



# TOMATO TOPICS



Know-how for Horticulture™

NEWS and INFORMATION  
FOR THE PROCESSING TOMATO INDUSTRY

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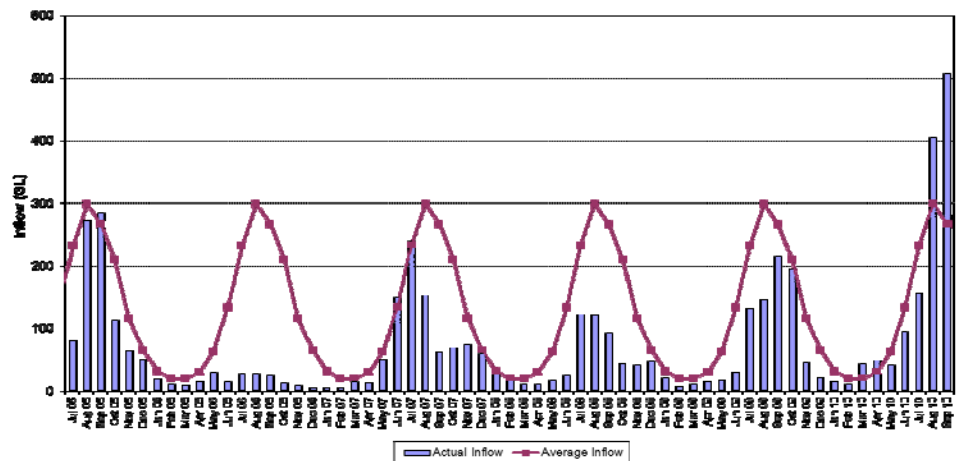
## Spring 2010

Heavy rain during the past month have brought about conditions we have not experienced for some time. The On-Farm Irrigation Efficiency Program funded through the Australian Government's Water for the Future initiative has resulted in many growers developing new ground with sub-surface drip irrigation, but due to the heavy rain have been waiting for ground to dry out before installation can occur. On the other hand this heavy rain has greatly increased inflows into Lake Eildon with current irrigation allocations now at 67% and expected to reach 100% later in the year.

Planting has commenced in the region with young plants at risk of attack by Plague Locusts, which are expected to hatch in large numbers across the region in the coming weeks.

At this stage it has been predicted that the total tonnage to be processed by the Australian Industry will be similar to last season, although the crops must firstly survive the Plague Locusts and the strengthening La Niña event in the Pacific Ocean which is usually, but not always, associated with above normal rainfall during the second half of the year.

Inflows to Lake Eildon  
July 2005 to September 2010



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## Horticulturists Need to Prepare For ‘Locust War’

Victoria is facing what could be the worst locust plague for 75 years. The Australian Plague Locust Commission forecasts spring hatchings will begin late September in north-west Victoria, through to mid-October in areas south of Echuca and late October in the Horsham area. Department of Primary Industries (DPI) and industry organisations are urging horticulturists to be prepared by planning a safe, chemical treatment program.

Growers are responsible for treating locusts on their own properties and the Victorian Government has committed to a 100 per cent rebate on chemicals used in the treatment of locusts by eligible growers in the worst affected areas during spring and summer.

DPI will treat hoppers on public land in collaboration with the Department of Sustainability and Environment and other government departments. In specific circumstances, where necessary and after DPI has made every effort to contact the grower, authorised DPI officers may enter private property without consent for monitoring and treatment purposes.

Locusts are hard to spot when they first emerge as young, immature locusts called hoppers. They are only about 3 mm long and pale in colour. Newly hatched locusts can cause considerable damage, consuming up to half their body weight in food per day.

Egg development is strongly influenced by temperature and moisture conditions. Eggs can either develop directly or development can be arrested by quiescence or diapause. Direct development occurs only in warm moist conditions. The rate of egg development increases with temperature so that complete development can occur in as little as 14 days with a daily maximum of 35°C, while at 25°C it can take a month. Egg development ceases below about 15°C.

