HORTICULTURE FOR THE FUTURE – AuSHS, NZIAHS AND AUSTRALASIAN POSTHARVEST GROUP JOINT CONFERENCE

The inaugural joint conference of the three leading Australasian and New Zealand horticultural R&D Societies will be held at Mantra Erskine Beach Resort, Lorne, Victoria from September 18 to 22, 2011, with a focus on attracting and supporting young people in order to build capacity in horticulture.

The Australasian Postharvest Horticulture Conference Organising Committee (APHC), the Australian Society for Horticultural Science (AuSHS) and the New Zealand Institute of Agriculture and Horticulture Science (NZIAHS) have joined forces in order to create an event of international significance around Horticultural Research, Development, Extension and Training.

Session themes will include:

- Climate variability and resource-use efficiency
- Sustainable pre- and post-harvest
- Fruits, vegetables and health
- Growing systems
- Value chain, marketing, and consumers
- Industry extension in horticulture and;
- Training and capacity building in horticulture
- Horticulture in developing countries
- Metabolomics in horticulture
- Postharvest physiology (including ethylene)
- Postharvest storage (CA, MA, postharvest treatments)
- Market access & quarantine
- Postharvest pathology
- Storage disorders and treatments
- Other

Registration

Early Bird Registration (before 1 August 2011) $650
Standard Registration (after 1 August 2011) $750

For more information visit
THE 29TH INTERNATIONAL HORTICULTURE CONGRESS.

The congress is being hosted by the Australian Society of Horticultural Science, the New Zealand Institute of Agricultural and Horticultural Science, and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, under the auspices of the International Society for Horticultural Science. Held every four years at various sites around the world, and attracting more than 2,000 delegates, the congress is a world forum on all aspects of horticulture and horticultural science.

The theme of the 2014 congress is ‘Horticulture - sustaining lives, livelihoods and landscapes’. We’ve chosen this theme to highlight the unique potential of horticulture to address the key issues of modern society - health, wealth and the environment. Horticulture matters to us all, whether we are involved in research, extension, education, servicing horticulture in production, amenity or environmental horticulture, in developed or developing countries.

So please reserve the dates of August 17-24, 2014 in your calendar. We hope you will contribute to the stimulating technical presentations while enjoying the spectacular sights of subtropical Australia.

The first E newsletter for the conference has been distributed. If you wish to obtain these in the future please register your interest at the conference website: www.IHC2014.org

The IHC2014 Organising Committee knows that it is best to build the Brisbane event on the successful features of previous Congresses. To help better understand these features, we completed a survey of over 1000 participants who attended the 28th International Horticultural Congress in Lisbon in 2010. We also listened to feedback from our enthusiastic team of Australian/New Zealand/Pacific Islands ambassadors on the ground in Lisbon on what worked well and where improvements might be beneficial.

As a result, we are committed to retaining many of the features you loved about the Lisbon event while adding some uniquely Australasian experiences and the relaxed “down under” hospitality.

Some of the things we are focusing on as a result of the survey and feedback include:

- Regular e-newsletters confirming key dates, Congress content and related symposia;
- Streamlined registration systems;
- Plenty of helpful Congress staff on hand;
- A professionally organized event that eliminates “no shows” from the program and uses new technologies to bring the program and abstracts in real time to delegates;
- A unique keynote programme;
- Plenty of comfortable seating around the venue for small groups to interact;
- Central location of the Congress venue to quality, affordable accommodation as well as to Brisbane’s well-known attractions and night life;
- A wide variety of field trips to highlight the horticultural diversity of the region and the key horticultural challenges faced;
- Well organised partner programmes that offer a special “down under” experience for delegates’ partners and families.

These are just some of the many useful suggestions that will be incorporated into IHC2014.
Note that it is not too late to offer your suggestions – please email us at info@ihc2014.org

We welcome any comments, feedback, and news articles for future issues of our e-newsletter. Please send these to our editor, Dr Paul Johnstone (Paul.Johnstone@plantandfood.co.nz). The deadline for submissions for the next e-newsletter is September 30, 2011.

