



Hydroponic Farmers Federation Newsletter

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President's Report



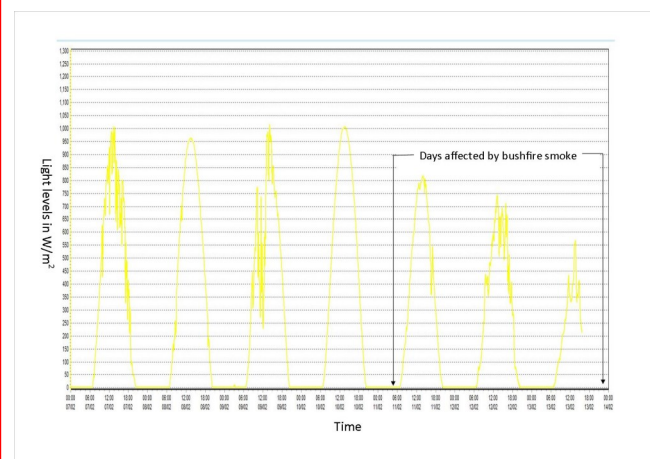
Dear Members, I hope you have all recovered from the Festive Season and are safe and well!. Oh yes, and your crops/businesses have survived the extreme heat! Your Committee is very active in providing "You the Members" with activities to hopefully help you in your business. Tony B, as usual is wearing many hats but the one I like the most is when he puts on the news letter editor hat. Whilst some will think being the president is difficult I can tell you that getting the news letter together is much harder! Well done Tony, & on that note, Tony B is always sniffing for good and informative stories, so please feel free to put your story forward. It's the end of the year for the Committee and we have programmed the HFF AGM/Grower Meeting in for the 3rd of April (See agenda Insert) We are very grateful to Tony Spurling and the crew at Gateway Hydroponics for opening the doors for us to visit. Whilst we have had meetings before at Tony's, we believe there are lots to see through improvements in the retail shop, and the growing of self pick Strawberries. I think we are in for a very informative day. With the AGM comes formalities, so please come along and join in. We will be giving those attending an up to dated report on the forthcoming HFF 2014 Conference to be held in July (Check out our Web site for all the details). I am not comfortable signaling out an individual committee member, as they all do a fantastic job and remember it takes more then one to "tango". But I have known Michael Tran for a long time and have been to many of the meetings he has arranged for growers in the Lara area. I must really congratulate Michael on his work in this area, as he spends many hours of his time helping these growers through sharing his knowledge and getting experts in their respective fields to talk with them. It really has fast tracked these growers development. For me personally what Michael does is exactly what I would like to see the HFF doing more of—helping others! In many cases we do achieve this, but on occasion it feels like we haven't got the support of the Growers, if you think you know everything, you bloody don't! How do I know this? "Because" !!!! As most members will know ASN Events have been managing the HFF conference for the last six years. We are excited about ASN being on board again for the up and coming Conference to be held in Mulwala. We are in the process of finalizing the Program as well as some exciting Farm Visits, which we can't wait to announce at our AGM. I thought you might like a feel for how we are approaching this conference by sharing the THEME and its meaning, thanks to those who can put a sentence together—this is exactly how we the committee feel about the Conference—**Networking for Knowledge** The 2014 HFF conference once again will feature a high quality program with the best speakers drawn from Australia and New Zealand, and possibly Europe. The conference offers the opportunity to hear the latest practical and technical knowledge in the hydroponics Industry. The greatest resource in HFF conferences is not just in the "program" but the interaction with other delegates. Networking with other growers, industry representatives, speakers and other delegates allows you to share know how, experiences with others, and learn from them. Staged in the Mulwala club, which has accommodation on site, meaning you do not have to drive once you arrive! . You will be able to relax and enjoy the conference and the wonderful ambience of the Murray River at your door step, while ensuring you are keeping in touch with the latest developments in hydroponics. The committee have designed this conference to truly be a chance to "Network for Knowledge". **So if you know everything—come and share it with us at the Conference!**
John

