



CITrep

Newsletter of the Murray Valley Citrus Board

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Robert Mansell, Chairman MVCB

Chairman's Report

The next few months are going to be quite busy for your Board. The big issues for the next six months are:

- Organise a poll in both states for Murray Valley citrus growers to sign off on legislative changes. *Please do not forget to vote and make it count so that we can continue in an efficient manner under new legislation.*
- Finalise our crop forecast and communicate the results to growers and packers; also liaise with other regions on total crop for Southern Australia.
- Help co-ordinate a national orange promotion.
- Conducive conditions during the last couple of months have increased the danger of a fruit fly outbreak. This coupled with the large number of outbreaks happening in the Southern Riverina and north eastern Victoria means that we may have to find more funds for random roadblocks and to step up our publicity and education programs.

The Murray Valley Citrus Board has employed John Tesoriero as our new Chief Executive. I welcome John to our team and encourage growers and packers to make themselves known to him.

John comes to the MVCB with a water industry background. He is on a steep learning curve,

picking up on all our organisations and the industry policies and politics. John has already picked up on many issues and is driving them.

I would like to thank all growers for their co-operation in filling in their planting statistic forms for the MVCB. The Board is starting to gather some very valuable information from these figures. We cannot tell growers what to plant but the information that has been gathered is available to growers to assist them make a decision on future plantings or reworking. Other areas are a couple of years behind and have started gathering this information and in the next couple of years we should have a comprehensive data base on plantings in Australia.

Growers need to talk with their packers to assess availability of markets for different varieties, eg, I have been concerned about the number of Navelinas in the ground with its narrow market window. Growers should contact the staff at MVCB for up to date statistical information, they will gladly help you.

Website

The MVCB has its website up and running and is committed to keeping it up to date. I recommend that all growers have a look each week. For help with your web site search, please phone Kerry or Peter at the Board office. Our website is www.mvcitrus.org.au

Cont'd...

Your vote is important to the future of the MVCB

Currently, the MVCB operates under separate NSW and Victorian laws. Victorian and New South Wales Murray Valley citrus growers will soon vote to have the MVCB operate solely under Victorian laws.

Therefore, the proposed legislative change is an immediate priority that will enable the Board to provide services to growers with reduced costs and unnecessary duplication.

As Chairman, I stress that your vote is crucial and urge you make it a priority at the appropriate time.

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Chairman's Report *cont'd*...

ACG Annual Conference

The ACG Annual Conference is being held in Mildura this year (April 18 - 22). They don't come around very often to this region so I recommend that growers attend some, if not all, of the sessions. It gives attendees the opportunity to meet growers from other producing areas in Australia as well as learning from the various speakers during the Conference. There will also be field trips organized.

Crop Forecast

At the time of writing, the forecasts have not been finalised but it looks like the Navels will be lighter than average.

The Valencia crop is not going to be a big crop either. Valencia trees continue to be removed which should start to send alarm bells to the processing industry. While growers continue to get unrealistic prices for Valencias, this trend will continue.

Projects

The MVCB helps fund research by outside agencies using matching funding wherever possible. This comes mainly through Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL). The last round of funding requests to HAL were cut due to the large number of applications.

- A major project funded by the MVCB in conjunction with CSIRO, on the Determination of the Citrus Flowering Gene, was not successful but we will resubmit the Project to HAL for the next round. The MVCB has already contributed \$120,000 towards this project which is about half way through.
- The Citrus Rind Disorder project is a three and a half year project run by CSIRO which is two and a half years into the research. The MVCB has contributed \$55,539 of our \$87,746 commitment.
- Four projects have recently been completed for which we are awaiting final reports. The project on Irrigation Management of New Citrus Varieties is continuing and expected to be completed later this year.

If you have a project you think is worth pursuing, contact the staff at the office and they will assist you to progress your suggestion.

Robert Mansell Chairman



New Chief Executive Reports for Citrep

John Tesoriero, Chief Executive MVCB

The transition from managing a rural water authority to a citrus industry organization has been challenging as I reflect on the first two months of my appointment as Chief Executive of the Murray Valley Citrus Board.

From my experience in the electricity and water industries, managing resources is basically the same irrespective of the organization. Management is essentially about strategic planning, team building, providing excellent customer service, financial control and adding value to both our business and your business.

While my previous involvement with the irrigation industry provided a broad understanding of issues impacting on horticulture enterprises, eg. the cost of production, access to markets and remaining viable in an increasingly competitive environment, I have been on a steep learning curve coming to grips with the industry since my appointment in December 2003.

To flatten out this learning curve, I've done the obvious things of talking to key stakeholders (customers, packers, exporters, Australian Citrus Growers, Horticulture Australia etc) about the industry. I have also visited both the Melbourne and Sydney markets and established links with our South Australian and Murrumbidgee citrus industry organizations. It's a high priority of mine to continue with this practice.

