

Doug Marks is Chairman of the Australian Onion Industry Association Inc.



Well, what a year! It is one that nearly everyone in the Onion Industry will want to forget.

There were terrible harvesting conditions in most States that spoiled crops in several of the coastal producing areas and Queensland lost crops due to floods and excessive rains. If the prospects of selling a weather damaged crop was not hard enough, we then had to contend with a worldwide oversupply of onions.

Other Australian districts failed to clear stocks before bulbs deteriorated. Early sprouting was a major problem in most late areas due to the rain at harvest and the mild conditions early in winter.

As much as we would like to forget a year like this, there are always lessons to be learned.

I think everyone is aware now that small onions and those of inferior quality will not be accepted in a market amply supplied with what they want. The size of onions required in Australia has gradually increased to a stage where only 60 mm and above are desired. Any grower or production area that failed to market all their onions (other than because of bad weather efforts) must seriously consider whether they continue to grow that quality of onion.

Your AOIA committee has worked through an increasing workload this year and I would like to pass on a thank you to Trevor Twigden, John Salvestrin, Alan Carey, Kevin Prosser, David Hood, Rob Sandow, Tim Shadbolt, Les Giroud and Tim Groom for their willingness and free giving of time.

A special thank you to Trish Herrimann who has now finished her role as a fill-in Secretary while Judi was away on maternity leave. Congratulations as well to Mark and Trish on the arrival of their baby girl. Also thank you to Judi for taking up the role again, earlier than she had anticipated. Due to the increasing workload it is our intention to upgrade Judi's position over the next few years to the role of Executive officer due to the difficulties of a Chairman to take on the role and devote the attention now required.

This report is being written while attending an AUF Conference on AOIA behalf. At the Conference I have held discussions about a number of issues including Peak Horticultural Body Membership benefits such as fleet discounts that the AOIA could fit into and also joint membership. I was able to discuss with Senator Brownhill and his staff the implementing of a \$0.60/ MT HRDC levy for the initial purpose of industry unification, industry standards, consumer and nutritional/ promotional research. The new varieties of red and sweet onions are making it more important to identify consumer concerns relating to these varieties and their uses and also to work towards a sweetness and pungency identification standard.

The International Alliums Conference for November 1997 in Adelaide is progressing well with a lot of interest from overseas, so please take this marvellous opportunity to hear the best in the world as well as mingle and talk to leading overseas Onion Industry people.

Conference registration costs are being kept to a minimum and second registrations from producers will be at a reduced rate. If you would like to be involved in sponsorship or the trade exhibition, contact our Secretary.



I have decided not to seek re-election due to work commitments so I wish the incoming Chairman all the best for what will be a very busy year with the Conference coming up.

Best regards,

Doug Marks
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