Locusts are ravenous feeders of fresh green vegetation. When locusts are in large numbers vegetable and herb crops are particularly susceptible with locusts feeding on green crops, eating the leaves. Vegetable seedlings and younger crops are at higher risk because they will need to recover and some plant loss may be experienced.

### Treatment options

The best time to treat locusts is about two weeks after hatching when locusts are in the ‘hopper’ stage and unable to fly. When locusts first hatch and emerge from the ground, they are often scattered but within two weeks form into dense bands while feeding.

Chemical insecticides are the most effective method of treating locusts. Growers should seek expert advice from their chemical reseller or agronomist as to which chemical best suits their situation with due consideration to withholding periods.

There are a number of products eligible for rebate under the Victorian Government's Locust Insecticide Rebate Scheme. A full list of insecticide products eligible for the rebate can be found in the Chemical Control Options Tool available on the DPI website [www.dpi.vic.gov.au/locusts..](http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au/locusts..) Growers are advised to:

- ◆ Use chemicals safely and responsibly – make sure to read all the instructions and seek advice where necessary
- ◆ Obtain specific information on the most appropriate products for your situation from chemical resellers or agronomists.
- ◆ Repeat the insecticide treatment if necessary as the first application may not be 100 per cent effective. Any repeat activity should only occur if adhering to label directions and requirements.
- ◆ Be aware of sensitive sites and the location of beehives or organic properties

To assist growers in completing the Locust Insecticide Rebate Application Form, the DPI has added new tools including a [Chemical Control Options Tool](#) and an [Insecticide Cost Calculator](#) on its website. This tool contains information about the eligible agricultural chemical products for treatment of locusts for the different agricultural and horticultural crops.

### Withholding period

Growers need to make sure withholding periods are observed, particularly for crops close to harvest. It is also critical to take this into consideration if land adjacent to crops is being sprayed as there is potential for sprays to drift onto crops close to harvest.

### What are growers obligations?

Victorian growers need to be vigilant in monitoring their crops, pastures and known locust egg beds for evidence of activity and crop damage.

The Australian Plague Locust has been declared an exotic pest and this declaration places two important obligations on all land managers.

All growers **must**, under the *Plant Health and Plant Products Act 1995*, notify DPI of the presence of locust hoppers on their land. Notifications can be made by calling the **DPI Locust Hotline on 1300 13 5559**.

All growers **must** also treat locust hoppers on their land when numbers exceed 80 locust hoppers per m<sup>2</sup>.

All chemical use must be in accordance with State laws and regulations, including record keeping requirements. For information, visit the DPI Chemical Standards website at [www.dpi.vic.gov.au/chemicalstandards](http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au/chemicalstandards)

# Managing Heat Stress & Sunburn in Processing Tomatoes with Screen Duo

David Bell

## Executive Summary

A review of the literature shows a robust body of research on heat stress impacts at various stages of tomato development results in significant yield and quality losses. Among the points impacted are vegetative development including include transplant shock and establishment, flowering, fruit set, fruit development, maturity, and quality.

**Manage Heat Stress:** The trial results presented here demonstrate that growers have an excellent tool in the use of Screen Duo to reduce heat stress damage.

**Improve Total Yield:** Growers have had to use deficit irrigation to manage soluble solids, for a specified genetic potential. Deficit irrigation reduces total yield. With Screen and Screen Duo growers can increase the level of soluble solids without having to resort to practices that might reduce their yields. This provides significant income potential to growers and processors.

**Water demand management:** Studies in a number of perennial and annual crops have demonstrated increased soil moisture levels and reduced water stress in Screen Duo treated plants compared to those untreated.

## Introduction

Strides in tomato production have focused on improved yield by plant breeding and managing inputs such as crop nutrition, genetics, irrigation and pest control. Other factors affecting yield, such as temperature extremes have been outside a producer’s control. Heat stress (28°C and above) and excessive solar radiation have been demonstrated to negatively affect tomato yield and quality. Growth events such as flower abortion, fruit set, ripening and total usable yield are all negatively impacted by high temperatures. In addition, combined high temperatures and radiation can cause usable yield loss due to sunburn damage to ripening fruits.

