



Citrep

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Newsletter of the Murray Valley Citrus Board

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Robert Mansell

Chairman's Report

Welcome to the Christmas 2006 edition of Citrep.

The MVCB has certainly been busy over the last few months in dealing with Exceptional Circumstances (EC) application, pulling together research on Fullers Rose Weevil (FRW) and meeting overseas delegations, as well as dealing with all the normal spring issues on our farms.

In the previous Citrep, we mentioned issues with FRW that were keeping us out of China. The MVCB has been trying to fast track more research in this regard. Applications to HAL for funding research projects are due in by 20th November 2006 to secure funding for next year. The MVCB is prepared to underwrite a project until funding is forthcoming, so that we don't miss out on a year's research. With this in mind, the MVCB employed Leonie Burrows to write up an application to HAL and as well, employed Megan Edwards, our local FRW expert, to search the latest worldwide research literature, in order to bring us up to date on current and past practices.

We have come up with two strategies: a long-term strategy of controlling FRW in the orchard, and a shorter-term strategy of dealing with FRW, post harvest, at the packing shed. The post harvest research should be underway by the time this newsletter is distributed. We intend to keep growers informed on the orchard research as we go.

The MVCB was delighted to see the announcement by the Federal Government that horticulture in the Sunraysia region will be granted EC status. This comes after concentrated discussions with both state and federal governments, seeking assistance for our growers. John Tesoriero will cover the EC application in detail in his article, but I encourage growers to look at their figures and put in an application.

Valencia fresh markets have been firm, however growers and packers have been disappointed by pack-outs because of the small fruit size. There is a world shortage of FCOJ (frozen concentrated orange juice) and world prices are believed to be at record levels. This being the case there should be strong demand for Valencias this season, especially if growers have large sized fruit.

The MVCB, along with ACG and SCG, met with a Chinese delegation of technical experts recently. The MVCB also hosted a delegation of Brazilian experts, looking at how we grow citrus in Australia. The Brazilians gave a presentation which outlined the problems they have with pests and diseases (they have many more than we do). I am glad to be a grower in the relatively healthy environment of Sunraysia.

The MVCB was again represented with a display at the Mildura Show. Placed in the agriculture pavilion, it was staffed by Board members, staff and their families. Our thanks go to all who contributed to another successful presentation.

In the past year or so, we have seen our cost of production increase rapidly, due to increased costs on practically everything we use on the farm. Fuel and fertilizer are probably the worst, plus another wage rise as well. Compliance costs continue to rise, and even though they may be small, they all add up. I believe the new mandatory code in the wholesale markets will see a significant increase in the cost of handling fruit through the domestic markets. You have guessed right, we the growers will pay.

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Chairman's Report *Cont'd...*

The MVCB and DPI Victoria have been working on a plan to break the FFEZ (Fruit Fly Exclusion Zone) up into three smaller areas along the Murray Valley. Our intention is to achieve area freedom status in these smaller zones more quickly. This will allow a zone that has 12 months without a single fly detection, to place fruit into markets such as Japan, Taiwan, Thailand, USA, New Zealand, Indonesia and Korea without cold disinfestations; thus saving up to \$4.00 per carton and enabling more volume into those markets. With a bit of luck this should be in place by the next Navel season, which will be welcome news.

A major issue at the moment is water and just how much we are likely to be allocated next year. Should we be cutting back now, so that we can have a little bit more next year? There will be much discussion on water issues in the future, so keep tuned.

It is very challenging in horticulture at present, to say the least, so keep your chin up, and have a Happy Christmas, and I hope a prosperous New Year for all.

Robert Mansell Chairman MVCB



John Tesoriero

Chief Executive's Report

Annual Report

Murray Valley Citrus Board's Annual Report for 2005/06 has been tabled in the Victorian Parliament and is now able to be released. It is pleasing that our report received an unqualified opinion from the Auditor General.

Citrus producers wishing to obtain a hard copy of the report can contact the MVCB office, or alternatively the full report is available on our website www.mvcitrus.org.au

Exceptional Circumstances (EC)

The extension of drought assistance to all eligible producers, meaning that horticulturalists are eligible to apply from 24 October 2006, is good news for citrus producers within our area. The assistance package has been extended until at least 31 March, 2008. Following this news, a meeting of horticultural industry leaders, the Rural Counselling Service and Centrelink was held at the MVCB office on 27 October, 2006.

The EC benefits to eligible producers will include income and business support and interest rate subsidies. Individual citrus producers will need to demonstrate financial loss from the farm business to be eligible for the above benefits. Producers are urged to contact the Centrelink Drought Assistance Hotline by phoning 132316, or Sunraysia Rural Counselling Service on 03 5022 0799 to discuss their eligibility.

Information sessions were arranged at Swan Hill, Robinvale and Mildura on 8, 9 and 10 November respectively, and provided the latest information about eligibility and how to apply for assistance.

Staff Matters

MVCB Accountant, Karen Burrows, has taken up an appointment with Bidgee Finance in Mildura and sadly left us on 3 November, 2006. We wish Karen well in her new appointment and thank her for the valuable contribution she has made to our operations. Susan Chapman (Associate CPA) has been appointed to fill this position and we look forward to her settling into this role. It is proposed that Susan will work up to 2 days per week.

Mildura Horticultural Regional Taskforce Projects

In an attempt to understand the impacts of the current economic downturn facing horticultural industries in Sunraysia, the Mildura Rural City Council (MRCC) and Wentworth Shire have taken a lead role in working with industries to identify strategies to improve the regional outlook. In March 2006 RMCG completed an Economic Sustainability Study for the Mildura Horticulture Region. In April and May 2006 the report was used by MRCC to lobby for government assistance.

Unfortunately, the feedback from the Federal Government was that funding for emergency assistance was not possible within current guidelines.

However, the following four projects were funded by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and Department of Primary Industries:

- 1 **Profile of Financially Sustainable Enterprises for Horticultural properties**
The purpose of this project is to provide information to assist growers and their service providers to adjust and recover from the downturn.

The information will assist:

- Growers' business decisions, including market information and sustainable business characteristics to help decisions on exiting, contraction/expansion, other investments and budgeting.
- Service providers who can assist with adjustment and recovery (facilitating property amalgamation, rehabilitating irrigation supply, Farmbis). Service providers include Federal, State and Local Government, water authorities and training organizations.