Citrus is a vital and important industry to the region's economy and survival in the long term requires cooperation at all levels of the value chain. I have carefully studied the Board's strategic plan and believe we are on the right track to address the key challenges facing the industry providing we all work together.

Since my appointment, the Board has responded to the Victorian Government's Green Paper on "Securing our Water Future". Our response can be accessed via our web site www.mvcitrus.org.au. Copies of our response are also available at our office at 58 Pine Ave Mildura, if required. As a Board we look forward to continued dialogue with government over water related issues, which are of vital importance to our customers.

An immediate priority occupying the Board's agenda is the proposed legislative change to re-constitute the Murray Valley Citrus Board under Victorian legislation.

As reported in the press recently, our growers in both Victoria and NSW will soon be asked at separate polls in each state to vote in favour of the proposal. Currently, the Board runs under separate but similar NSW and Victorian Acts, which is an inefficient way of doing business.

Within the next few weeks the Board will be holding a series of grower consultation meetings about the process leading up to the poll later this financial year.

Another issue of importance being addressed by the Board is keeping our area fruit fly free. In this regard we are monitoring the situation closely, particularly recent outbreaks in the Deniliquin area and are developing strategies with key stakeholders to protect our industry.

In conclusion, I am very pleased to be part of the Murray Valley citrus industry, and I look forward to working with staff, stakeholders and partners to ensure a sustainable and prosperous future.

John Tesoriero Chief Executive

Successful MVCB Promotional Activities



Left to Right 1 & 2 MVCB at the 2003 Mildura Show 3 & 4 General promotional activities undertaken by the MVCB.

A review of the promotional activities of the MVCB and their value to the industry over the past three years highlights a number of key factors.

- Overall the 'Meet the Grower' concept has been highly successful. The Board has concentrated on a number of 'hands-on' promotions and community based activities, where there has been a conscientious effort to involve growers. This has certainly lifted the profile of the citrus industry in a more personal manner. (Unfortunately, HAL has now decided not to continue with this promotion.)
- Promotions have been primarily aimed at increasing the awareness of consumers regarding citrus fruits and juices. Strategies to inform them of the health benefits of citrus have been used throughout.
- Particular emphasis has also been placed on getting this message across to the younger members in the community.

Des McNamara, Field Manager, MVCB believes that promotions of this type are successful because the consumer is in front of you and citrus products are directly in front of people.

The events we have been involved in, and the promotional strategies we have developed, all mean that these hands-on promotions are very cost effective and the positive outcomes can be readily measured. We have sold product wherever possible at these events to help cover costs rather than rely entirely on grower levies; Des stated.

A summary of promotional activities undertaken makes an impressive list. Many are now yearly fixtures; some with a considerable history of involvement. The total is a clear indication that the Board has been proactive in its determination to promote the best interests of the industry.

PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN

- **Retailer Training Session, Melbourne Market**
- **Golden Rivers Produce and Food Festival (Annual)**
- **Schools Program in Conjunction with QFVG**
Focusing on healthy fruit and vegetable diets. Four Melbourne metro schools covered. Fruit and product information distributed. (On-going. Currently negotiating with Melbourne Market Authority to expand the program into more schools.)
- **'Masters Games' Mildura Sponsorship**
Provision of oranges and distribution of promotional material to games competitors (600 plus).

- **'Taste of Mildura' Promotion**
Assist the Citrus Shop with promotional material etc.
- **Farm Safety Expo**
33 plus Mallee area school children. Donation of product and distribution of promotional material.
- **'Tour of Sunraysia' Sponsorship**
- **Melbourne Show (Annual)**
- **Mildura Show (Annual)**
- **Wentworth Show (Annual)**
- **Spring Picnic at Werribee Mansion (Annual)**
(formerly Picnic at Heide)
- **Harvest Picnic at Hanging Rock (Annual)**
- **Women in Agriculture Day, Manangatang**
- **Elmore Field Day (Annual)**
- **The Cardross Fair (Annual)**
- **Country Diving Championships, Mildura.**
- **Avalon Air Show, in conjunction with Mildura Rural City Council**

The MVCB has also been involved with numerous in-store promotions organised in conjunction with HAL. In addition, the MVCB financed promotions in a number of stores in both metropolitan and regional centres over and above the HAL promotions.

PROMOTION QUESTIONNAIRE

A questionnaire was completed by growers who helped at the Werribee Harvest Picnic last year. They indicated that:

- a) They believed there were benefits from attending this type of promotion.
- b) This type of promotion was an effective way of promoting citrus.
- c) They would encourage other growers to attend such promotions.

Questions revolved around any previous attendance at similar promotions and how these promotions could be made more effective. Responses in the area of encouraging growers to attend promotional opportunities were very positive. They highlighted that growers gained an understanding of what consumers want and acknowledged that consumers welcomed the chance to talk directly with growers.