## Manages heat stress to Improve Yields

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 transplant shock, poor crop establishment, 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. Although sunburn is visible, the greater loss occurs due to productivity losses that can be measured but not seen.

A series of small plot replicated trials have been conducted over the past three seasons with a range of assessments undertaken including yield, heat stress losses, sunburn, flower abortion and soluble solids. Data was recorded and analysed in Agricultural Research Manager.

Table 1 provides a summary of yields over the past three seasons. A yield increase of 26.7 t/ha has occurred by season long applications of Screen Duo to manage invisible heat stress.

Table 1. Screen Duo manages heat stress to increase tomato yields over three seasons.

	Tonnes/ha			
	Marketable Yield	Heat stress	Sunburn	TOTAL
SCREEN DUO	124.4	0	9.8	134.2
Untreated	91.2	26.7	16.3	134.2

Heat stress and sunburn in processing tomatoes cause significant economic losses. At temperatures >28°C the growth of tomato plants can be negatively affected leading to losses in yield and quality. Yield losses are a result of poor pollination, increased flower abortion, reduced fruit set and growth and fruit drop. Temperatures that are too high for tomatoes may interfere with pollination and fertilization, causing pollen to become non viable, resulting in fewer viable fruit. Loss of quality measured as reduced soluble solids (TSS), poor flesh and skin colour, sunburned fruit and increased incidence of disease. Temperatures >27-30°C cause blossom and fruit drop and the formation of oddly shaped or discolored fruit. Synthesis of lycopene and carotenes ceases at temperatures above 29.4°C.

## Flower Abortion Management

The abscission of tomato flowers from heat stress is an important yield limiting factor in processing and fresh tomato production. Abortion of tomato flowers is a physiological disorder resulting from high temperatures. The most likely mechanism is low carbohydrate levels in plant tissues. Day temperatures over 32°C will reduce fruit set. As few as three or four hours at 40°C may be sufficient to disrupt fruit set. Any environmental condition that disrupts the normal course of pollen, ovule or zygote development will predispose the flower or young fruit to abscission. Night temperatures greater than 24°C will also cause flower abortion. Sustained hot temperatures at night burn up the food reserves the tomato produced during the day and the flowers abort.

Table 2. Screen Duo applications significantly reduce tomato flower abortion.

Season	Aborted Flowers/SQM	
	Untreated	SCREEN DUO
2007/08	16.6 a	9.5 b
2008/09	2.3 a	0.6 b
2008/09	5.4 a	2.9 b
2009/10	13.3 a	3 b
MEAN	9.4	4.0

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

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

Results clearly show that reducing the temperature of tomato plants with Screen Duo during critical growth stages can result in significant reduction in flower abortion increasing fruit set and thus yields.

**Sunburn management**

Sunburn occurs when tomato fruits are subject to intense solar radiation that increases the temperature of the skin and flesh, leading to discoloration and irreversible tissue damage. Damaged tissue provides an entry point for fungal and bacterial diseases.

Results clearly show that reducing the temperature of tomato plants with Screen Duo during critical growth stages can result in significant reductions in sunburnt tomatoes.

Table 3. Screen Duo applications have significantly reduced the level of sunburn tomatoes.

Season	Sunburnt Tomatoes %w/w	
	Untreated	SCREEN DUO
2007/08	13.5 a	1.8 b
2008/09	15.4 a	7.6 b
2009/10	15.3 a	7.2 b
MEAN	14.7	5.5

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

**Improved Tomato Yields**

The application of Screen Duo over the growing season will significantly increase the red tomato yield of processing tomatoes. By managing heat stress and reducing flower abortion and managing sunburn the application of Screen has significantly increased the yield of red tomatoes.