ABARE has agreed to the scope of work and are commencing this project. This will involve farm surveys. Information from Sunraysia Rural Counselling Service is being collected to assist in this project.

Cont'd...

Notes

from
Neil Eagle

2 Industry Collaboration – Options to achieve economies of scale for horticulturists

The purpose of this project is to identify and develop business strategies for horticultural properties to better achieve economies of scale and a lower cost of production. It includes developing a series of business templates and case studies that include land leasing, machinery sharing, using contractors and joint marketing.

Tenders have been called and Street, Ryan and Associates appointed to deliver this project.

3 Scoping the Opportunity for Value Adding and Regional Diversification of Irrigated Horticulture

The purpose of this project is to identify opportunities to improve the competitiveness for the horticultural industry and its supply chain. There have been a range of national, industry and regional studies completed that will need to be collated by the consultant. The consultant will review this body of work and identify the specific opportunities that are most relevant and have the greatest chance of success. The opportunities could include:

- Reducing regional cost of production, eg development of shared infrastructure and services across industries
- Value adding, eg processing, packing etc
- Supply chain improvements
- Removal of regulatory impediments and costs

Scholefield, Robinson Horticultural Services have been appointed to deliver this project.

4 Other Activity

The Project Manager, Charles Thompson, has met with Victorian DPI regarding co-investment to ensure that:

- The information made available from the above projects flows through to users as soon as possible.
- Other project activity is co-ordinated.

Currently the Vic DPI is developing some projects to achieve this and will be seeking feedback from the Task Force on their views.

Information from the projects is expected to flow through to industry and growers from the end of November onwards.

John Tesoriero Chief Executive

A Report from Mid-Murray

This Navel season has provided mixed results.

In late May and early June we saw the disturbing trend re-emerge of a progressive market collapse, as immature early Navels from southern regions were delivered to the market, in competition with mature, sweeter Queensland Navels.

It appeared we were going to see a repeat of the debacle of the previous year's marketing, both domestic and export, through a lack of market planning. However, severe frosts in early June, especially in the Riverland and Sunraysia, resulted in a marked reduction of the total available Navel crop for fresh fruit marketing.

This event tipped the demand/supply factor in the growers' favour, progressively raising returns to them, to the extent that their average nett returns were lifted by an average of about \$3.50 per packed case, above the dismal result of the previous year.

The series of meetings that developed the Industry Strategic Plan for 2006–2011 highlighted two areas of major concern to the growers in the industry.

Firstly, the absolute need for a properly funded National Peak Industry Body, and the need to maximize the beneficial utilization of the very considerable total funds available to the industry, through levies and other sources.

Secondly, to urgently explore the means whereby we can get the marketers of our produce to operate under a coordinated marketing plan.

The prime example of such co-operative action is the success story in the USA market, and now the commencement of supplies to China this year, under a planned co-operative strategy.

The success of progressing these two measures is the only way to see a profitable growing industry into the future.

Neil J Eagle

Chairman, Mid Murray Citrus Growers Inc.

Advertise your service
or product in the next
issue of Citrep.

For further information about advertising in Citrep
please contact Kerry at the MVCB office on 03 5051 0500.

Research Project

Impact On Citrus, Industry Training Program 2006

Mr Rohan Ashley completed a program in May this year under the Industry Training Program that aims at developing future leaders for the citrus industry.

Proudly supported by the Murray Valley Citrus Board, the inaugural Impact on Citrus Industry Training Program commenced in Mildura on Monday, 23 January, 2006, with selected applicants from the Murray Valley Region representing a broad range of industry links.

Formerly titled **Lead On**, the program provides a unique opportunity for young people in the citrus industry to build leadership capacity.

The *Leading Industries* Program is based on the belief that primary industries have a wealth of human potential that is being under-utilised, due to people lacking the skills, knowledge, networks and confidence to participate. The program therefore focuses on personal development. It provides an opportunity for participants to come together with both peers and industry leaders.

Rohan was one of 14 participants and his research project was on the impact on quality between grafted and new citrus trees.

This report is the first from the group and hopefully, it will encourage other participants to contribute to later editions of Citrep.

Rohan Ashley is a young citrus grower with real empathy with the land. He was born in Swan Hill in 1976. 'My family and I lived in Goodnight until 1985 before moving to the Nangiloc area. My education began at Tooleybuc State School, finishing my primary school days at Nangiloc Primary. My secondary education was at Red Cliffs Secondary College where I completed my VCE in 1994.

I was initially employed at the Golden River Zoo as the leading hand on an ostrich development program that involved an agistment assignment at our family farm at Colignan. While farming ostriches, I completed

an apprenticeship in horticulture at TAFE, Mildura. When the ostrich industry declined, I moved to Goldup Contracting, operating citrus rakes, aerators and mulchers, as well as driving a citrus hedger for Groves Engineering when required.'

With this experience behind him, Rohan purchased a New Holland tractor and Ledgard pruner and began his own contract pruning business. His venture was supported by driving wine grape harvesters for Mr Frank Sos. He remembers that much of his early working career was supported by harvester driving from the 1994 vintage until 2001. This turned into quite a lucrative program and he gained real satisfaction from running his own business.

'In 2002, I was approached by a large family agricultural business in Colignan called Advinco. At first, I was not interested in leaving what I was doing and felt that I was keeping myself busy enough, but with some persuasion, I found myself employed as Advinco Wine Grape Manager in October 2002. I now manage 190 hectares of wine grapes, and as Assistant Operations Manager, find myself involved in a plantation of 300 hectares of trellis dried vine fruits and a citrus grove consisting of 162 hectares planted to a range of varieties and ages. From this, I found out quite quickly what busy meant.'

As stated earlier, this year from 23 and 24 January until the beginning of May, Rohan participated in the Leading Industries Citrus Program supported by the Murray Valley Citrus Board. The project culminated with a presentation by all participants, delivered to various industry leaders at the Melbourne Market. His project focus was to follow the effect of a re-worked citrus tree and a field grown citrus tree, monitoring any impact on fruit quality.