The Secretary



March heralds the start of Autumn in Australia, and I am sure that like me, you were glad to see the back of the extreme weather. In a summer that saw 5 days of above 40C temperatures, and then another burst of hot weather only a couple of weeks ago, the conditions have certainly been trying for all of us in the growing game. 'But why are you worried? - you've just had 6 weeks holiday as a teacher' I can hear the sceptics saying! As much as many of my colleagues enjoy that particular perk of the teaching award, that little treat has not filtered down to the bloke that runs the greenhouse. It was work as usual for me, and in conjunction with my trusty part time worker—Doug Oldaker—we were hard at it keeping a Tomato crop that was in full production growing at optimum performance levels. Of course we do have plenty of 'toys' to assist us in the process—and the technology is a great benefit when conditions become as extreme as they did in this season. If you asked me what was the greatest help in keeping the climate cool and stable, then the use of fogging technology would win hands down. As a general guide, we had our system set to start fogging for cooling at 26C, and we also allowed the RH to ride to 65% when cooling. The trick is to keep the plants cool but also encourage an appropriate level of transpiration in the plants. The transpiration process not only assists in cooling the plants but also bulks up the humidity in the house. On the 'hot' days we were able to keep our greenhouse temperature some 6C cooler than outside temperature. Another item in our bag of tricks, are the shade screens that we have installed in the house. The obvious use of these was to pull them across on hot days to reduce the level of radiation. Whilst that certainly happens, the side effect was that humidity shot up under the screen and temperatures actually rose. This was all down to the fact that water from the fogging system couldn't evaporate. The solution that we came up with was to run the screens across to 35% on the really hot days. This gave some protection to the heads without hindering the cooling / evaporation process. On those plus 40C days, my take on things was that we were in survival mode—as long as we got out of the day with all the plants looking reasonably healthy, we were winning. But the long term effects were also at the back of my mind—with the risk of Blossom End Rot being my number one concern. Yes we did suffer from a little BER—which we are seeing the tail end of now, some 7-8 weeks later, but in

general the plants have come through the process fairly well unscathed. The other little delight that I have to contend with is that I am trying to keep a balanced climate for 27 varieties in the one house as part of managing the De Ruiter living proof centre. So I can assure you that having a single variety crop is a much easier proposition to handle! So nature had been busy chucking it's worst at us for most of the summer when we were faced with another issue. For those of you that don't know I am also a CFA volunteer—and have been for the past 23 years—so on top of keeping the glasshouse going I was also heavily involved in chasing fires in my role as an operational officer with my crews. In my experience there are generally three things that start fires—Men, Women and Children. So it was no surprise to find that on the last hot days numerous fires 'magically' started around the state. But the one that has had the most impact has been the grass fires that got in to the open cut coal mines at Hazlewood. Whilst the effects have been well publicized through the media, we also experienced some dramatic reductions in radiation levels in the surrounding areas due to the smoke that the fire generated. As you can see by the graph below,



this caused some pretty dramatic reduction in sunlight levels. The fire is an ongoing issue and for those growers who are operating in the LaTrobe valley, I hope that you are not being effected to much by this ongoing drama. So we are now heading in to a new year and on the horizon is the HFF conference. I would encourage everyone to make the effort to attend this event. You will undoubtedly learn something new, as well as having the chance to network with other members of our great industry at a location that is second to none. I look forward to seeing you all at this great event later in the year. Regards, Tony Bundock

Australian vegetable growers' income expected to fall

The average income of Australian vegetable growers is expected to have fallen by 38 per cent in 2012-13, according to data released by the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES). ABARES conducts an annual survey of Australian vegetable growers, with the results of the latest survey covering data collected in 2011-12 and 2012-13.

Australian vegetable growing businesses average cash income is estimated to have fallen to \$103,000 per farm in 2012-13. This represents a 29 per cent decrease from 2005-06, and is 41 per cent lower than the five year average to 2012-13.

"These findings clearly illustrate that Australia's vegetable growers are doing it tough," said Mr Kurt Hermann, AUSVEG spokesperson. "Estimates suggest that average vegetable business profits have fallen from \$60,200 in 2011-12 to a deficit of \$10,000 in 2012-13. This is an approximate reduction in business profit of 117 per cent from the previous year," said Mr Hermann

"Reduced vegetable production volumes, due to below average rainfall at the time of planting, has been a major contributing factor to the expected decline in vegetable growers' income in 2012-13."

"This is troublesome news for the vegetable industry, with rising production input costs and lower profits already squeezing many Australian vegetable growers out of the industry. Growers in the bottom 25 per cent when ranked by rate of return had an estimated average loss of \$101,200 in 2011-12," said Mr Hermann.

