

# Australian Onion Association

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Doug Marks is  
Chairman of the  
Australian  
Onion  
Association

**T**his year proved to be a life-saver for many in our industry. If prices from the previous two years had continued, many would have been forced out. Prices at times exceeded \$20/bag particularly on whites, with the range for most of the season between \$10 and \$20.

The main reason was a smaller supply as plantings were down and more in line with expected consumption. However severe weather conditions faced in many areas of South Australia (two and a half times their average rainfall) and much of the rest of Australia, resulted in lower yields. Severe outbreaks of downy mildew completely devastated some crops. These problems were made worse by the shortage of chemicals, (competition with the grape industry which was also suffering severe downy mildew outbreaks) and also indications of resistance.

In 1993/94 season planting increases in some states such as S.A and Tasmania appear to be compensated by other states (mainly Queensland and N.S.W.) being lower. Going into next season with good prices and short early supplies means that with orderly marketing the potential for good average prices exists for 1994.

*AOA itself has been busy on a number of issues this year*

### RESIDUE TESTING

□ Government is pushing to regain full recovery cost from residue testing by government authorities. While the industry agrees that it is important to test onions for residues so that we can make the most of our (clean) image both here and overseas, we do not believe it is fully a grower benefit. The consumer also gains benefit in knowing fruit and vegetables are safe. AOA believes government should cover 50% of costs. Private companies are being pursued as a cheaper alternative (thanks to Deputy Chairman Trevor Twigden for his work in this area).

### REMOVING TARIFFS AND PROMOTION

□ AOA has been negotiating with the government over removing tariffs of onion bags and to collect a promotion levy. However while tariffs appear to be progressing well, the levy raising has become bogged down with government insisting we go through the Australian Horticultural Corporation (AHC), which industry finds unacceptable. We



*Doug Marks (Chairman) with his wife Joy and children Krystal and Daniel.*

still strongly believe we should promote the health benefits of onions. I would encourage any growers in support of an active promotion to write to the secretary with their views.

### NEW ZEALAND TOUR

□ After our Annual General Meeting in November, a group from the onion industry will be heading to New Zealand for a tour of their industry. Although NZ is a competitor both on overseas and local markets, it is likely to be beneficial in establishing a dialogue between the two countries.

### MEMBERSHIP GROWN

□ AOA membership has grown this year in response to our new membership categories which are: States \$600 - 10 votes; Companies \$180 - 3 votes; Individual \$60 - 1 vote. I would encourage everyone to join even if you are only able to attend meetings occasionally, because you will be sent minutes of meetings which will supply an up to date view of the industry.

### THANKS

- To John Salvestrin for again putting together a very informative "Onion Australia". It seems like only yesterday when he put together the first one ten years ago. This magazine is a good way to spread news and information to the industry and if anyone has an article they would like published or an issue covered please contact John.
- To the committee for the work they have put in this year and a special thank you to our secretary Reg Miller for his untiring efforts in a year which he has overcome personal illness. Reg has been with our organisation since its inception and looking towards retiring at the end of next year.
- To all sponsors and speakers this year for enabling us to do more for this great industry.

Wishing all a prosperous year in 1994.

DOUG MARKS, CHAIRMAN