Table 4. Yield of red tomatoes

Season	Red Tomato Yield t/ha	
	Untreated	SCREEN DUO
2007/08	No data	No data
2008/09	82.9 a	114.1 b
2009/10	99.5 a	134.6 b
MEAN	91.2	124.4

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

No reliable yield data was available for the 2007/08 season due to a very wet finished that significantly reduced all yields.

**Improved Soluble Solid Levels**

Soluble solids are produced as the tomatoes change colour. This is most apparent during the latter half of the ripening period when the tomato has increased to full size. Factors that affect sugar accumulation include:

- adequate nutrients – need to keep leaves functioning
- avoiding water and heat stress – heat and water stress closes stomata = less CO<sub>2</sub> = less photosynthesis = less sugar for the fruit. Size of the sugar “sink”.

The application of Screen Duo to tomatoes maintained higher levels of photosynthesis during hot weather, thus providing an increase in soluble solids levels.

The levels of soluble solids for harvested tomatoes were independently measured at harvest.

Table 5. Soluble solids levels.

Season	Mean % Soluble Solids	
	Untreated	SCREEN DUO
2007/08	5.8 a	6.3 a
2008/09	6.1 a	6.3 a
2009/10	5.1 a	5.1 a
MEAN	5.7	5.9

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

The application of Screen Duo to processing tomatoes has increased the level of soluble solids and significantly increased the yield of total soluble solids per hectare. This represents a significant benefit not only to the grower but also to the tomato processing industry.

Table 6. Yield of Tomato Soluble Solids (t/ha)

Season	Yield t/ha of Tomato Soluble Solids	
	Untreated	SCREEN DUO
2008/09	5.0 a	7.2 b
2009/10	4.5 a	6.2 b
Mean	4.8	6.7

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

**SCREEN DUO**

Screen Duo is the first product to be developed from Fusion Technology, a set of patent pending abiotic stress solutions from CMM. Screen Duo is effective for the reduction in crop damage due to excess heat, light and drought. Fusion-based products utilize two different mechanisms for stress management. A particle film is used to avoid the stress by reflecting/refracting away excess UV, visible, and IR light away from the crop. This keeps the crop cooler, supporting photosynthesis and reducing damage from excess radiation. A naturally occurring compound is added to stimulate the plant’s inherent stress coping biochemical systems. The specific compounds in Fusion were chosen and tested based upon information in the scientific literature. Some compounds appear to help with excess heat and drought, whereas others reduce damage from low temperatures.

Screen Duo contains the same ingredients as original Screen, with a synthetic form of a specific common plant constituent added. The combination shows excellent management of heat/light /drought stress, resulting in higher yields of better quality fruit. Screen Duo provides this excellent activity at rates that are one half or less than those used with Screen or similar stress management products. This provides growers with an easier to use product, less material to handle, less visible residue on higher quality, higher yielding fruit. The constituent in Screen Duo is found naturally in a wide range of crops, including tomatoes, grapes, melons, and other horticultural crops.

Screen Duo will be applied at half of the rates of the original Screen providing growers with significant benefits including ease of handling and mixing.



## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Optimizing the productivity of crops and maximizing the efficiency of nutrient use in horticultural crops.

Professor Patrick Brown from the  
Department of Plant Science at the University of California

Topics: Plant nutrition and crop production  
Estimating nutrient demand and preventing deficiencies  
Fertigation or Foliar Fertilizers, what is the best choice?

Bendigo, Discovery Science & Technology Centre – Auditorium  
Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> Oct 1pm

If you wish to attend please contact  
Barmac Pty Ltd, Nick Bond 0428 969003 [nbond@barmac.com.au](mailto:nbond@barmac.com.au)

### Maximizing On-Farm Carbon Cycles for Profit, Production, and Protecting the Future

26<sup>th</sup> –29<sup>th</sup> October, 2010 Dubbo NSW  
Enquiries (02) 6374 0329

### Proposed Drip Irrigation Tour

Netafim are proposing to organize a tour for processing tomato growers next June to Israel and perhaps an additional country (open to suggestions?)

