatoes. Nearly all the crops appeared to be hand harvested. The Agriculture Bank of China supplied finance to growers to enable crop production to occur. Some growers may take the full 12 months to payback this loan in full.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Irrigated Cropping Field Day

Thursday 11th October 2007

Kerang

For more information please contact Damian Jones, DPI Kerang 03 5452 1266

8th World Congress and 11th ISHS Symposium on the Processing Tomato

8th - 13th June 2008, Toronto, Canada

www.worldtomatocongress.com

Financial assistance is available for current processing tomato industry levy payers to attend this congress. Please contact Liz Mann for further information.

Irrigation Australia 2008 Conference and Exhibition

Melbourne, 20th-22nd May 2008

www.irrigationaustralia.com.au

Western Flower Thrips

As another season commences and winter cereal and canola crops are being cut for hay/silage or drying off it is important that growers be aware of the potential thrip threat. Thrips may be moving to another feed source, thus targeting perhaps the only "green" crop in an area which may be a processing tomato crop.

If you begin to experience a high thrip pressure or an unusual level of TSWV please contact Liz Mann to enable thrips to be collected for accurate identification. If Western Flower Thrips are present your spray regime may need to be modified to ensure maximum control.

Tomato Yellow Leaf Curl Virus

It is important for growers to once again be on the lookout for suspected TYLCV symptoms. All seedlings should be inspected for the virus prior to planting and crops should be monitored for both the virus and silverleaf whitefly.

TYLCV, can be confused with several other tomato conditions such as tomato big bud, tomato yellow top, physiological leaf roll and phosphate and magnesium deficiency.

It is unlikely that this virus will establish in the open as whiteflies are not expected to survive a winter in the open paddock in Victoria. Last surveillance conducted in 2007 did not detect any TYLCV and no further detection, outside of the original detection in 2003 and 2006, of the silverleaf whitefly.

Are You Interested in Participating in an On-Farm trial?

If you are in the process of trialling a new product, fertiliser program, or technology on farm and would like some assistance to conducting the measurements to determine if there is any impact on yield or quality please contact Liz Mann for assistance.

Liz can also assist if there are opportunities to source additional funding to help cover your expenses involved in the on farm trial.

Internet Weather Web Sites

Provides an estimation of the amount and time of day for forecast rain

<http://www.metcheck.com/V40/AU/FREE/7DAYS.ASP>

Provides and estimate of the chance and amount of forecast rain

<http://www.eldersweather.com.au/local.jsp?lt=aploc&lc=7985>

14 day precipitation outlook for Australia

<http://wxmaps.org/pix/prec7.html>

2007/08 Research Funded by the APTRC

TM07001 – Cultivar Evaluation Full Project Cost for year = \$72,000

This season machine and observation trials will be established at the following locations:

NSW: Direct seed and furrow

- Machine and replicated observation trials (Jim Geltch), 2 trials have been sown, the first in early September and the second in mid to late September

Victoria: Transplant and drip

- Early machine and replicated observation trial (J & P Kennedy), planting planned for mid October
- Mid season machine and replicated observation trials (North Central Produce), planting planned for mid November
- Mid season machine and replicated observation trials (Cedenco, Echuca/Rochester), planting planned for early November

The initial project budget included 2 machine trials and 1 unreplicated observation trial in 2 locations in NSW and 3 locations in Victoria. The second machine harvested trial in each location was included as a backup, but only 1 machine harvest trial in each location was to be assessed.

This season the observation trials have been replicated as a response to the review of the cultivar evaluation project by Horticulture Australia. Overall project costings are expected to remain at the same level as budgeted.

TM06004 - Nutrition and soil management for high yielding high soluble solids processing tomatoes (D.Blaesing) Full Project Cost for year = \$28,000

Suggested activities

1. Nutritional/Soils training needs review
2. Discussion groups The following activities could take place in a group environment:
 - nutrient management workshops (soil analysis interpretation, estimating nutrient availability, assessing factors that influence nutrient uptake and how to monitor this, working with removal rates, efficient, fertiliser types and use)
 - soil management workshops (soil structure and microbiology, sustainability in-field soil condition appraisals)
 - provision of nutrient budgeting tool (spreadsheet and / or booklet format) as requested
 - finalising / updating draft nutrient managements book
2. One to one advise
 - Be available to growers to answer question one a one-to-one basis, mainly by phone but also farm

visits (discussion of management options, inputs, crop performance, soil structure, soil moisture) on request when in Victoria

- Encourage growers to use self assessment tools which will underpin a change in soil and nutrient management practices – advise on where to get more information or funding
3. Demonstration 'trials'
 - assist in planning (protocol) and analysing (brief summary report) trials that growers want to conduct on their property (make sure they replicate strip treatments, leave controls, collect relevant data and observations etc)
 - design 'best-bet' nutrition plans based on nutrient budgeting as compared to 'one-fits-all recipes' with a couple of key growers
 4. Review of commercial monitoring data and factory results

At this stage Doris will be involved in a Phosphorus trial with Cedenco. This is an on-farm trial which Cedenco expressed interest in establishing. Additional funding for this is covered by an additional VC payment from Cedenco which will then be refunded to Cedenco to cover some of their costs.

TM05001 - The Development of Innovative Tomato Management Practices to Improve Soil-Health and Productivity Full Project Cost for year = \$17,362

Three possibilities for this seasons work

- A) do more on biological additives targeting *B. subtilis* - different application methods and times (i.e. temp responses, inoculating speedlings, soil and foliar application) with soil levels before and after application).
- B) determine the plant nutrient status by plant stage. This would require normal application and another treatment as full nutrient, or grower with high fertiliser application
- C) defer the project for 12 months, this would enable the current years budget (\$17,362, APTRC contribution \$9549) to be put aside and used next season in a potential project looking at Arbuscular-mycorrhizal fungi (AMF). The IP issues need to be resolved regarding the previous work funded by Unilever

TM05007 - Technology Transfer Full Project Cost for year = \$30,900

This includes a continuation of the industry technology transfer activities and management of the overall industry research program. The Industry Development Manager also acts as the primary contact point for the industry.