If you know any non-members, new faculty staff, and new industry personnel involved in horticulture and/or horticultural science and who might be interested in receiving the 2014 IHC e-newsletter, please invite them to register on www.ihc2014.org

**NHRN Snapshot of Horticultural R & D Capacity in Government Agencies**

Earlier this year, with encouragement from HAL, the National Horticultural Research Network (NHRN) compiled an approximate inventory of Horticultural staff employed in research and development by discipline within each of the member organisations and this exercise also described anticipated changes in staffing levels over the next 5 years. The NHRN is composed of members from each State Department of Agriculture, CSIRO as well as HAL. The University of Tasmania, which represents the Department of Agriculture in Tasmania, is the only University represented on the NHRN although the network does have linkages with the Australian Council of Deans of Agriculture. This inventory of R & D capacity does not include staff from other universities or private contract researchers.

**National Horticultural Scientific Capability Snapshot**

Units: FTEs - Scientists and technical staff currently working in horticulture

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**Likely trends in National Horticultural Scientific Capability**

**March 2016**

**Increase or decrease over current day.** Ranking Rating: 1 = Significantly Reduce Capacity 2 = Reduce Slightly 3 = No Change 4 = Increase Capacity Slightly 5 = Significantly Increase Capacity

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**FEWER RAIN STORMS ACROSS SOUTHERN AUSTRALIA**

CSIRO media release

Decreasing autumn and winter rainfall over southern Australia has been attributed to a 50-year decrease in the average intensity of storms in the region – a trend which is forecast to continue for another 50 years. In an address on 4 July to the International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics conference in Melbourne, CSIRO climate scientist, Dr Jorgen Frederiksen, said these changes are due to reductions in the strength of the mid-latitude jet stream and changes in atmospheric temperatures. The jet stream comprises fast moving westerly winds in the upper atmosphere.

“The drop in winter and autumn rainfall observed across southern Australia is due to a large downturn in the intensity of storm formations over at least the last three decades compared with the previous three decades, and these effects have become more pronounced with time,” Dr Frederiksen said. "Our recent work on climate model projections suggests a continuation of these trends over the next 50 years.”

The most important circulation feature associated with winter storm formation is the strength of the sub-tropical jet stream. For example, winter storms give south-west Western Australia much of its rain. Between the 20-year periods 1949 to 1968 and 1975 to 1994 south-west WA rainfall reduced by 20 per cent. In south-east Australia, there were reductions of 10 per cent.
COFFEE RESEARCH IN QUEENSLAND

What makes a good cup of coffee? DEEDI scientists find out

A DEEDI study hopes to get to the bottom of what Aussies want from their coffee.

Consumer scientist Katrina Gething is leading the study which gauges consumer preferences for a range of coffee beans and blends, including Australian-grown coffee.

The findings will be used to develop an Australian coffee flavour wheel for use by chefs and the food industry.

“This information will be valuable in showing exactly what it is Australian consumers like about coffee and precisely what aspects of Australian-grown coffee are appealing,” Katrina said.

“What’s really exciting is we’ll be able to define specific regional flavours.”

A SUSTAINABLE ‘BIO-DERIVED’ JET FUEL INDUSTRY IS ACHIEVABLE.

Establishing an economically and environmentally beneficial, ‘bio-derived’ Australian and New Zealand aviation fuels industry is a viable proposition, according to a report compiled by CSIRO in collaboration with the region’s major aviation industry players.

The report, Flight Path to Sustainable Aviation, predicts that over the next 20 years a new, sustainable, Australia-New Zealand aviation fuels industry could cut greenhouse gas emissions by 17 per cent, generate more than 12,000 jobs and reduce Australia’s reliance on aviation fuel imports by $2 billion per annum.

The study found that production of commercially viable quantities of aviation fuels derived from non-food biomass sources (eg: crop stubble, forestry residues, municipal waste and algae) is a feasible option for Australia and New Zealand. It also found there are currently sufficient biomass stocks to support a local jet fuel industry.

Source: CSIRO website
PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION NOT ADOPTED BY GOVERNMENT

In February 2010, the Australian Government asked the Productivity Commission to examine the effectiveness of the rural Research and Development Corporation (RDC) model, including the appropriateness of current funding levels and arrangements for improving productivity through research and development (R&D), and whether there are any impediments to effective and efficient functioning of the model.

The commission consulted extensively with participants throughout the inquiry, by holding public hearings and informal meetings, and releasing an issues paper and a draft report, which drew a total of 295 submissions. Stakeholder submissions were overwhelmingly supportive of the RDC model. The commission provided its final inquiry report to the government in February 2011.