One such comment from a grower, 'to learn first hand consumer perceptions regarding food safety, nutrition, health benefits and the opportunity to educate consumers on where citrus comes from' was beneficial.

Des McNamara Field Manager, MVCB

Retirement Dinner



Left to Right 1 John Braniff and his daughter Samantha enjoy the evening. 2 Debbie and John Braniff enjoying the occasion. 3 Stuart Holland, Dick Walters, Mick Hollingworth and Neil Eagle raise their glasses to the outgoing Chief Executive.

A well attended Retirement Dinner for John Braniff, Chief Executive, MVCB was held in the Mildura Grand Hotel on Tuesday, 9 December 2003.

John had been working on behalf of the citrus industry for the past twelve years.

A number of speakers acknowledged John's contribution and commitment to the industry during the evening. In less serious mood and communicated in the good spirit of a happy evening, many anecdotal stories were also related, drawing attention to situations John would probably rather forget.

Mr Robert Mansell, Chairman MVCB, made a presentation to the outgoing Chief Executive in recognition of a job well done.

John's response concluded a most enjoyable occasion for all those in attendance. He was left in no doubt that everyone wished him every success in the future.

Notes

from Neil Eagle

The current light crop year has helped cushion the impact of the closure of the fresh fruit market outlet through Hong Kong to mainland China. Even though there appears to be only an average to below average setting for the 2004/05 marketing year, there is an urgency to break through with market access to China and also to plan our forwardings into the other Asian markets. It is pleasing that there appears to be interest from some of our major exporters to better plan forwardings into these markets.

Comments from the AHEA indicated their concern that the positive comments by HAL and ACG regarding the outcomes for citrus growers in Australia from the Free Trade negotiations with the USA, neglected to recognise the importance to Australia of the Asian market and access to the Chinese market. AHEA, in my opinion, has been unfairly critical. Surely the issue is that any improvement in the conditions of our access to the USA market is a positive one for the Australian industry? This in no way implies that our access to the Asian markets (our major export market) is not of continuing major importance.

The failure to secure sufficient support for the proposed national levy increases for Marketing and R&D is very disappointing. It demonstrates that the importance of those increases in sustaining

the important marketing and on-going R&D activities was not adequately conveyed to growers in all areas.

In regard to the 'Living Murray' issue and the supposedly 'dying river', it is pleasing that the challenges posed by scientists such as Prof. John Pigram, Dr Lee Banson and Dr Jennifer Marohasy, to the emotive nonsense being peddled by the MDBC, ACF and some CSIRO and other scientists involved in the Wentworth Group, has had some impact. At a political level it has changed the focus of just pouring more water down the river to now focusing on the six nominated Icon Sites (or SEA's), and what is needed to maintain and enhance their health.

The real debate has just begun. It will be essential that:

- Scientists and economists of the Valley communities choosing, are engaged in the process.
- Community representatives from the three states are involved in evaluating the needs of each Icon Site.
- In the event that any environmental flows are deemed necessary, NSW, Vic. and SA share equally in their provision.

Neil Eagle Chairman, Mid-Murray Citrus Growers Inc.

Irrigating Citrus in Late Summer

The late summer period is another critical stage where poor irrigation management practices can effect citrus production levels. The following points should be considered when irrigating citrus during this period:

- Accurate, high tech. irrigation scheduling tools such as capacitance (EnviroSCAN or C-probe) and neutron probes consistently indicate that during February - March water demand becomes greater from the lower part of the rootzone. This means that it is important to ensure that irrigations are filling the soil profile during this period. Proper irrigations over the whole of the profile will also encourage a healthy and active rootzone. As mentioned previously, adequate subsoil moisture also helps to safeguard against crop damage during extreme heat periods, as well as during unforeseen circumstances effecting water supply.
- Leading up to harvest, hanging fruit will lower the canopy and the tree skirts. This will effect sprinkler irrigation distribution uniformity; particularly low-level sprinklers installed at every second tree. In this situation if your soil moisture-monitoring tool is not located near a sprinkler you may find that the monitoring unit is reading increasingly dry soil due to canopy interference. These readings soon become meaningless. In this situation the location of the soil moisture-monitoring tool may need to be addressed, as well as the canopy management.
- If looking to upgrade your irrigation system it is important to plan early. If looking to convert from full cover irrigation to strip irrigation

(low-level sprinkler or drip irrigation) the June-August period is the most appropriate time to make this conversion. Therefore, depending on the length of the harvest period, early planning should now occur in order to get the system installed and operating at the appropriate time.