NEXT APTRC MEETING

These projects will all be discussed at the upcoming APTRC meeting on the 2nd October 2007 at Echuca.

Amended Regulations Affect Chemical Use in Victoria

The new Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Control of Use) Regulations 2007 came into force on the 24th July 2007.

The revised Regulations provide a framework for monitoring agricultural and veterinary chemical use in Victoria and support the administration of the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Control of Use) Act 1992.

The most significant change to the Regulation is in relation to record keeping. All agricultural chemical users are required to keep records for all agricultural chemical use and not just the 'restricted use' or aerial spraying chemicals as previously required. The following records must be made within 48 hours of using the agricultural chemical product:

- Product trade name
- Date product was used
- Application rate of product
- Crop/commodity that was treated
- Extent of use (i.e. the area of land or the volume of water treated)
- Location where the product was used
- Name and address of the applicator/supervisor
- Name and address of the person for whom the application was carried out
- Wind speed and direction at the time of application

All records of chemical use must be kept for 2 years.

There are also new Regulations that apply to the application of agricultural chemicals by aerial spraying within 200 metres of a school, hospital, aged care service, or children's service.

At the time a person is employed or contracted to carry out agricultural aerial spraying the land manager must:

- Advise the employee or spray contractor in writing whether there is a school, hospital, aged care service or children's service within 200 metres of the land to be sprayed
- Provide the employee or spray contractor with details relating to the location of the school, hospital, aged care service or children's service

At least 24 hours before spraying the spray employee or spray contractor must provide the land manager with details of the name of the chemical to be used and the proposed time, date and duration of the spraying.

At least 12 hours before the spraying the land manager must make every reasonable effort to inform the school principal or site manager of the chemical being used, the location of the proposed spraying and the proposed time, date and duration of spraying.

When aerial spraying is carried out one or more of the following methods must be used immediately before or during aerial spraying to provide the pilot with an accurate indication of

the weather conditions at the target area:

- A smoke generating device used at ground level;
- The aircraft is fitted with a smoke generating device which is operating;
- A windsock is operating and clearly visible to the pilot at ground level;
- An automatic weather station is located at or near the point of spraying, and information about the wind speed and direction is available to the pilot.

For further information on the new Regulations visit www.dpi.vic.gov.au/chemicalstandards

Books of Interest

Our Water Mark (Victorian Women's Trust 2007)

Available from: enquires@watermark.org.au

Cost \$10 (covers postage and handling)

A Guide to Succession, Sustaining Families and Farms

Available from: ground-cover-direct@canprint.com.au

Cost \$10 (covers postage and handling)

Exceptional Circumstances

The Exceptional Circumstances Assistance across much of Victoria and NSW has been extended from the end of March 2008 until September 2008. (This includes the processing tomato production area.)

Those people who have not submitted an Exceptional Circumstances Interest Rate Subsidy from October 2006 to now, and wishing to do so, must apply quickly as the cut-off date is the 16th October 2007. After the 16th October the next interest rate subsidy period commences. Those that have applied in the past will be able to reapply and should receive a letter from Rural Finance saying when you are eligible to reapply for that period. Those that have **not applied** previously may submit an application after the 16th October 2007, which will incorporate the 2007/08 financial year.

For more information or assistance in completing the application please contact Liz on 0427 857 578.

Farm Safe

New on farm resources are available from the Farm Safe Website. You will need to register to access these but registration is free.

<http://www.farmsafe.org.au>

Resources available include:

- Farm worker/Contractor Induction
- Hazard Checklist for Hazardous chemicals, storage and use
- Hazard Checklist for Emergency Preparedness
- Sun Safety

Future Begins To Come Into Focus

Future Focus, a strategic vision that will help the horticulture industry successfully navigate through the next decade and beyond, has released its first discussion paper, identifying potential drivers of the future of the horticulture industry.

Previously known as the Horticulture Industry Strategic Plan (HISP), Future Focus is the first strategic plan of its kind for horticulture. It will address future challenges and give the entire horticulture industry a strategic path for future growth.

Future Focus is a three stage exercise. The findings from a preliminary macro scan of horticulture have shown the most important factors to be considered by the industry will include developing strong export markets, increasing domestic demand and improving productivity.

The water crisis, supply chain competitiveness and labour costs were also identified as topics to be discussed with industry members before finalising the first phase of the strategic plan.

Facilitated by Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL), Future Focus is being developed collaboratively with all sectors of industry and a 26-person Industry Leadership Group is steering the project.

The planning process involves consultation with grower bodies, retailers, wholesalers, exporters, processors, relevant Australian Government and state government agencies, as well as with experts within the fields of R&D, domestic and international marketing, the environment and regulation.

Future Focus will collect industry feedback at upcoming wholesalers and exporters workshops. One-on-one meetings will be held with the Centre for International Economics, which is assisting the horticulture industry in the development of this plan.

The real power of Future Focus will be its ability to channel the collective efforts of everyone involved in horticulture into one clear direction. It will balance a long-term strategy with immediate industry concerns.

Individual industries will be able to incorporate the findings of Future Focus into their own strategic plans and achieve greater returns from their investments.

To assist with industry communication, Future Focus has launched an official website, www.futurefocus.org.au to function as the central location for all

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

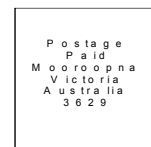
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