Estimated cost would be around \$4,000 providing HAL funding is accessible

If you are interested in participating please register your interest with Liz Mann by the end of Dec 2010

## By-product stockfeed and chemical use

As many tomato processors sell tomato waste such as discarded tomatoes, pomace and leaves as novel stockfeed, growers are asked to be mindful when using insecticides on their crops.

While there is a large range of pesticides approved for use on tomatoes, some of these products have label directions that prohibit the feeding of treated crops or waste to livestock. This is due to the likelihood of unacceptable residues occurring in either milk or meat, which could jeopardise Australia's access to valuable export markets.

An example of an insecticide that may cause such problems is endosulfan. The label for all endosulfan products contains the following prohibitive statement:

'DO NOT feed treated tomato crops to livestock' and 'DO NOT feed vegetable wastes or wrapper leaves of treated veg-

etable crops to livestock'.

Therefore, growers supplying tomatoes to processors should not use endosulfan on tomatoes, as it is very likely that the waste will become stockfeed. Growers should read chemical product labels carefully before applying the product and comply with any withholding periods and restraints statements.

DPI will continue working with primary producers and food processors to ensure that the risk of unacceptable residues caused by insecticide use on novel stockfeed is appropriately managed by the entire industry – tomato producers, food processors and livestock producers.

DPI has produced an Information Note AG0469: *Feeding crop waste to livestock and the risk of chemical residues*, which provides additional detail.

For further information regarding chemical use and stockfeed, contact Steven Field, DPI Senior Chemical Standards Officer on 03 5824 5532.

## World Processing Tomato Crop Update (WPTC 28/9/10)

### Italy

In the **North** there were some rains in the last two weeks which led to the closure of factories for a few days. Fruit quality is not bad with average brix of 4.9, and the price paid is 92% to 100% of the base price, that means about 70 €T.

The total volume processed should be 2.4 million tonnes in the North.

In the **South** the situation is quite good. Some excess tomatoes are being moved to the North to be processed at transport costs of 35-50 €/tonne.

Factories in the South have processed more paste than usual but the figures will be known at the end of the season.

### Spain

Factories have been working at full capacity in Extremadura for the last 3 weeks, but some will close at the end of this week and most next week. The few rains in the last weeks did not cause any serious problems and the yields of the mid and late varieties were better than at the start of the season. Andalusia finished processing early in September. In Navarra, harvest is scheduled to last until the third week in October.

### Portugal

The harvest is going very well with good quantities and fruits of a very good quality. 80% of the program of 1.1 million tonnes had been processed by 20 September.

### France

There are been two episodes of heavy rains two weeks ago but these were localized and did not affect the crop too much although locally the harvest stopped for 2 days. More rain is forecast for this Friday. Fruit quality has deteriorated since the rains but remains decent, despite many green tomatoes.

### Greece

The weather has been quite good in the last few weeks despite some rains which did not cause any big damages. Fruit quality is good although brix is slightly lower than last year.

### Turkey

The harvest is almost over and most factories have now closed. The price of tomatoes has risen to 220-230 euros/tonne. The price of canned tomato paste in the shop has not yet risen to take into account the high cost of production this year.

### Ukraine

Some rains in June lowered yields and the conditions were poor for part of August, improving in September.