- Trees with late hanging fruit have a higher water demand than trees already picked. Proper irrigation management becomes difficult when large irrigation units or valves begin to contain picked and unpicked patches for significant periods of time. A common example is when summer Navels are left unpicked and the irrigation-scheduling tool representing the irrigation unit is located in a patch previously picked. Here the scheduling tool may indicate low to moderate irrigation requirements, whereas the patch of trees still hanging fruit will have a far higher water demand. Compromises will have to be made in these situations. Future consideration should be given to altering the irrigation design as well as installing an irrigation-scheduling tool in the summer Navel patch in order to identify this greater water requirement.

Jeremy Giddings
Irrigation Officer, NSW Agriculture

MVCB Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of Registered Citrus Producers and Approved Receivers was held on Tuesday, 9 December 2003 at 58 Pine Avenue.

The Chairman's Report and the Financial Reports were accepted and the Operational Report was taken as read.

Chairman Robert Mansell advised that the Board intended to have more grower consultative meetings, probably in April, 2004. There was also general discussion around the issue of the MVCB's financial reserves.

- As David Mixon's Review of the 2003 USA Export Program immediately preceded the meeting, there was no guest speaker included in the AGM program.
- A copy of the full Annual Report is available at the MVCB office or on the web site.

A vote of appreciation was extended to Mr John Braniff for his services to the Board and the Citrus Industry.

The AGE Harvest Picnic at Hanging Rock

29 February 2004

Now in its 17th year, more than 100 small Victorian producers show-cased their wares at this well attended one-day event. The MVCB has been in attendance almost every year since its inception.

Des McNamara, Field Manager, MVCB said the promotion was again highly successful with the Board being involved with the Melbourne Market Authority, in creating a 13 metre long food hall.

'The MVCB also ran a very popular 'Juicing Competition' using hand juicers. The purpose of this was to encourage the home juicing of citrus fruits. The eventual winner was Ms Catherine Buttigieg, of Hampton, Victoria,' Des stated.

Left to Right 1 John Tesoriero presenting the winner with a basket of citrus products. 2 The juicing competition.



Overview of the Murray Valley Citrus Board



BOARD MEMBERS Left to Right Robert Mansell, Robert Farnsworth, Ken Bevington, Paula Gordon, Stuart Holland, Andrew Hollingworth, David Hunt-Sharman, Colin Nankivell, Keith Richards.

CURRENT BOARD MEMBERS

Robert Mansell (CHAIRPERSON)
Horticulturist Colignan

Robert Farnsworth (VICE CHAIRPERSON)
Horticulturist Trentham Cliffs

Ken Bevington
Senior Research Scientist NSW Department of Agriculture Dareton

Paula Gordon
Horticulturist Trentham Cliffs

Stuart Holland
Senior Policy Analyst – Agriculture Department of Primary Industries Melbourne

Andrew Hollingworth
Horticulturist / Packing Shed Manager Koondrook

David Hunt-Sharman
Managing Director W H Kirkness Pty Ltd Melbourne

Colin Nankivell
Horticulturist Mourquong

Keith Richards
Solicitor Martin, Irwin and Richards / Horticulturist Palinyewah

The Murray Valley Citrus Board is a Statutory Authority with broad responsibilities for the development of the citrus industry in the region which covers the major citrus producing areas on both sides of the Murray River in NSW and Victoria (some 540 growers).

The Board's vision is for a profitable, innovative, internationally competitive and sustainable citrus industry.

The Board aims to deliver this vision through eight key program areas outlined in its 2001-2006 strategic plan.

- 1 Domestic / Export Market Information
- 2 Best Practice Management and Business Skills
- 3 Promotion of Citrus
- 4 Fruit Fly Area Freedom
- 5 Food Safety / HACCP / Quality Assurance
- 6 Communication
- 7 Partnerships to facilitate industry planning and service market requirements
- 8 Statutory obligations, administration and governance

CHARTER

The Murray Valley Citrus Marketing Board was established by the Murray Valley Citrus Marketing Acts 1989 of Victoria and New South Wales. The Murray Valley Citrus Marketing Board commenced operations on 1 July 1990, succeeding the Citrus Fruit Marketing Board of Victoria and the Murray Valley (NSW) Citrus Marketing Board.

The Board is primarily concerned with the production, harvesting, packaging, processing and marketing of all citrus varieties, excluding lemons, grown in the Murray Valley citrus production area.

Functions of the Board

- 1 To promote the domestic and export marketing of citrus fruit and citrus products
- 2 To make arrangements for the marketing and processing of citrus fruit and citrus products
- 3 To develop and provide marketing services
- 4 To promote the sale and consumption of citrus fruit and citrus products
- 5 To develop and assist in the development of improved methods of producing, handling, marketing and processing of citrus fruit and citrus products
- 6 To develop and maintain minimum quality standards for citrus fruit
- 7 To investigate, report on and make recommendations to producers, the citrus industry or the New South Wales and Victorian Ministers on issues relating to marketing of citrus fruit and citrus products

Management and Organisational Structure

The Murray Valley Citrus Marketing Board is a grower funded statutory marketing authority and information provider established under complementary legislation in New South Wales and Victoria.