While noting several areas of possible improvement in the RDC model, the commission recognises in its report that the matching funding arrangements, the high level of industry engagement and the strong support from all sectors for the RDC model make it unique among R&D funding models around the world. The commission also indicates that the strengths of the model include the close links with industry and the ‘systems integrating’ role that the RDCs play in terms of collaborating with other research funders and influencing research priorities and framework reform.

However, the commission suggests that levy payers and other industry stakeholders should take on greater responsibility for funding industry-focused research through the RDC model, as it argues that much of the government’s current investment is being used to fund projects that producers would have sound financial reasons to fully fund themselves. The commission therefore recommends a gradual reduction in the cap on the government’s dollar for dollar matching of eligible industry R&D levy contributions, from 0.5 per cent of an industry’s gross value of production (GVP) to 0.25 per cent. The commission also recommends the introduction of a 20 cents in the dollar matching contribution for industry levy contributions above the reduced GVP cap, to provide a further incentive for producers to increase their contributions.

The Australian Government will not adopt the commission’s recommendation to halve the cap on government matching contributions to the RDCs in conjunction with the introduction of a new subsidy above the cap. While it is clear that some aspects of the RDC model could be improved, strong support for the model overall was evident throughout the commission’s inquiry. The government’s matching contributions are a key pillar of the model, and there is a risk that reducing the government contributions would undermine the model’s strength and would potentially jeopardise the government-industry partnership that underpins the model.

Source: DAFF website

RURAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL
NATIONAL STRATEGIC RURAL R &D INVESTMENT PLAN

This National Strategic Rural R&D Investment Plan is intended to provide high-level strategic direction and coordination to a diverse rural RD&E system. The system is estimated to have an annual turnover of about $2.9 billion across the agriculture, fisheries and forestry sector, its value chain, and in areas related to the rural sector more broadly. The Council emphasises that it is crucial to consider this wider system in determining priorities and areas of investment for rural RD&E. The wider system includes traditional agricultural research as well as research in other areas, for example new chemicals, technology improvements or more effective environmental management practices.

Rationale for change

In the coming decades, Australia’s rural sector will face considerable challenges, including climate change and the need to concurrently increase productivity and sustainability to respond to rising global demand for food while maintaining the resource base for future generations. Meeting these challenges will require long-term transformation of the rural sector, defined broadly to include communities associated with agriculture, fisheries and forestry as well as related industries along the value chain. Every effort should be made to better secure and enhance the substantial capability that enables our rural sector to develop, access and apply world-class, adaptive knowledge.

1. Australia’s rural RD&E system, defined broadly, has an annual turnover of about $2.9 billion and represents about 10 per cent of the national innovation system. This comprises $1.1 billion in the ‘agricultural, fisheries and forestry’ (AFF) component of the system, $1 billion in the ‘expanded along the value chain’ component and a further $0.8 billion in the ‘related to rural’ component.

2. The rural RD&E system’s diversity is a strength, however, its complexity and fragmentation make cohesive responses to emerging opportunities and risks challenging.
3. There is evidence that rural sector productivity growth is slowing in Australia and other developed countries. Continued productivity growth in the rural sector will be an important source of economic growth for Australia in the future.

4. RD&E underpins productivity growth and sustainable development in the rural sector. Any slowdown in the growth of public funding for RD&E is of concern because of the time lag between research expenditure and desired outcomes, risking a contraction of benefits in the medium term.

5. With an ageing research workforce and evidence of an increasing skills deficit, there may already be insufficient capacity in the rural sector to develop and adopt innovations at the desired rate.

**Vision**

The Council proposes the following ‘big vision’ for rural RD&E: that the rural RD&E system will play an important role in:

- Contributing to the national economy by enabling Australia to play its part in the global effort to double rural sector output over the next 30 years while utilising proportionally fewer resources
- Developing a range of technologies and knowledge to contribute to healthy Australian lifestyles and global food security
- Producing a wider product range, including food, fibre, energy and bio-based products, in addition to ecosystem services.

For the rural sector to achieve these outcomes, the Council believes the Australian Government’s investment in rural RD&E must be better understood and targeted. The system will need further development and an increased focus on international collaboration to share knowledge. The Council recommends allocating resources to maximise opportunities and minimise the likelihood, or impact, of adverse events.