In his presentation Rohan noted that initially it was an exciting season for fruit quality, and yet for most around the Nangiloc - Colignan area, a disappointing Navel season, with excellent quality fruit devastated by severe frosts in mid-June. The result was hundreds of tonnes of export quality fruit frozen and later falling to the ground, if not left rotting on the tree.

'The frosts delivered one real advantage for field grown trees over re-worked trees. It became obvious when trying to protect citrus fruit from becoming frost damaged. By applying overhead irrigation, the field grown trees withstood the weight of frozen irrigation water much better, while many of the re-worked trees were destroyed through the breakage of the grafts due to the weight of the ice.

That aside, with the application of overhead irrigation to the trees in a frost situation, we were able to save some of the fruit.'

As a further outcome of his studies for the project, Rohan made the following observations. 'The only real thing that matters in primary industry at the moment is whether or not you make any money. Picking from selected patches of Navelina oranges and following the fruit through the packaging and marketing process, we found that the number of cases packed per bin were higher with field grown trees. Unfortunately, I could not obtain true parallels with fruit in the markets, due to the earliness of the harvest and found that none of the fruit picked from the field grown trees had the opportunity to make the first boat for export. However, the produce from the field grown trees gave a greater return per tonne and per hectare, even though not seeing export incentives.



Mr Rohan Ashley

More time and research would need to be put into this, but my one small research project shows that if you have the time and finance to grow from field grown trees, the returns in the long term could be more rewarding.'

Rohan Ashley concludes with some interesting personal observations. 'As a young horticultural farmer, I have some great concerns about the whole industry. Since I was given the position at Advinco, every type of crop that we farm has fallen to a point that is not sustainable. Whether you are a big grower or a small one, it is only the amount of debt that you have to support that varies.'

'I am afraid for the future of all horticultural industries and cannot see that the signing of the Free Trade Agreement has done anything but harm us as a country. If it were a good decision for Australia to sign it, the Federal Government would have it plastered over every television station and newspaper in the country. Even though farmers in other countries get huge subsidies, as a grower I would rather stand on my own two feet. If our Federal Government does not want farmers in Australia they should come clean and give us the opportunity to re-educate ourselves into another industry.'

'Failing this, I'm quite sure that we cannot afford to reverse this FTA decision, so we need to focus on the things we can control - things that encourage consumers to purchase our produce through superior quality. A few things

that we have that a lot of other countries do not, include our extremely suitable weather conditions, good quality water and the unquestionable Clean - Green image that we fight to hold onto.'

'When leaving school, and even before then, there was no pressure from my family to return to the land. I freely chose to become a farmer for two reasons. Farming is, most of the time, extremely rewarding. You can see the difference your decisions make to the land and your crops, and you can never be sure what is going to happen tomorrow regarding weather, markets, machinery etc. It is a continuous challenge, but hopefully by persevering and maintaining a united grower voice, and with some good rains, we will again see improved market prices.'

The MVCB remains genuinely excited about the initiative and strongly supports the idea of equipping participants with the skills and self-confidence necessary to become future citrus industry leaders.

Mr Tony Filippi, Industry Development Officer (IDO) provided the following update.

From the success of the first program, there are enough participants for another to be conducted, a second program has now been initiated.

An extension of the first project has been lodged with Horticulture Australia Ltd (HAL)

to receive extra funding, which provides an avenue to commence this course prior to July, 2007.

At this stage, the application has been received and approved informally, but is expected to be approved during December 2006.

This second program will be an opportunity for the few who were unable to complete their project from the pilot program to present it at this next session.

Some activities of the graduates from the first program:
Amanda Beevers - Citrus Promotion In Schools
Jason Kotz - Toxic Waste Dump submission and presentation with the MVCB to Panel / Presentation of USA Export Program for 2006 season
Justin McPhee - elected to Riverlink Board and MVCB Best Practice Committee
Michael Crisera - invited to become a member of IDO Steering Committee. He is currently considering the offer.

The networking from this program has enabled a distinct and tangible pathway for our emerging leaders which will contribute to the sustainability of our industry.

Enquiries should be directed to Tony Filippi, Industry Development Officer, MVCB on 5051 0500.

E. Warhurst Compiler

SunRISE 21 Inc. – What it Provides

SunRISE 21 Inc. has been operating in Mildura for 11 years and continues to contribute to irrigated horticulture in the Sunraysia area. Nevertheless, many people ask what does SunRISE 21 do? The following outlines some of the valuable services they provide, and some major achievements to date.

SunRISE 21 is a community based, sustainable regional development organization, situated in Lemon Avenue, Mildura. Their speciality is the mapping of the irrigated areas along the Murray River, from Nyah to the South Australian border, and along the Darling River from Menindee to Wentworth. SunRISE 21 works with the community, government and industry using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology to produce maps, data and digital products.

Prior to the commencement of SunRISE 21 in 1995, mapping of land related information in this region was very poor. The advent of GIS technology has vastly changed the way they can collect and manage land related information, and with the use of this technology, SunRISE 21 has put the Sunraysia region in the forefront of collating land related data. Over the years, SunRISE 21 has developed an extensive crop database, and has involved local growers in crop and property planning which supports local industry and impacts on the region as a whole.

The result is better information related to irrigated horticulture, as demonstrated by achievements such as:

- 1 The National Citrus Plantings database for the citrus industry.
- 2 Information for the Economic Sustainability Study undertaken by Mildura Rural City Council and Wentworth Shire Council to address current issues faced by local horticultural industries.
- 3 Facilitation of aerial photography every three years.
- 4 Preparation of a three yearly Crop Report, which outlines in detail regional changes and trends across all horticultural industries in the region.

It should be noted that there is no collective information on irrigated horticulture except that compiled by SunRISE 21. The organisation is leading the field in terms of datasets, especially the level of accuracy in the collation of irrigated horticultural data, as well as the production of digital products using orthophoto imagery and DEM or terrain elevation data.