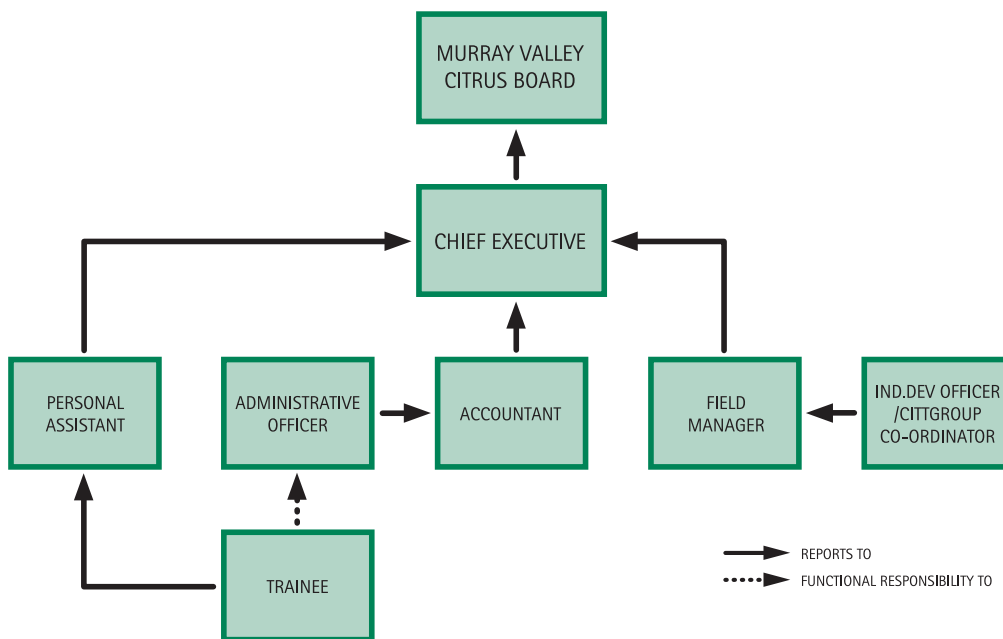
The Board consists of nine members, of whom one is nominated by the New South Wales Minister for Agriculture and one is nominated by the Victorian Minister for Agriculture. Appointment of other members is subject to their application to, and subsequent nomination by, the Selection Committee. Members are appointed for a three year period. The term of current appointments commenced 1 July 2002.

Murray Valley Citrus Board



STAFF MEMBERS Left to Right John Tesoriero (Chief Executive), Marian Tobin, Des McNamara, Sarah O'Flaherty, Peter Morrish, Kerry Needs, Casey Watt.

MVCB Organisational Structure



BOARD MEETINGS

The Board formally met on eight occasions during 2003. Smaller sub-committees, as listed below, also met or held teleconferences on a number of occasions to develop recommendations to the Board.

Cittgroups/Best Practice/Food Safety & HACCP
 Ken Bevington, Paula Gordon, Colin Nankivell, Mick Hollingworth, Robert Mansell, Keith Richards

Communications/Strategic Planning/Partnerships & Industry
 Keith Richards, Ken Bevington, Paula Gordon, David Hunt-Sharman, Rob Farnsworth, Stuart Holland

Finance, Audit & Legal
 Keith Richards, Stuart Holland, Rob Farnsworth

Domestic/Export Market Information, Statistics and Systems
 Mick Hollingworth, Robert Mansell, Rob Farnsworth

Fruit Fly
 Keith Richards, Paula Gordon, David Hunt-Sharman, Colin Nankivell

Promotion of Citrus
 David Hunt-Sharman, Mick Hollingworth, Robert Mansell, Colin Nankivell

Special Projects
 Rob Farnsworth, Mick Hollingworth, Stuart Holland

The Annual Growers Meeting was held in Mildura in early December.

There were also 25 CITTgroup events, workshops and farm walks with the purpose of providing extension advice and research to producers.

Australian Citrus Growers 56th Annual Conference

Mildura 18 - 22 April 2004

A comprehensive program has been compiled for the above event.

The conference will bring citrus representatives together from all parts of Australia and abroad.

All people, from the broad range of sectors involved in the citrus community, are encouraged to participate in this peak industry event.

For information about accommodation in Mildura please contact the Mildura Visitor Information and Booking Centre:
180-190 Deakin Avenue
Mildura
Telephone: 03 5018 8380
Facsimile: 03 5021 1836
www.visitmildura.com.au

For more information about the Conference contact Sunraysia Citrus Growers:
Telephone: 03 5023 8205
Facsimile: 03 5021 1905

10th ISC Congress

Mr Peter Morrish, Industry Development Officer, MVCB was one of 20 Australians who attended the 10th International Society of Citriculture Congress in Morocco. The Congress, held from 15 - 20 February 2004, is the peak citrus presentation opportunity for researchers throughout the world, with over 850 people in attendance from more than 40 countries.