For more information, please feel free to contact:-

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www.ausveg.com.au

Membership



I am pleased to report that the HFF Membership is currently running at 46 currently financial members, this is made up of 28 growers, 18 industry 2 life, 1 affiliate and 1 supporter member. Of these, only 32 are currently financial.

With our conference coming up in the middle of the year we are expecting an increase in membership numbers. The reason behind this is that delegates who are intending to attend the conference, and are currently not members of the HFF, will soon do the maths and realise that taking out a membership will give them a better deal for the discounted registration at the conference!

This isn't an issue for us in that we are more than happy to welcome these individuals to the conference and we can also spend some time with them explaining about the benefits of being an ongoing members of the HFF. For existing members, can I also give those of you who haven't paid your 2014 fees a gentle reminder to do so as soon as possible? Remember that only financial members can take advantage of the benefits conferred by HFF membership, including free grower meetings and discounted registration at both the HFF and AHGA conferences to name a few. Finally I look forward to seeing many of you at the AGM meeting which Gateway Estate will be hosting. Happy growing, Tony Spurling. Membership secretary.

“Unsocial” media



Facebook is now a part of our everyday life to a lesser or greater degree. For those of you with teenage kids (and older) it will not be news to you the whole world seems to evolve around this form of social media,. Although quite why some people seem to want to post pictures of what they have just eaten for tea always baffles me. However, on the positive side of things, many horticultural businesses are using Facebook to great effect to promote their products and general branding. Facebook provides a great source of free media exposure and it also creates a huge network of potential contacts in the process. But on the negative side, there seems to be a belief that because something is posted on Facebook then it must be true. This means that if someone wishes to post a false story about you or your business, the content of that story is suddenly ‘out there’ for everyone to see. Jon Murphy of Murphyfresh and Flavorite Tomatoes were recently subjected to just such a situation when the following ‘post’ appeared on a facebook page of Environment East Gippsland. The content of the post suggested



that Murphyfresh were hell bent on destroying rain forests in order to provide a fuel source for their bio mass burners. This post was commented on by many people with comments such as ‘I didn’t know that’ and ‘I won’t be buying Flavorite Tomatoes again’. The reality of the situation is that while Murphyfresh do have a biomass burner, they are most certainly not wreaking havoc on every forest within a 25km radius of their property. Both Murphyfresh and Flavorite were instantly seen as being the ‘bad guys’ in a totally one sided argument that had no basis for truth. A real case of being guilty until proven innocent. Independent energy advisor, Andrew Lange, gave assistance to the cause by writing an e mail which was sent to the relevant networks including Richard

Colbeck (Federal Parliamentary Secretary for forestry), state politicians, and VAFI and a number of timber town communities. The content of the e mail is listed below:-

Subject: passionate protestors getting it wrong

A few months back I visited a hothouse tomato business near Mansfield that had converted from using brown coal briquettes to using chipped native forest reject logs for the heat energy for their expanded production. In the situation of an imminent cut-off in supply of briquettes they had only the choice of a woodchip-fuelled system or LPG. The LPG was a far cheaper option for capital cost but the woodchip option allowed them to access the wood that was available and of a more stable ongoing price - either native forest or plantation sourced. Over a protracted period the costs were about equal. The choice of woodchip as fuel also means more local jobs and some option for using sawmill residues of either milled native forest hardwoods or plantation pine.

"Unsocial" media

However the call to boycott this company is now out (see website below) and there are no qualifications reflecting any of what I have just stated. It is a call in effect to force the company to be shut down and yet appears based on wrong information. Just scroll down past the Vic map on the link below:-

<http://www.eastgippsland.net.au/>

Even the information around the map is really dubious - are they suggesting that all of Victoria be restored to forest cover? Not a bad ambition in itself, but how we then feed the population becomes a minor issue - unless of course we have a lot of glasshouses heated by woodchip). The questions are: what is the legal recourse of the company, and what is the responsibility of government to protect companies from this sort of irresponsible action? This 'environmental' group at fault is motivated by passionate convictions, the members probably work for nothing, and see no problem in this black/white thinking and the approach based on this judgement of 'the end justifies the means'. **Andrew Lang**

So when you read the facts, you can see that it presents a fairly differing viewpoint from the 'Facebook' version of events. Both Murphyfresh and Flavorite have ensured that they have not entered in to a slanging match with EEG, but it is very disappointing to see this sort of activity being levelled at two of the best exponents of responsible and sustainable growing within our industry. If you want to read some more accurate facts about Murphyfresh's new biomass system, there is a great article in the December 2013 edition of Practical Hydroponics and Greenhouse magazine which gives a detailed insight in to the system, and Jon Murphy's viewpoint on the decisions to install biomass heating. And this story is all true!