Aerial Photography Co-investment

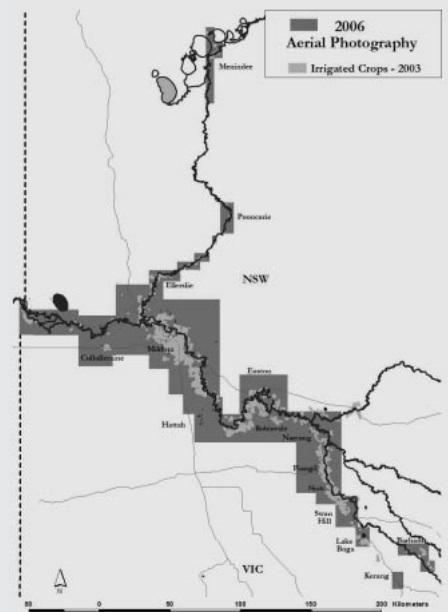
SunRISE 21 helps facilitate new aerial photography every three years for the region from Nyah to the South Australian border, as well as parts of New South Wales. The 2006 flyover undertaken in February was an investment of over \$300,000 from regional organisations, and covered an area of over 1.25 million hectares. SunRISE 21 is now going through the process of having the 2006 aerial photography converted to orthophoto imagery. The spatial information produced from aerial photography is valuable to individual growers, as well as to industry for planning purposes.

There is no other region in Victoria or New South Wales which can provide updated imagery of horticultural production every three years. SunRISE 21 reports that there is a huge investment in maintaining the irrigated horticulture data, however this data is used by a range of organisations, and therefore the cost is shared by contributions from a range of sources.

How Can SunRISE 21 Be Of Relevance To Growers?

The information collected and collated by SunRISE 21 can represent industry collectively or growers individually. SunRISE 21 provides a service to growers in the supply of Property Plans or Crop Plans.

The areas covered in the new 2006 aerial photography are shown in the map below.



Property Plans are large format individual plans showing layers of orthophoto imagery, contouring and property boundaries where available. These plans are a useful map base for property planning by growers for use in redevelopment, irrigation design and soil surveys.

Crop Plans are small format individual property plans with orthophoto background, crop patch outlines overlaid and tabular crop details attached. These plans are a useful property record particularly for quality assurance and insurance purposes. The Crop Plan includes hectares of crop patches calculated from the scale accurate orthophotos.

SunRISE 21 works with the Murray Valley Citrus Board (MVCB) to maintain citrus crop data, and each year all regional citrus growers receive a crop plan of their property to verify details of plantings and to feed back information on new plantings. The MVCB uses the resulting data to maintain accurate planting statistics which help in planning for the citrus industry.

Living With Reductions to Allocations This Summer

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A number of growers have not taken advantage of the Property Plans sent by MVCB each year, and are therefore missing out on the benefits these plans provide as well as potentially creating gaps in data collection.

SunRISE 21's Work With Australian Citrus Growers Inc.

SunRISE 21 was contracted to Australian Citrus Growers Inc. to assist in mapping citrus plantings across all major citrus growing regions in Australia, to produce a National Citrus Plantings Database.

What Are The Plans For The Future?

SunRISE 21 is planning to establish a web based mapping service for growers. This would involve giving secure log-on access to individual growers who will be able to input their own crop data to retrieve up to date property maps.

The current web site www.sunrise21.org.au is a user-friendly site which allows users to locate properties online and order hard copy or digital products. This new service will create a secure online member section providing up to the minute mapping services to growers.

The other major project in the pipeline is the production of the next Crop Report. Growers and local organisations will be familiar with the previous and current crop reports, and are awaiting the new report which will detail the changes in crop data and regional trends from 2003 to 2006.

Further information may be obtained by contacting SunRISE 21 Inc, 54 Lemon Avenue, Mildura or by telephoning 03 5021 1588.



Jeremy Giddings

At the time of writing, reductions to water allocations have just been announced for NSW irrigators.

There are various management practices that citrus growers can adopt to reduce irrigation requirements, such as eliminating mid-row cover crops and mulching. However, the water savings possible with these practices are generally variable but minor, and not well documented. In addition, the level of reductions being announced now requires the adoption of practices that result in greater water reductions than these practices achieve.

In other districts, severe reductions have necessitated more drastic practices such as pruning and even tree removal. Whilst this will be more of an option if allocations continue to decline (although bringing forward the removal of unviable patches should definitely be considered), growers in the lower Murray Darling have demonstrated that significant reductions in water use are possible with minimal production loss.

The irrigators who have demonstrated this all have one thing in common, and that is they have begun adopting soil moisture monitoring.

Water savings have not always resulted from the adoption of soil moisture monitoring, particularly on large mature trees because blocks were previously under irrigated. When monitoring has commenced on younger trees up to 10 years old, irrigation requirements have almost always been found to be significantly lower than expected.

Annual applications of 5-6 ML/Ha using full cover under tree sprinkler is not uncommon for trees of this age which are well monitored, and in a recent study a patch of Navelina consistently produced 15 T/Ha (400 trees / Ha) over a three year period. In fact, growers who have identified this lower water requirement have generally improved tree health and yield and hastened maturity. All citrus growers are in a continual process of re-development and low water use in these patches represents a chance to save water and with the use of some budgeting and planning, potentially maintain or minimise reductions in water applications for mature trees elsewhere on the property.

In most cases growers do not re-develop or top work whole irrigation units and adjusting irrigation system layouts may be necessary to meet these reduced applications. The level of water savings observed however, will usually make the cost and inconvenience of these adjustments viable. In addition to this, these patches which have specific water requirements, will be able to be irrigated to their own individual requirements for the life of the orchard, potentially improving tree health and production.

The other major water saving option observed for citrus has been the adoption of drip irrigation. Annual applications for mature, drip irrigated trees are generally 6-8ML/Ha. Whilst it is too late for conversion for citrus this season (for mature trees in particular), you should be giving significant consideration to this conversion before next season.

In summary, you cannot alter irrigation management practices confidently and successfully unless you monitor soil moisture. Once this commences, opportunities for water saving will then be recognised.

Jeremy Giddings
Irrigation Officer, NSW Department of Primary Industries, Dareton

From the Orange Tree to



1 Robert Mansell, Eddie Warhurst and David Goldup sample a variety of citrus juices provided by Nangiloc and Colignan Primary School pupils. 2 Fun and games with oranges.
3 School Principal Mr Eric Wright provides samples of 'Slurpee'.