Peter's attendance incorporated the international presentation of the Murray Valley citrus planting database. The presentation included manuscript of the final report for the project and was displayed as a poster during the Conference. Peter was required to be in attendance at specific times to answer questions regarding the project.

Australian representatives ranged from growers to extension personnel, marketers and export development officers.

Peter has made some initial comments:

- The Congress welcome highlighted the production of easy peel, seedless Mandarins and how their production is steadily increasing.
- Marketing and consumer diets are two areas where world citrus bodies need to work together, by emphasising the health benefits. An international citrus representative is already using Australian CSIRO research results released in 2003.
- Joint marketing to maintain shelf space in supermarkets is also required due to the competition from other fruits and vegetables.
- Research presented was wide and covered all aspects from laboratory research, developing new varieties, to specific variety management.
- Nutrition focused on fertigation with the majority of citrus growing regions moving to this method of fertilizing with dripper irrigation.
- Crop regulation was a major topic particularly with the Clementine varieties being alternate bearers. Research is focusing on more readily acceptable chemicals that assist in the management of this problem in conjunction with pruning.
- Sunlight management, generally via netting, also looks to be a practice of the future. Growers will need to be able to harvest the beneficial components of light to encourage tree production, while eliminating harmful light that damages fruit.

- Breeding programs are focusing on seedless easy peel fruits. They are also attempting to widen the timing of fruit availability. (For example, an easy peel seedless Mandarin ripened and coloured in Sunraysia at the start of April.) This is extremely costly research and benefits are not as yet seen in the orchard, but may be in the next 5-10 years.
- 'Natural sports' of current varieties are also still being explored. Patented varieties will become more prevalent and grower groups will probably be established to grow these varieties under monitored conditions.

In general, a very interesting Conference with a lot of laboratory research presented that still needs development to show benefits in the orchard.

Australian Representation

Approximately 21 Australians attended the Congress with a combined report to be compiled. Australian representatives were mainly from South Australia with a couple from Queensland, four from Murray Valley and Gerard McEvelly from Horticulture Australia Ltd (HAL). Including Peter, four of these representatives were involved with oral or poster presentations at the conference.

More detailed reports will be included in future editions of Citrep.

For further information contact Peter Morrish, MVCB, Telephone: 03 5021 1890

2003 Australian Citrus Season Report

A detailed summary and review of this year's export program to the USA was given to a group of some 70 growers and packers by DNE World Fruit Sales Vice President, David Mixon on Tuesday, 9 December 2003.

Riversun Chairman Peter Walker, Managing Director Steve Allen and Operations Manager Trevor Warren were also in attendance.

Introduced by Mr Kevin Cock, the meeting was initially addressed by Dr Ken Bevington and Dr Michael Treeby who had recently travelled to the USA to see things as they were on-the-ground with the arrival of vessels 304 and 305.

Mr David Mixon introduced his comprehensive presentation with a quote:

'We cannot direct the wind, but we can adjust the sails.'

He made the point that the amount of repacking required this season was a concern.

The main reason for the rejection of some Navel oranges this year was rind breakdown. (Blue and green mould was a lower incidence factor.)

'The USA market likes our citrus and consumers are looking for Australian Navels, but we must maintain quality and consistency for a quality market that will keep the Australian identity alive,' Mr Mixon said.

In this context, David Mixon had some interesting observations:

- DNE are the Australian marketers; we are not growers. As an industry we have to adjust the sails. We have to be prepared for competition. South Africa, for example, is making changes every day to meet the Australian standard. *'Right now we are heading for the rocks. All we are asking is that as an industry, where do we make changes to keep away from the rocks.'*
- If DNE is not promoting the fruit, we are not selling the fruit. Structured attempts to educate the retailers have been developed and implemented. Promotion moves product and also educates the consumer.

For example:

- DNE provided retailers with promotional material on CD as well as electronically this year.
- Over 3500 sale kits were sent to retailers.
- Merchandisers/Sales staff were armed with data to support sales.
- Examples of Navel orange advertisements were shown
- An All Aussie advertisement section was included in the promotions strategy.
- Back to School Navel and Minneola advertisements were also important because of the seasonal factor in the USA.
- A new demonstration program with incentives to retailers to participate was implemented. Retailers considered the promotions as 'fantastic!' There are lots of first time tasters. That's why we do demonstrations that indicated what the market is telling us about our product. It is also a way of educating the consumer to come back!

- Price difference remains a big issue. Currently, fruit colour is the only thing that separates Australia from South Africa as they are now right up there with quality.