### China

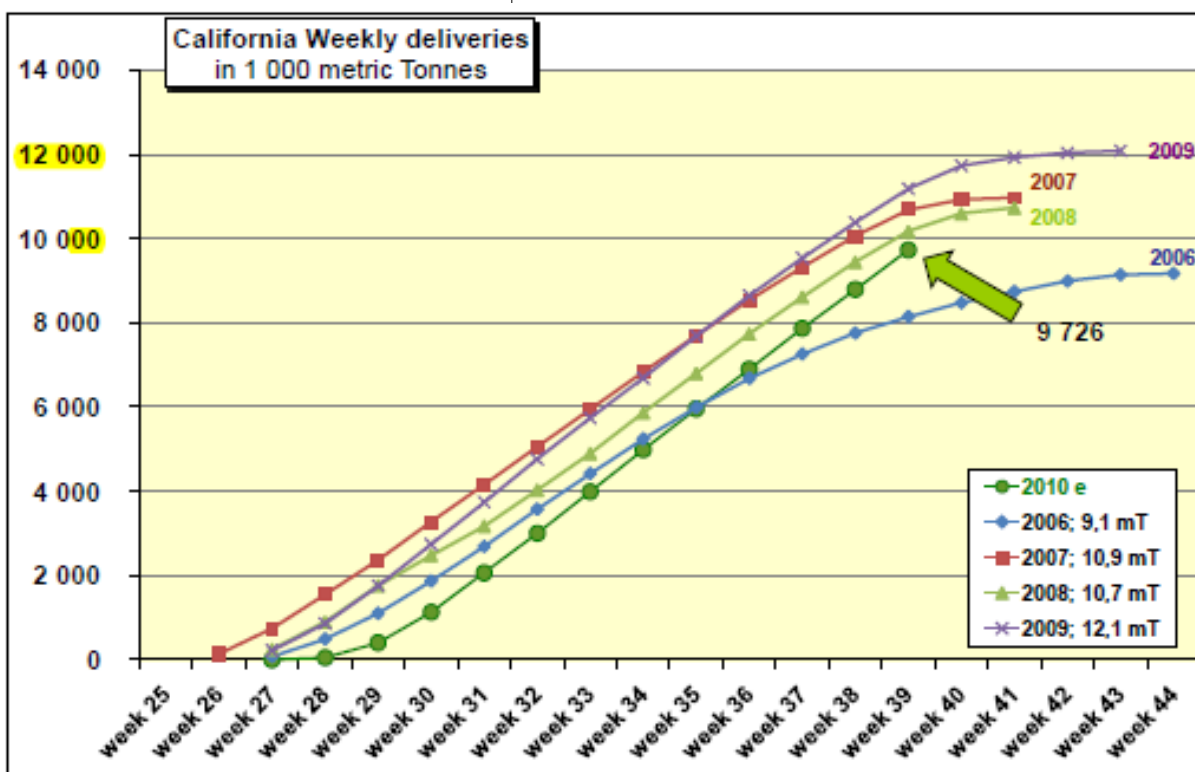
The harvested fresh tomatoes in China up to 9:00 am on Sep.20 is 5.77 million and the total estimate will be something around 7 million if there is no big change on weather in the following 10-15 days.

### Brazil

Unilever's Brazilian tomato products business, which includes a processing plant in Goiania and major tomato sauce brands was sold last week to Cargill.

### California

The harvest continues at a rate of more than one million short tons per week.