Recently, Mr Robert Mansell, Chairman, MVCB and I were invited to the Nangiloc and Colignan Primary School to participate in a highly successful and enjoyable launch of an innovative citrus project. Both Mr Mansell and I were able to announce to the gathering of parents, teachers, friends and pupils, that we would be providing financial support to further this worthy initiative. The Primary School is located 45 kilometres south of Mildura and it is surrounded by citrus groves. It has an enrolment of 80 pupils with 90% of them residing on citrus farms.

The aim of the project is for the pupils to track the journey of an orange from the tree to the consumer's hands, enabling the children to acquire rudimentary skills that are necessary in operating a business.

The school has always been proactive in developing life skills, and encourages pupil involvement in its operations. For example, pupils in grades 4, 5 and 6 have run the canteen for the past 20 years. Recently this process became more formal and a company (Fundz Inc) was established. Fundz Inc has a company meeting every Friday. Each of 8 sub-committees prepares a report and jointly produces a newsletter. The whole process is geared towards real life financial learning experiences. The company is now in its third year of operation and is an integral part of the upper school curriculum.

A recent visit from the Country Education Project revealed the opportunity for the school to become involved in a nation wide project entitled 'Enterprise Learning'. The school was to identify a project and then develop wide links with the community and industry. As they are surrounded by citrus groves, oranges became the focus.

The school Principal, Mr Eric Wright made the following comments.

'We wanted the children to gain a greater appreciation of the citrus industry and to

also examine what could be created from the many oranges which are discarded as waste.

'The purchase of a commercial juicing machine was achieved with funding from the Country Education Program. The children now produce fresh orange juice to sell at the canteen and to their families. The machine is also advertised for hire. The children were generating income from what was once waste. They were also exploring health/hygiene,

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to the Supermarket Shelf



packaging, advertising and storage issues. Our production of juice was greater than demand. What else could we do? The school canteen sold icy poles, so why not replace these with 100% frozen citrus juice. This was the birth of a new product "Slurpeez". A commercial sink was installed and a weekly production line established. The children launched their special product on 26 October, 2006!

As the project was becoming self-funding, the school started plans to examine the journey of the orange from tree to supermarket shelf. Such an ambitious plan involved making contacts with a variety of organisations and industry groups. To date, the project has the total support and praise of the Murray Valley Citrus Board, SOS Citrus, Mildura Co-Op, Coles Supermarket, Melbourne Citrus Committee, Mildura Rural City Council, Melbourne Market Authority, Addamo Packers and local growers.

'The response has been overwhelming, with many of the above providing financial and in-kind support. The doors have been opened for us to further develop this incredible learning experience.

'The children will now actually visit a local farm and physically pick a bin of oranges.

They will then track the fruit to a local packing house (SOS Citrus). There, they will observe it being graded and packed for shipment direct to Coles or the Footscray Market. They will then travel into Mildura to visit the Mildura Co-Op where the fruit is packed for export. While in Mildura they will visit a local juice company and Sandalwood Packers, who also pre-pack for Coles Supermarkets!

'Melbourne will be our next stop where we will experience the Footscray Wholesale Market, visit a Coles Warehouse, and Addamo Packers who pre-pack fruit and vegetables for Coles and Woolworths. The journey will be complete when the children finally see the fruit as it is selected and taken to the register by the consumer.

During this entire program the children will carry with them their 'Orange Buddy', an actual orange given to them on the very first day (picking day). The orange will be given a full medical to check its condition, size, grading etc on day one and again periodically during the following weeks. The orange will also generate questions to be answered by the children who will reflect on the process from the orange's perspective. For example: What is happening to me? Where are they taking me? Etc

'We believe this is a unique and exciting project. It is possibly the first enterprise-learning project, which focuses on the citrus industry, conducted by primary school pupils. It will be documented and used as a model for other schools. Its potential to teach our young students 'life skills' is extremely powerful, as it will enrich their understanding in so many ways. The enthusiasm and support that has already been generated is amazing. As Principal, I thank the organisations and industries already involved in this unique, challenging and exciting program!

Some relevant comments:

'We believe it's a unique program; involving primary school aged students and the citrus industry. We do not know of any other schools or programs attempting to benefit this industry.' (Mr Eric Wright, Principal Nangiloc / Colignan Primary School.)

Cr Sharyon Peart, former President of the School Council, states the following: 'Enterprise Learning is a fantastic initiative. It is a wonderful opportunity for the children to constructively learn and provides inspiration to achieve great things in their future careers. The concept of Enterprise Learning should be included in every primary school curriculum!'

From the Orange Tree to the Supermarket Shelf Cont'd...

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Mr Robert Mansell, Chairman, MVCB, stated that citrus was a major product of the local community. 'The Murray Valley produces 25% of Australia's citrus so it's very important that we try to sell all our fruit.' He emphasized that in a world production sense, we have to be smart with what we do with our fruit.

'Therefore, the MVCB is very pleased to assist the children in this worthy project that enables them to experience first hand the links in the chain of events for citrus from tree to supermarket. This knowledge will prove particularly valuable in the years to come, by having a better understanding of the citrus industry from tree to consumer.'

My impression was that, overall, this is a great project and provides the opportunity for the pupils to learn in a co-operative and enjoyable way. First hand knowledge is an essential ingredient in today's world and these students are the next wave of citrus producers, marketers and consumers.

This practical project is education by direct involvement with the issues that matter in the local area. There is no better way to learn. As such, I commend the initiative and wish it the success it deserves.

E. Warhurst Compiler

CITTgroup Workshops



Participants at the Pest Awareness Workshop presentation.

Pest Awareness Workshops

During spring and early summer months, the focus of attention for most growers is to avoid any potential damage to early season fruitlets. It is well known that excessive blemish on any fruit at harvest significantly impacts on packout results.

With this in mind CITTgroup workshops have been held across the region where the focus has been to provide practical assistance to growers, to understand how early season pests impact on potential fruit quality and what needs to be done if a problem is identified.

CITTgroup workshops are arranged following grower enquiry. Upon registering, a citrus grower is encouraged to gather a group of neighbouring growers to attend a presentation on the property. Participants are presented with a 10X hand lens and given a short lesson on its use. They then move into the field and attempt to find insects in their habitat and identify the damage they cause.