The Council has determined the following investment goals:

- Facilitate ongoing industry development and adaptation to change through RD&E
- Leverage innovation for growth along value chains, with greater sharing-of-risk and reduced reliance on natural resources
- Integrate natural resource management with production systems to use natural resources more efficiently
- Use improved modelling and scenarios to analyse and plan for climate change, build understanding, and develop adaptation practices and resilient systems
- Build capability through high quality education and training
- Reward and retain world-class researchers through commitments above current investment levels
- Develop social research and tools that enable rural communities to embrace change, adopt new technologies and manage the impact of change
- Develop elite genetic resources, emerging technologies and multidisciplinary capability for application to rural problems and opportunities
- Invest in, and in some cases accelerate the development of cross-sectoral RD&E strategies such as those relating to bioenergy, bio-based products, food and nutrition
- Develop systematic links, and collaborate, with leading international groups to improve access to funds, markets and knowledge that can address common Australian and global needs.

Following consultation with stakeholders, these goals have been distilled into five RD&E investment themes. Industry development and sustainable production are viewed as interdependent and influenced in the longer term by transformational RD&E. People are considered central to the system because it is through their initiative, innovation and motivation that rural RD&E will be relevant and effective in the long term. International links encompass the other themes, recognising that many challenges facing Australia’s rural sector are global and that Australian researchers are, and must continue to be, active participants in international research networks.

**Theme 1: Industry development.**

The Australian Government should continue its support for the rural R&D Corporations model as a critical component of the National Primary Industries RD&E Framework and commit to ongoing support for both of these elements in the transfer of system-wide knowledge to effective rural sector networks. Additional funding mechanisms should be developed with the private sector to support other rural industries in pursuit of the vision set out in this Plan. The Australian Government should invest in conserving the genetic diversity of major socio-economically significant species and associated knowledge, in addition to continuing its support for international efforts to conserve germplasm, including in relation to biodiversity.

**Theme 2: Sustainable production**

The Australian Government should improve coordination of and collaboration in RD&E initiatives that inform the management of land, water, marine and other natural resources to achieve sustainable outcomes for current and future generations.
**Theme 3: Transformational RD&E**
The Australian Government should ensure that policy settings encourage the rural sector to participate actively in new business opportunities, including those related to bio-based production.

**Theme 4: Capacity in people**
The Australian Government should apply its rural research funds in ways that value research excellence as well as research impact, and raise the profile of agriculture, fisheries and forestry within the broader research community. The Australian Government should invest in initiatives to increase the rural sector’s utilisation of technical knowledge, better equipping it for global competitiveness, productivity, adaptability and sustainable development.

**Theme 5: International links**
The Australian Government should build strategic international links and strengthen the capacity of existing networks to contribute to international efforts to address climate change and sustainably produce food, fibre and renewable energy. The Australian Government should encourage industry and researchers to strengthen links that increase the flow of international capital into Australia’s rural RD&E system.

To achieve the Council’s vision for rural RD&E, the initial balance of investment across the rural RD&E system should be:

- 40 per cent: transformational investment for long-term outcomes
- 30 per cent: near-term adjustment for mid-term outcomes
- 20 per cent: capacity building in people
- 10 per cent: international linkage.

Source: DAFF website

**NATIONAL FOOD PLAN SUBMISSIONS OPEN**
In its 2010 election commitment the Australian Government indicated that the key aims for a national food plan were to integrate food policy by looking at the whole food supply chain, to protect Australia’s food security, and to develop a strategy to maximize food production opportunities. It also outlined a wide range of issues it would consider when developing a national food plan. The plan is expected to have a broad scope, including issues such as food security, productivity and efficiency, sustainability, health and nutrition and general economic policy relating to the food sector. One role for the plan will be to recognize the wide range of work already being done by stakeholders. The government envisages that a national food plan will outline the Australian Government’s vision for the food industry and consumers, to guide Australian Government actions and provide certainty for other stakeholders. A national food plan, when finalized, would seek to better explain and better integrate Australia’s approach to food policy, from production through to consumption, and be consistent with the government’s market-based policy approach and commitment to fiscal discipline.

Submissions on the ‘Issues paper to inform development of a national food plan’ are due by 5pm Australian Eastern Standard Time, Friday, 5 August 2011.