## WORLD PROCESSING TOMATO COUNCIL

Date of last update: 28 September 2010

		2007 FINAL	2008 FINAL	2009 FINAL	2010 FORECAST 28 Sept 2010	AVERAGE 2007 to 2009
all figures in 1000 metric tonnes						
<b>NORTHERN HEMISPHERE*</b>	<b>MEMBERS IN MEDITERRANEAN REGION (AMITOM)</b>					
	Algeria**	300	260	240	400	267
	Egypt	36	108	150	150	98
	France	99	125	215	190	146
	Greece	640	670	810	620	707
	Iran**	2 100	2 060	2 400	1 400	2 187
	Israel	225	240	238	230	234
	Italy	4 800	4 900	5 747	4 800	5 082
	Malta**	9	12	12	9	11
	Morocco	140	160	160	160	153
	Portugal***	1 030	998	1 242	1 200	1 090
	Spain***	1 801	1 770	2 700	2 200	2 090
	Syria**	70	150	150	150	123
	Tunisia	580	800	750	800	710
	Turkey	1 650	2 700	1 800	1 300	2 050
	Ukraine**	85	150	340	280	192
	<b>Subtotal Mediterranean Region</b>	<b>13 365</b>	<b>15 103</b>	<b>16 954</b>	<b>13 889</b>	<b>15 141</b>
	<b>MEMBERS IN NORTH AMERICA</b>					
	California	10 950	10 720	12 073	11 158	11 248
	Canada	563	560	495	479	539
<b>Subtotal North America</b>	<b>11 513</b>	<b>11 280</b>	<b>12 568</b>	<b>11 637</b>	<b>11 787</b>	
<b>MEMBERS IN ASIA</b>						
China	4 800	6 405	8 655	7 000	6 553	
Japan	43	44	40	42	42	
<b>Subtotal Asia</b>	<b>4 843</b>	<b>6 449</b>	<b>8 695</b>	<b>7 042</b>	<b>6 596</b>	
<b>Subtotal WPTC members</b>	<b>29 521</b>	<b>32 832</b>	<b>38 217</b>	<b>32 568</b>	<b>33 523</b>	
<b>NON MEMBERS</b>						
Bulgaria	140	150	150	150	147	
Hungary	115	83	110	72	103	
Poland	205	160	100	140	155	
Czech Republic	15	15	15	15	15	
Slovakia	30	30	30	30	30	
Other US States (exc. California)	524	439	556	526	506	
<b>Subtotal non-members</b>	<b>1 029</b>	<b>877</b>	<b>961</b>	<b>933</b>	<b>956</b>	
<b>Total Northern Hemisphere</b>	<b>30 550</b>	<b>33 709</b>	<b>39 178</b>	<b>33 501</b>	<b>34 479</b>	
		<b>2007 FINAL</b>	<b>2008 FINAL</b>	<b>2009 FINAL</b>	<b>2010 FORECAST 28 Sept 2010</b>	<b>AVERAGE 2007 to 2009</b>
<b>SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE*</b>	<b>MEMBERS</b>					
	Argentina	340	350	450	390	380
	Australia	229	151	270	265	217
	Brazil	1 291	1 200	1 150	1 780	1 214
	Chile	670	510	619	864	600
	South Africa	160	150	167	140	159
	<b>Subtotal WPTC members</b>	<b>2 690</b>	<b>2 361</b>	<b>2 656</b>	<b>3 439</b>	<b>2 569</b>
	India	120	130	130	130	127
	Mexico	17	18	18	25	18
	New Zealand	70	65	65	65	67
	Peru	70	70	70	70	70
	Senegal	52	51	70	55	58
	Taiwan	20	20	20	20	20
Thailand	260	260	260	260	260	
Venezuela	40	40	40	40	40	
<b>Subtotal non-members</b>	<b>649</b>	<b>654</b>	<b>673</b>	<b>665</b>	<b>659</b>	
<b>Total Southern Hemisphere</b>	<b>3 339</b>	<b>3 015</b>	<b>3 329</b>	<b>4 104</b>	<b>3 228</b>	
<b>GENERAL TOTAL</b>		<b>33 889</b>	<b>36 724</b>	<b>42 507</b>	<b>37 605</b>	<b>37 706</b>
of which members of the WPTC		32 211	35 193	40 873	36 007	36 092
		95,0%	95,8%	96,2%	95,8%	95,7%

all figures in 1000 metric tonnes

In red: estimate, no recent information on the country

### DISCLAIMER

All figures are provided to WPTC members and other participating experts of the processing associations. WPTC does not guarantee or assume any liability for the accuracy of the contents of this site/report and shall not be responsible for any losses sustained as a result of relying on the contained information.

\*Hemispheres are not defined in the strict geographic sense but as:

Northern Hemisphere: crop period mainly July to December

Southern Hemisphere: crop period mainly January to June

\*\* AMITOM associate members

\*\*\* Tomatoes produced in Portugal but processed in Spain are reported in Spain

## Bamford Decision –implications for trusts

The High Court recently handed down its decision in the Bamford matter, this may result in unforeseen ramifications for the way that trusts are now able to operate. This is of considerable interest to Australian farmers, many of whom operate under a trust arrangement.