The type of pests on which the presentation is focused, is the growers' decision, but each session commences with the virtues and basic strategies of field monitoring. In this instance most sessions covered the four main early season pests, namely Katydid, Light Brown Apple Moth, Kelly's Citrus Thrips and Spined Citrus Bug. These are commonly known as dynamic pests which, if left unattended in large numbers, can cause substantial damage in a short period of time.

During these sessions growers are taught to use the least disruptive strategies if control is necessary and to wait until the crop is at a certain stage of growth before considering

any action. The follow-up in the field session reinforces the shed presentation, to actually see where the pests can be found and the numbers of both pests and beneficials. This is often a surprise to many growers.

The CITTgroup co-ordinator has the ability to deliver sessions as often as needed and at short notice which enables the workshops to be as small as 6 to 12 participants. The size of the group and familiarity with each other, enhances interaction and questions of relevance to their orchards which in turn encourages growers to adopt and practice monitoring techniques.

More than eight sessions were conducted this season with extremely positive feedback that sessions such as these were valuable, especially when growers followed up with phone calls and queries that confirmed they were actually monitoring.

By taking this approach it is hoped that more grower interaction in our region will accelerate the monitoring of specific stages of the crop more closely, with management decisions not just reliant on calendar or regional information. The overall CITTgroups aim is to ensure growers refine management tools in their orchards to improve the potential of high quality marketable fruit.

Tony Filippi

CITTgroups Co-ordinator IDO MVCB

CITTgroups
AUSTRALIA

MVCB's Regional Citrus Promotions Campaign

This year, the MVCB continued to raise its industry profile at the Mildura Show, the Wentworth Show and the Barham Golden Rivers Produce and Food Festival as part of its seasonal, local and regional promotion campaign.



1 Jill Purich and Karen Burrows manning the Mildura Show stand. 2 Jill Purich, the Board's casual office assistant was kept busy at this year's Wentworth Show.

Mr Adrian Clay, MVCB Field Officer, stated that the emphasis throughout was to inform growers of the Board's Strategic Plan and the support mechanisms that flow from this to growers, individually and collectively. There was a concentration on such areas as best practice, market reports and relevant areas of marketing, including niche markets for new varieties.

'The basic message is that the MVCB is here to help, and to highlight that the Strategic Plan and support to growers go hand-in-hand', Adrian said.

Adrian commented that the Barham Festival was well attended and consumers were very interested in the produce on display, which concentrated on the health qualities of a wide range of citrus varieties. 'The event was again combined with a music festival which added another dimension to the occasion.'

'The Wentworth Show was also very successful with the strong sense of community again to the fore, making for a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere over the two days of the event.'

This year the Board's display at the Mildura Show was relocated to the Agriculture Hall. Adrian Clay stated that overall, there seemed to be a lack of agricultural promotions in total, when compared to previous years. The reason for the change of venue was to encourage growers and those interested in citrus to gain knowledge of citrus varieties as well as the services and functions of the Board, with Board members and staff being available to talk to growers in attendance at an individual level.

'There was a definite aim to create a greater awareness of newer varieties such as Blood Oranges, in terms of potential niche markets for these and other emerging varieties. As well, we provided fresh orange juice in natural form and in frozen drinks.'

'This was to try to reach the younger generation who are the next wave of consumers. Being part of the popular Elliott Emu Trail and providing free tastings of varieties were two other successful efforts in achieving this aim.'

The three-day Mildura activity was staffed by MVCB Board members, staff and their families and contributed to maintaining a high visual profile of the MVCB and the vital industry it represents. The Board is grateful for their willing assistance.

The two MVCB free competition winners were Gayle Talent of Westcliffs and Amanda Beevers of SS Packers.

E. Warhurst Compiler

Harvest Trail

The National Harvest Labour Information Service

How to avoid employing Illegal Workers by using the Harvest Trail.

**NATIONAL HARVEST LABOUR
Information Service**
"Making sure Growers and Jobseekers find each other!"



Harvest Trail
AN AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE



You may have seen recent media reports that the Federal Government, through the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA), is considering introducing penalties for employers who are found to have been employing workers who are in Australia illegally or do not have a visa that permits them to work in Australia. Not knowing they are not permitted to work will not be a valid excuse and employers will need to prove they made appropriate enquires to establish the employee's legitimacy.

This will also be the case when using the services of a Labour Hire Contractor. The grower will be expected to have made reasonable enquiries to ascertain the workers supplied to them by the Contractor have a legal right to work in Australia. Of course the easiest way for a grower to overcome these issues, avoid possible penalties and the inconvenience of having your workforce taken away is to source your labour from your local Harvest Labour Office.

Workers sourced from one of the Federal Government appointed Harvest Labour Offices operated by MADEC have been checked to ensure they have the legal right to do so and best of all, the Harvest Office's services are free. The Harvest Offices which are located in all the major harvest regions around the country, are supported by the National Harvest Labour Information Service (NHLIS) which is also federally funded and was set up to distribute information and help co-ordinate harvest labour requirements for the Harvest Trail of Australia.

The NHLIS can mobilise workers from areas which have finished harvest to regions where labour is required to complete harvest thereby alleviating the harvest labour problems of horticulturalists trying to pick their crops. Both the Harvest Offices and the NHLIS deal with all types of workers including backpackers, itinerant workers, "grey nomads" and eligible Australian job seekers. To speak to your closest Harvest Labour Office just call the NHLIS on 1800 062 332 and they will connect you. Calls to 1800 062 332 are free from a land line.

Options

For growers who like to recruit their workers themselves, DIMA have established a web based tool they call "Entitlement Verification Online" (EVO).

EVO is a web-based system that allows quick and easy verification of the study and work entitlements of a person who is in Australia, but was born overseas. The facility was introduced in November, 2004. It allows registered employers and labour suppliers to check the work entitlement of prospective employees online. It is the department's preferred method for employers to check work rights. The service operates 24 hours a day and provides results in seconds.