Advertise with Hydroponic Farmers Federation

in the HFF newsletter


COLOUR *(member)*

Full pg - \$175
1/2 pg - \$110
1/4 pg - \$70

BLACK & WHITE *(member)*

Full pg - \$110
1/2 pg - \$70

All prices are not including GST



BLACK & WHITE *(non member)*

Full pg black & white - \$132
1/2 pg black & white - \$84
1/4 pg black & white - \$54

All prices are not including GST

To become a member visit <http://www.hff.org.au/membership/>
For further information please contact Emily: eg@asnevents.net.au or **Ph 03 59 832 400**



HFF 2014 AGM AND GROWER MEETING



Victorian Hydroponic Farmers Federation

AGM and Grower Meeting

Thursday 3rd April, 2014

Gateway Hydroponics

667 Maroondah Highway

COLDSTREAM, VIC 3770

COST:- FREE FOR HFF MEMBER—\$30 NON MEMBER GST inclusive

- 09.30 AM Registration Tea / Coffee
- 09.50 AM Welcome and introduction by the HFF President—John Elford
- 10.00 AM Greenhouse tour
- 11.00 PM HFF AGM
- 12.00 PM Lunch
- 01.00 PM Graeme Smith Industry / PCA update
- 01.30 PM Syngenta seeds—Update on seed quarantine
—Dion Potter and Wayne Richardson
- 02.30 PM Meeting Closure

FOR CATERING PURPOSES PLEASE RSVP BY MONDAY 24TH MARCH

PLEASE EMAIL RSVP TO John Elford — johnelford@bigpond.com with the following details:-

NAME/S.....

NAME OF BUSINESS/COMPANY.....

PHONE NUMBER/email address.....

HFF MEMBER YES/NO.....



HFF 2014 CONFERENCE

Info from M in here.....

North American Study Tour



PCA Nth American Greenhouse Study Tour Canada, California & Mexico



1-17 October 2014

A mix of hydroponic, greenhouse & aquaponic farm tours, technical research centres,
Canadian Greenhouse Conference & industry networking

Visit state of the art greenhouse operations in a climate similar to your own!

Enjoy

Itinerary

Vancouver - Chilliwack, Abbotsford & Richmond
Delta site visits
Montreal - Commercial Greenhouse Rooftops
Niagra Falls - Canadian Greenhouse Conference
Harrow - Greenhouse Research Station
Edmonton - Greenhouse & Aquaponic Site Visits
Mexico City - Queretaro, Irapuato, Ajuchitlan
greenhouse site visits.
Los Angeles - Beverly Hills & Houweling Oxnard
Nursery, Camarillo



PCA Euro Tour 2007

\$6,245 pp PCA Full & Affiliate Members
+ \$1,075 for single supplement
\$6,745 pp non-members

Package includes:
Qantas return airfare & all transfers.
Twin-share accommodation, all breakfasts & some dinners.
State of the art site visits & tour guides.
2 day full rego @ Canadian Greenhouse Conference '14

Shop

Canadian Greenhouse Conference

Two day full registration - lectures, workshops, farm tour & 300 booth trade expo.

Why?

See, touch & interact with new technology & products
Talk to the experts - exhibitors & speakers are a resource for your business.
Bring your questions & get those answers!
Comparison shopping - all the players are on site & eager for your business.
Planning - gather information & collect business contacts for that next purchase or expansion
Connect with colleagues - this might be the most important reason of all - we don't operate in a bubble. Talk to old friends & make new ones; share industry challenges & solutions.
Return to work re-energized with new ideas & a sense of community.

Benefit

Graeme Smith Tour Leader

Originally a tomato grower, Graeme now is a highly regarded consultant for a diverse range of hydroponic & greenhouse crops, across many climates. Graeme has hosted several PCA overseas study tours to Europe & North America, which are so well received that many participants return for a second trip and/or send their business partners.