Vital Concern Issues:

- Not all fruit grown is good enough for export. (Blocks or groves should be predetermined if good enough.)
- Timing is everything - GA fruit, varieties, harvesting etc.
- Know your packer and marketer. Not all sizes go for export.
- Make the right decisions early - reduce costs. We are no longer in the lucky situation of demand exceeding supply. Competition is here and we need to look at the marketing windows.
- The importance of keeping a price difference between Australia and South Africa with quality. 'South Africa will always be the cheap guy!'
- The ability to control pricing - without speculation, but with complete knowledge.
- The ability to keep retailers from applying pressure by threatening the use of one against the other.
- In recognising past failures, establish control over the volume sent to the USA on a market driven basis.
- The ability to organise so as not to allow the unorganised production/selling pricing schemes of past years.

Each of the above points directly affects the pricing and returns to growers of Australian product. Without the alliance, all would be out of control and would not enable us to establish a workable solution. 'We must all work together to resolve the issues!'

The future of fresh fruit into the USA.

- 'We can sell more citrus in the USA. We are only talking 2 million cartons.'
- 'You have got the premium market. The US is ready to pay high prices for quality. We have to strive for 100%.'

There were good questions throughout the lengthy presentation with the advantages and disadvantages of the program being raised from the floor.

E. Warhurst Compiler

Visit of USA Citrus Variety Expert

In late September 2003, the MVCB organised a meeting with visiting USA 'citrus variety expert', Tom Mulholland.

Mulholland Citrus in California was established in the 1930's with 600 acres of orchards and a nursery with 250,000 trees. The family were the first American growers of the Australian Lane Late and Fischer Navels. More recently, they are leading the way in the introduction of the beneficial wasp insect, (*Aphytis Melinus*) and have also introduced the Delite Mandarin. (Many trials have been carried out in the past 40 years in co-operation with the University of California.)

Tom Mulholland is Vice Chairman of the California Research Board, Board member of California Citrus Mutual, California Tristeza Agency, member of the California Citrus Nursery Association and a long-term committee member of Sunkist.

The main topics for discussion included *Mulholland Citrus*, citrus varieties and the results of trials conducted on their property.

In this context, some interesting points were raised by Mr Mulholland in the first part of the meeting.

- Their expertise has really been in the nursery industry. *Mulholland Citrus* is regarded as a place of innovation and they grow from seed to tree, with as rapid growth as possible based on an overall 12 to 18 months preparation period. (Trifoliata rootstocks produce the best quality.)
- Tom Mulholland considers that 'the Mandarin world is the new area of citrus.' (The Delite Mandarin - a seedless variety - *Delite to the last little bite*. This variety has been available for ten years in the USA and is one of the best varieties grown by *Mulholland Citrus*.)
- Their property has serious pest problems with Red Scale as the major pest.
- *Mulholland Citrus* have seriously started their own fruit sales with the focus on marketing 'Easy Peels'. Their thrust is on how to develop a better market for themselves based on questioning what the market wants. 'As growers, we must ask this question,' Mr Mulholland said. He has learnt that the evolution of citrus has now gone to soft Easy Peels. 'The market wants the seedless Easy Peel - a kid-proof kind of fruit. This is what it comes down to,' Mr Mulholland stated.
- In terms of fruit sales, the two best varieties that *Mulholland Citrus* have to offer are the Clementine and Delite Mandarin.
- Tom Mulholland pointed out the concerns in getting to this new position in the industry. They wanted to be innovative; to set their own price and determine their own markets and profits. He regards marketing as the bottom line in terms of a new product. Therefore, they had to meet the challenge as a marketer

and determine who was going to give the best return. Everything was an option and there was a need to assess all. The sales are the most important part. (Because of this, *Mulholland Citrus* decided to change the system and do the marketing themselves.)

- On the point of self-help, Tom Mulholland has some excitement in him for the citrus industry, but considers that as soon as you lose innovation you will be stymied and down there in the hot-bed of mediocrity. 'Our main concern is that we now have to get the critical mass to satisfy the supermarket chains,' he said.

Tom Mulholland also stated that he was trying to excite those in attendance of alternatives to consider and that innovation is one of the greatest words for a farmer. 'I say to growers, push out the Valencias. This is currently the dynamic in California, and Valencias are a dead variety. Grow Navels and Mandarins,' he commented.

He considers that Navels remain 'the king' of sweet citrus, but there is no doubt that Easy Peels will have an effect on the American Market over time. (The Spanish Clementine that is now coming into the USA will have an impact on Navel consumption, for example.)

'The Navel is probably the most successful citrus that has been produced, but the transition is going to Easy Peel, although this will not change over night,' Mr Mulholland concluded.