Source: DAFF website

**UPDATE ON MYRTLE RUST AND ASIAN HONEY BEE IN AUSTRALIA**
The Gillard Government will provide $3.5 million to support national pilot programs aimed at creating an ongoing solution to the management of Asian honeybees and the plant disease, Myrtle rust. Earlier this year, two separate National Management Groups, comprising representatives from industry and federal and state governments, concluded that eradication of Asian honeybees and Myrtle rust is no longer technically feasible. The funds, $2 million for Asian honeybees and $1.5 million for Myrtle rust, are being provided to support a pilot of the national transitional containment principles developed by the National Biosecurity Committee in 2010.
QUEENSLAND FRUIT FLIES IN VICTORIA

Victoria has experienced one of the worst seasons for Queensland fruit fly outbreaks in 2011 with a number of outbreaks declared across the state in most of Victoria’s key fruit-producing regions.

Source: Victorian DPI website

MEDITERRANEAN FRUIT FLIES IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Primary Industries and Resources SA (PIRSA) declared a fruit fly outbreak at Port Augusta on 18 April 2011. The outbreak was declared after 16 male Mediterranean fruit flies were discovered in a trap at Port Augusta West. A 1.5 kilometre quarantine area is in place around the detection site. The quarantine will last until at least mid November 2011, but may be extended if additional “wild” flies or infestations are found or if weather conditions affect the program.

Source: PIRSA website

CHESTNUT BLIGHT IN VICTORIA

Chestnut blight, a declared exotic disease under state legislation, has been confirmed on a number of properties in the Ovens Valley in Victoria’s north east. Vic DPI has been working with affected growers and the chestnut industry, tracing movements to and from suspect properties and surveying other groves and nurseries. About 150,000 chestnut trees throughout Victoria have been surveyed for signs of infection. Precautionary inspections of 500 oak trees and 1200 eucalypts in and around infected properties have also taken place.

Source: Victorian DPI website

APPELLATION OF SOUTH AUSTRALIAN PRODUCE

The State Government is proposing the introduction of Australia’s first appellation control scheme to protect the identity and enhance the marketing of foods produced in defined regions of South Australia. Deputy Premier and Food Marketing Minister John Rau is seeking industry and community views about a legislated labelling scheme that would assure consumers that they were buying authentic South Australian foods produced in specific regions, using genuine regional produce. The proposal for such a scheme has grown from discussions with leading figures in South Australia’s premium food industry.

Source: PIRSA website

NEW PUBLICATIONS

Vegetable pest ID made simple with new guide

Vegetable growers and their service providers can now access a newly released, comprehensive guide to identifying insects, spiders and mites affecting most vegetable crops in Australia. Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI) Principal Entomologist Iain Kay said accurate and confident identification of insects, spiders and mites was the first step to successful management of pests and natural enemies in vegetable crops. “Identifying pests is an essential prerequisite for crop monitoring, which is the backbone of an effective pest management program,” he said.

*The comprehensive publications consist of a workshop manual and trainer’s handbook designed as a main resource for delivering a workshop program on pest identification in vegetable crops.

For more information, call DEEDI’s Customer Service Centre on 13 25 23 or visit http://www.deedi.qld.gov.au/.
Transgenic Horticultural Crops, Challenges and Opportunities

As the world debates the risks and benefits of plant biotechnology, the proportion of the global area of transgenic field crops has increased every year, and the safety and value continues to be demonstrated. Yet, despite the success of transgenic field crops, the commercialization of transgenic horticultural crops (vegetables, fruits, nuts, and ornamentals) has lagged far behind. Transgenic Horticultural Crops: Challenges and Opportunities examines the challenges for the creation and commercialization of horticultural biotechnology and identifies opportunities, strategies, and priorities for future progress.

The production and commercialization of transgenic horticultural crops is an enormous task—its progress and realization require an informed research community, horticultural industry, government, and body of consumers. To aid in this effort, this book provides facts, analyses and insights by leading experts in this field to inform a wide audience of students, agricultural and genetic professionals, and the interested public. Part of the global conversation on the pros and cons of transgenic foods, Transgenic Horticultural Crops aims to stimulate more interest and discussion on the subject and to promote the development of safe and sustainable genetically modified horticultural crop varieties.

UPCOMING ISHS MEETINGS


December 3-6, 2011, Bangkok (Thailand): Asia Pacific Symposium on Postharvest Quality Management of Root and Tuber Crops


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