Registration is a simple online process accessed via <http://www.immi.gov.au/managing-australias-borders/compliance/info-employers/evo-orgs.htm>

Once registration is complete, an automatically generated email is sent to the user to notify them that their account is ready. You are required to complete the registration online, answering some verification questions stipulated in the initial registration process.

Users can then check a person's status online, once they agree to the terms and conditions on every check.

An EVO account is easy to maintain with users having access to many flexible options, including:

- Their choice of password
- The ability to change contact details online
- Password expiry after 28 days
- The Account expires after 90 inactive days - but, can be easily reactivated
- Forgotten password support available

EVO Support

Comprehensive help is available for users from a number of sources:

- Online help on EVO
- Field based help
- Direct access to appropriate information on www.immi.gov.au
- By phoning 1800 040 070

No local Harvest Labour Office?

For those growers who are located in an area where there is not a Harvest Labour Office, the NHLIS can still help you to source workers



from the Harvest Trail. The NHLIS can arrange to lodge the vacancy(s) on the Harvest Trail Website on your behalf, again just call 1800 062 332 for assistance. Obviously you will need to be available to take enquiries from prospective workers that the NHLIS refers to you.

Growers who have internet access can lodge positions electronically on the Harvest Trail website but must be prepared to list their contact details and be available to receive enquiries from job seekers at peak times.

To get started, log onto www.jobsearch.gov.au/harvesttrail, click on 'Employers', then 'Advertise a Job', and follow the prompts. For further information or advice call the NHLIS on 1800 062 332.

Max Polwarth
 Manager, National Harvest Labour
 Information Service

Murray Valley Citrus Board Product Price List

Available through the Murray Valley Citrus Board office.

Item Name	Grower Price \$
PUBLICATIONS	
Citrus Disease and Disorders	\$26.00
Citrus Growing Manual	\$22.00
Citrus Pests & Their Natural Enemies	\$85.50
Citrus Field Guide - Citrus Pests and their Natural Enemies	\$35.00
Drip Irrigation Book	\$25.00
Physiology Notes 04/2003	\$18.00
Good Bug Book	\$44.50
Citrus Disease & Defects found in the marketplace	\$118.75
CD Citrus Pests & Their Natural Enemies	\$45.00
PRODUCTS	
Citrus Peelers - Complete	\$1.00
Cranston Gauge	\$39.00
Hand Lens	\$8.50
Plastic Juicer	\$3.50
Sizing Ring America (Yellow)	\$22.00
Penetrometer 011	\$274.00
Phenolphthalein PH Indicator	\$44.00
Refractometer REF103 Brix	\$340.00
TDS Solid Tester pocket (PH WATER TESTER)	\$125.00
NET BAG SALES	
Grapefruit 3 kg net bags - per 1000	\$178.75
Imperial 1.5 kg net bags - per 500	\$89.38
Navel 3 kg net bags - per 1000	\$178.75
Navel 1.5 kg net bags - per 1000	\$139.00
Valencia 3 kg net bags - per 1000	\$178.75
MEETING ROOM FACILITIES	
Half day Board Room hire	\$55.00
Full day Board Room hire	\$110.00
Half day Projector Multimedia hire	\$110.00
Full day Projector Multimedia hire	\$220.00
Coffee Tea Biscuits (per head) - Board Room hire	\$1.50
CITREP NEWSLETTER ADVERTISING	
<i>Black & White</i>	
1/9 PAGE Portrait (60 mm x 85 mm)	\$35.00
2/9 PAGE Landscape (125 mm x 85 mm)	\$70.00
2/9 PAGE Portrait (60 mm x 175 mm)	\$70.00
4/9 PAGE Portrait (125 mm x 175 mm)	\$140.00
1/3 PAGE Landscape (190 mm x 85 mm)	\$110.00
2/3 PAGE Landscape (190 mm x 175 mm)	\$200.00
FULL PAGE (190 mm x 265 mm)	\$275.00
<i>Colour</i>	
1/9 PAGE Portrait (60 mm x 85 mm)	\$80.00
2/9 PAGE Landscape (125 mm x 85 mm)	\$160.00
2/9 PAGE Portrait (60 mm x 175 mm)	\$160.00
4/9 PAGE Portrait (125 mm x 175 mm)	\$310.00
1/3 PAGE Landscape (190 mm x 85 mm)	\$240.00
2/3 PAGE Landscape (190 mm x 175 mm)	\$500.00
FULL PAGE (190 mm x 265 mm)	\$610.00
FLYER - 1 PAGE INSERT	\$300.00

Sunraysia Rural Counselling Service

Assistance for citrus growers in the Sunraysia region of Victoria/NSW and the Swan Hill district.



Graeme Thornton Rural Financial Counsellor

"This season is particularly difficult for many citrus growers who may have extensive damage to crops or trees because of frosts. This is on top of facing financial pressures from poor market returns in recent years with fruit not suitable for packing being of little commercial value. There are also emerging concerns regarding water availability in the Murray-Darling with allocations already restricted for NSW irrigators and great uncertainty for next season for all irrigators unless there are significant rains in catchments."

"Citrus growers affected by the current industry downturn need to carefully assess their financial position and options going forward. Farm businesses need to be very cautious of any escalating debt or erosion of equity, in riding out tough times and be mindful of their exposure to external forces over which they have little control. In times of industry pressures it is vital growers make sound informed decisions about their prospects."

"Citrus growers in NSW in the Western Division, including Wentworth, Dareton, Buronga etc, Balranald Shire and the Riverina areas are currently eligible to apply for Exceptional Circumstances [EC] as their farms are located in drought declared areas, and there are no exclusions of producers. These EC declared areas now have assistance to March 2008, which includes Relief Payments from Centrelink and Interest Rate Subsidies available through the NSW Rural Assistance Authority. IRS applications must be lodged by December 2006 for the current round."



Don Seward Rural Financial Counsellor

"For those experiencing financial difficulties there is assistance available through the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry's Farm Help Program, administered by Centrelink. Farm Help includes Income Support, Advice and Training Grants or Re-establishment assistance, for those wishing to exit farming. We do a lot of work with growers helping them get the necessary information for applications and assisting our clients with Centrelink processes. In times such as this, we see Farm Help as a valuable program to support farm families and provide relief, while they consider their prospects, investigate all options, seek appropriate advice and decide whether to continue or look for alternatives to relying on farming."