A very good question and answer session followed the presentation that lasted for over an hour with solid contributions coming from all participating growers. This prompted Mr Robert Farnsworth, Deputy Chair, MVCB to comment that the presentation generated a lot of focussed discussion and perhaps there should be more of them. It's a good thought.

Eddie Warhurst Compiler



MVCB Products and Services

Fruit Maturity Testing

The MVCB offers a free fruit Maturity Testing service to growers in the Murray Valley area. As part of the Maturity Testing service, the Board also offers free supply of N10 solution to those packing sheds conducting their own maturity tests.

Library Resources

Growers are invited to visit the Board office and browse the comprehensive list of publications available. Some publications are not for loan, but growers are encouraged to utilize the reading area provided. Come and have a cuppa while you browse. A number of free citrus fact sheets, meeting notes and notices are also available for growers.

Citrus Growing Manual

The Citrus Growing Manual is based on information and advice from researchers, agriculture consultants, extension staff and successful citrus growers. The manual aims to assist and provide knowledge and skills to Australian growers to satisfy quality and food safety specifications for all local and export markets. A recommended guide for all citrus growers.

Spray Diary

To assist growers to maintain uniform and accurate spray records. These recording books are available for free from the Board office to growers and packers from the Murray Valley area.

Publications and Products for sale from the Board Office

Further details on any of these products and services may be obtained by contacting the Board office. Prices may be subject to change.

Publications

Citrus Diseases Et Defects found in the market place	\$95.00
Citrus Growing Manual	\$22.00
Citrus Pests Et Their Natural Enemies	\$85.50
Citrus Physiology Notes April 2003	\$18.00

Products

Citrus Peeler	\$1.00
Cranston Gauge (Sizing implement)	\$37.00
Magnifying Hand Lens	\$8.50
Plastic Citrus Juicer	\$3.50
Penetrometer	\$230.00
Phenolphthalein PH Indicator	\$44.00
Refractometer	\$340.00
Sizing Ring America (Yellow)	\$22.00
Sizing Ring Australian Domestic (Orange)	\$22.00

Citrep Newsletter Advertising Rates

QUARTER Colour page	\$160.00
THIRD Colour page	\$210.00
HALF Colour page	\$310.00
FULL Colour page advertising	\$610.00
QUARTER B/W page	\$70.00
THIRD B/W page (black & white)	\$95.00
HALF B/W page	\$140.00
FULL B/W page (Black & White)	\$275.00
FLYER 1 page insert	\$300.00



Board Member Profile

Mr David Hunt-Sharman

For the past four years David Hunt-Sharman has served as Chief Executive of the Australian Table Grape Association, based at the Institute for Horticultural Development, Knoxfield, Victoria.

David is also Managing Director of W H Kirkness Pty Ltd, an export/import services company specialising in troubleshooting for solutions of international trading problems to satisfy exporters and importers needs.

David previously held positions as Export Manager for agrifood companies including Bestfresh Produce and the Uncle Toby Company, Mildura Co-op Fruit Co and SPC Limited and has over 34 years experienced in sales and marketing and has specialised in exporting to Asia and Middle East as well as other world markets.

David's broad understanding of market complexities of quality and value for money have enabled him to implement successful marketing strategies for a broad range of horticultural fresh and processed products.

David offers ATGA and the MCVB his extensive expertise in industry, particularly in relation to the Australian horticultural export industry, the international market place particularly as it relates to horticultural exports, market access and wider international trade issues.

His knowledge of the interface between industry and Australian Quarantine Inspection Service (AQIS), the role of Quarantine Export Advisory Council (QEAC) and its terms of reference, the role of Horticultural Export Consultative Committee (HECC) and its terms

of reference, and the development of the EXDOCS electronic documentation system are valuable assets for ATAGA and the MCVB.

David has held the following positions:

- Foundation Director of Australian Arab Chamber of Commerce and Industry (AACCI)
- Member Strategic Working Group of AHC Horticultural Market Access Committee
- Member AHC Taiwan Import Apple, Citrus and Stone Fruit Quota Committees.
- Member Australian Trade Advisory Group to Federal Govt
- Member AQIS EXDOCS Advisory Committee.
- Member HRDC Potato Export Marketing and Promotion Services Project Steering Committee
- Chairman and Chief Executive Australian Horticultural Exporters Association (AHEA)
- AHEA Delegate to Southern Hemisphere Assoc of Fresh Fruit Exporters (SHAFFE)
- Secretariat to AQIS AHEA Board of Management
- Team Leader for Queensland Govt Study into market potential and opportunities for raw and processed products for export to South East Asia.

In addition to his ATGA Chief Executive role, David currently serves as:

- Member of Murray Valley Citrus Board (MCVB)
- Member of Australian Govt Delegation to Codex Alimentarius Fruit and Vegetable Committee, Mexico, Sept 2003.
- Member of the Executive of Aust Horticultural Exporters Association (AHEA)

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