Specifically, the following concerns that as of 1<sup>st</sup> July 2010:

The result of the case will see the ATO withdraw income tax ruling 95/29 meaning that a beneficiary of a primary production trust will no longer be deemed to be a primary producer in the event that no income is distributed by the Trustee because the Trust has incurred a loss.

Beneficiaries of a primary production trust that are no longer deemed to be primary producers will therefore be ineligible for tax averaging benefits and access to Farm Management Deposits.

The above impacts would result in farm entities operating within a trust arrangement being significantly disadvantaged compared to those operating under partnership or sole trader arrangements. Furthermore, the legal and administrative costs of changing farmers' operating structures to cater for such a development would be significant and potentially trigger an additional tax burden if caught by deemed disposal rules.

The NFF has been liaising with the ATO on this issue and based on these discussions believes that there is an urgent need for Treasury, in conjunction with the ATO and the NFF, to examine the implications of the Bamford matter for farm trusts in more detail. Should the NFF concerns be founded, they will then look to explore and implement legislative remedies to ensure that farm businesses operating under trust arrangements are not unintentionally disadvantaged. It is important that this issue is resolved before the end of June 2011 when the 2010/2011 financial year accounts are lodged

## Brad Stillards's Nuffield Adventures

Washington DC was another world on our return. Gone were the odd pieces of snow that dotted the landscape three months earlier; in its place a hot and humid environment greeted us as

we stepped out the door to catch yet another taxi. The group enjoyed a day of rest before heading up to Capitol Hill for a series of meetings with various staff members and lobbyists involved with agripolitics. It made for some very frank and sometimes direct questions about imports and exports, tariffs and subsidies.

My view of agriculture is changing and I'm starting to question why developed countries base most of their focus towards production at the cost of nutrition and ultimately our value in the market place. It goes against the principle of business, to devalue your product by over supply. The more I hear we have to feed the world, the more I wonder why it is that our markets fluctuate so much if food is in such demand. There are more than just farmers who have a stake in food production and it's cost. Those who have their interest in the status quo of cheap food far outweigh those who do not. After being told by the Assistant U.S Trade Representative for Agricultural Affairs that there are many farmers out there who farm at any cost simply because they love it, struck me as some what true. Most of us (farmers) feel a sense of honour in feeding families. While the cold reality of the all mighty dollar drives us to be more efficient at using up our resources at the cost of sustainability, it is somewhat ironic that if a larger number of farmers didn't care as much as they do about their production, the cost of living would rise dramatically.

After DC, we flew into Alberta, Canada, where we were warmly greeted by Steve Larocque (Beyond Agronomy) and Karen Daynard, both fellow scholars. Steve had organised this leg of our tour and I was looking forward to it. Alberta is a land full of rolling hills of crop after crop devoid of any tree of consequence. A population of pick ups on steroids that the US would envy was the norm. Once again, the talk of too much rain was on the agenda. So much so that wheat planting had been delayed and in some cases abandoned leading up to our arrival. Yellowing of flooded crop was apparent and common (which is uncommon for the area). A highlight of the trip for me was a farm stay with John Mills, a young farmer who's approach to farming was as interesting as it was innovative. His approach to running his business (Eagle Creek Farms) is diverse, with a "U pick" (you pick the produce yourself) garden, a seasonal maize and sunflower maze that would be best described as agri-tourism and Seed Potato business. John is also selling the shares in a "season" and whatever is produced in it. He drops off the produce to all his shareholders at a predetermined site. A little different to just waiting until harvest and taking a price. *(to be continued in December edition)*

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

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Phone: (03) 5825 4633, Fax: (03) 5825 4725, Mobile: (0427) 857-578, E-mail: [lizmann@aptrc.asn.au](mailto:lizmann@aptrc.asn.au)

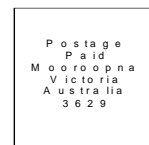
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### Sender:

APTRC Inc.

P.O. Box 2293

SHEPPARTON, VIC 3632



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