STOP PRESS - On the 24th October 2006 Government announced **ALL PRODUCERS** in the Sunraysia and Swan Hill districts are now eligible to apply for Exceptional Circumstances assistance, which includes similar relief payments and interest subsidies available to NSW growers. Applications to Centrelink must be lodged before Christmas to be back paid to the 24th October 2006 date of declaration. Interest subsidy applications are not likely to close until October 2007 for the first round. This now means **ALL** citrus producers are eligible to apply.

'It is most important growers do not self assess their own particular circumstances regarding eligibility for assistance, but enlist the help of a qualified professionals, such as ourselves.'

'We will meet you on your property and provide on-going assistance. Our Service is free and independent of financial institutions, welfare agencies or government, and information given to a rural financial counsellor is treated in strict confidence.'

Water Situation Facing Citrus Producers in the Murray Valley

The current water supply position is looming as a significant threat for not only citrus producers but all horticultural production throughout the Murray Valley. The only short term solution is a significant rainfall event/s to replenish depleted catchments resulting from an unprecedented drought sequence.



New South Wales producers are worst hit with major water restrictions imposed (20% and 32% respectively), South Australia is currently on 60% of allocation while Victoria has 95% of allocation. The reason for the disparity between NSW and Victoria is that Victoria bases its water allocations on volumes within the storages while NSW rely on long term average inflows to determine allocations. Restrictions in NSW are due to unprecedented low inflows into the Murray system and recent advice of reduced Snowy releases.

To brief producers on the severity of the situation, the Murray Valley Citrus Board (MVCB) facilitated a water forum at the Coomealla Club, Dareton on Thursday 23rd November 2006. The forum was chaired by Robert Mansell and speakers included David Harriss, Executive Director, Department of Natural Resources NSW, Owen Russell, General Manager Communications and Development, Lower Murray Water and Barry Philp, Manager Industry Development, Department of Primary Industries and Resources, South Australia.

In excess of 240 producers attended the forum and were told that without inflows, Lake Hume will be dry by January 2007 while Dartmouth and Lake Victoria would be dry by April 2007. Should this scenario eventuate, the only inflow into the Murray system would be via releases from the Snowy scheme already reduced due to low inflows into that catchment.

While the likelihood of a dry 2007 is low, producers were urged to adopt water saving strategies and techniques to get through this season. Jeremy Giddings from the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) NSW outlined such strategies to the forum. The development of a water budget to estimate the optimum water requirements for each patch was stressed. Producers were advised to prioritise the most profitable patches and allocate water accordingly. An option to allocate 80% to 90% of water requirements to the most profitable patches and allocate minimal water, 0% to 20%, to least profitable patches was recommended. It can be more profitable to grow half an orchard of good fruit rather than to grow a whole orchard of small unmarketable fruit.

There were numerous other water saving strategies discussed at the forum.

To guide growers in this endeavour the NSW DPI and MVCB are conducting "Surviving the Drought" workshops at Dareton Research Station, the first of which was held on Thursday, 30 November. Growers wishing to attend these workshops must register and should bring the MVCB aerial photographs of their properties with them to assist in the irrigation planning process. MVCB can supply a copy of property aerial photographs on request at no cost.

Other workshops will be held throughout the Murray Valley, depending on grower demand, with dates to be notified.

For more details and registration, contact NSW DPI - Phone 5019 8400.

Coordinated Fuller's Rose Weevil Research Program



Fuller's Rose Weevil (image from PaDIL website - www.padil.gov.au)

As you would be aware, the expanding production base of the Australian citrus industry, coupled with the fluctuating prices paid for processing fruit, makes it imperative for our industry to increase fresh fruit production in order to maintain sustainability. In order to divert fruit to fresh fruit markets we need to expand access to potentially lucrative export markets. The presence of Fuller's Rose Weevil in Australian citrus orchards seriously threatens the development of the lucrative Chinese market in particular, but also other export markets where quarantine protocols exclude the weevil.

Australian Citrus Growers Inc, Murray Valley Citrus Board, Riverina Citrus and the Citrus Board of South Australia are seeking to facilitate and support coordinated research

to address control/management and disinfestation of Fuller's Rose Weevil through:

- Coordinated research on the control / management of the pest within the citrus orchards; and
- Coordinated research on key options for post-harvest disinfestation of adults and eggs from citrus fruit prior to export to key markets.

We believe that it is only through coordinated, linked and industry-supported research on these two fronts that we can effectively develop citrus exports to China and other markets, and thus develop and maintain the long-term viability of the Australian citrus industry.

In order to facilitate this approach, the Murray Valley Citrus Board and Australian Citrus Growers Inc. have established a Fuller's Rose Weevil Steering Committee, which has undertaken background research/literature reviews to determine some of the most promising options for overall control of this pest. This led to the identification of further research required, as a pilot program, on post-harvest oil/chemical treatment of fruit to loosen adhesion of Fuller's Rose Weevil eggs, together with a high pressure wash to remove the loosened eggs. It has been identified that this important research will be coordinated by Peter Taverner from the South Australian Research and Development Institute (SARDI).

On 10 November 2006, a meeting in Mildura of research entomologists was facilitated by the Fuller's Rose Weevil Steering Committee, in order to discuss various options for further research into orchard control/management of the weevil. This was an extremely productive workshop which identified a cooperative research program for the next three years. It was agreed at the meeting that this is to be coordinated by Greg Baker of SARDI, but will involve a range of researchers and research institutions across Victoria, South Australia and New South Wales.

Australian Citrus Growers Inc. and the three State Citrus Boards (Murray Valley, Riverina and South Australia) fully support the agreed program and we will be facilitating/supporting appropriate research funding through a range of avenues which could include:

- Horticulture Australia Ltd. R&D funding
- Lobbying for funding support through the Commonwealth Minister for Agriculture
- Various industry funding mechanisms.

This coordinated approach promises thorough and fast results for the control/ eradication of Fuller's Rose Weevil in our valuable citrus industry.

Advertise your service or product in the next issue of Citrep.

For further information about advertising in Citrep please contact Kerry
at the MVCB office on 03 5051 0500.