Guided Industry Tours

Greenhouse, hydroponic & Aquaponic production & Research sites

Vancouver, Edmonton, Montreal, Niagra Falls, California & Mexico



Tour

Houweling Oxnard Nurseries

A showcase for the future of sustainable agriculture. These two x 20 acre Kubo Ultra-Clima greenhouses were opened in 2009 at a cost of \$53.25 million. Production increased by 58%, Water consumption reduced by 66% and run off was eliminated by recycling nutrients. More than 50% of energy needs are generated from their five acre solar panel system. Seeing is believing.

Enjoy

Side Trips & Excursions

Niagra Falls 'Maid Of The Mist' cruise
Capilano Suspension Bridge, Grouse Mtn & Granville Island
Queretaro historic colonial Mexican City tour.
Hollywood, Beverly Hills, LA guided tour

* Details subject to change

Register now & join other growers who learn from the best

1 - 17 October 2014

Contact Graeme Smith ph 0427 339 009 graeme@graemesmithconsulting.com
Or PCA ph 02 9907 6633 admin@protectedcroppingaustralia.com
www.protectedcroppingaustralia.com



LED Lighting—the latest technology



LEDs (light emitting diodes) are set to play a major role in horticultural lighting in the future for many growers. With LED lighting, the growth light – spectral output – can be tuned, which makes it possible to apply the optimum 'light recipe' at every stage of a crop's growth. This capability, together with effective heat management, long lifetime, high luminous efficiency and energy efficiency, opens up tremendous opportunities for growers and breeders. For the commercial horticulture vegetable crop market this means increased yield, early flowering, faster (root) growth, and more economical use of space. LED lighting is also highly energy-efficient, helping horticultural producers to lower electricity consumption, especially during the high consumption periods of autumn and winter.

Victorian based Powerplants Australia have just been announced as the Australia wide dealers for Phillips lighting. According to Powerplants Director, Simon Gomme, The aim in lighting is to have a good light distribution and help with heat distribution across all the plants. "Until now the focus has mainly been on achieving uniform light on a horizontal surface. However, it is much more effective if the vertical dimension is taken into account as well, especially with rising plants such as tomatoes and cucumbers' said Simon. "With Philips LED interlighting it is possible to provide light between the plants – without unwanted heat generation. This has major advantages in that all the plants can be lit at the points where they gain most benefit. The results are excellent. Various trials have demonstrated that this enables much higher and more efficient plant production as the light provided can be converted more efficiently into sugars, the building blocks of the plant". Having completed hundreds of projects world wide, Philips Lighting has many years of experience investigating the effects of LEDs on a range of crops. In every project an optimum light recipe is developed. A Philips light recipe is an instruction based on knowledge of how to use light to grow a certain crop under certain conditions. A light recipe indicates:

- Lighting aspects: light level, spectrum, required uniformity, position and time
- Parameters for which the recipe is valid, e.g. climate conditions
- Expected results besides energy saving

Phillips light recipes are suitable for different segments within horticulture, e.g. vegetable production, tissue culture and young plant production, cut flowers, seedlings and nurseries. Philips Lighting is currently working in conjunction with Powerplants Australia and Chisholm Institute of TAFE to establish a demonstration unit in one of the Compartment's at Chisholm's National Precision Growing Centre at Cranbourne. The trial will be monitoring growth and yield in Tomatoes as well as acting as a basis for both demonstration and grower training seminars.

For more details of LED lighting, contact Simon Gomme at Powerplants on (03) 8795 7750 or via e mail at simon@powerplants.com.au

Accredited training for the Hydroponic Industry



THE NATIONAL PRECISION GROWING CENTRE

Chisholm's National Precision Growing Centre is proud to offer Hydroponic industry accredited training via blended learning. This allows participants to study via a combination of online learning, workplace assessment and practical workshops at Chisholm's specialist facility. Study from anywhere within Australia, or overseas if required.

The National Centre for Precision Growing is located at the Cranbourne campus, and is the only purpose built glasshouse training facility in the Southern Hemisphere. The centre offers growers the opportunity to gain new skills and knowledge, as well as having existing skills recognised.

Accredited training (full time and part time)

- Certificate II in Horticulture (Production)
- Certificate III in Horticulture (Production) – apprentice training
- Certificate IV in Horticulture (Production)
- Diploma of Horticulture (Production)
- Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) training
- Chemical User Course -Agricultural Chemical Users Permit (ACUP).

Specialised short courses

- Crop Technician Course
- Specialist Priva Courses.

1300 244 746
chisholm.edu.au/glasshouse
enquiries@chisholm.edu.au

0251-1212

