

# Onion rings

## hopeful signs for a cyclic market upturn



It may be an old cliché but this onion season has certainly been one to bring some tears. A depressed domestic market and a poor export trade have left many people involved in the industry wondering what the future holds. But just like the rings of an onion the market does go in circles, and already there are signs of some correction in the level of production.

It is in this difficult environment that the Australian Onion Industry Association has been successful in gaining majority support across the country for a national research and development levy. At the time of writing, the submission to HRDC is about to commence and we hope to be successful.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank those of you who voted in favour of the levy introduction. Creating financial support for a chemical minor use program was seen as a major reason to support a national levy. Without such a program there is a strong chance we will be unable to develop better ways of growing onions, but also we will lose existing proven products as they come under review.

Development of a recognised sweet/mild onion market in Australia has also created a lot of renewed interest. This has been given impetus from the visit to Gatton in May by Dr Leonard Pike from the Crop Improvement Centre at Texas A&M University. Dr Pike highlighted the need for a consistent maximum pungency standard in sweet/mild onion retailing to ensure consumer confidence. Research is required in Australia to develop the growing skills to reliably produce



*Tim Groom, Chairman.*

mild onions, and there is an opportunity for a co-ordinated supply program starting in the north of the country and finishing in the southern States.

Consumer research can assist in identifying the hurdles to increasing onion consumption. It may lead to new opportunities in pre-prepared onions.

The national levy can pick up on current research being conducted in Tasmania and Queensland on white root rot, and there will be sufficient funds to work on other regional projects.

I would like to thank the association members who gave up their own time to run the regional meetings—Trevor Twigden, Judi Prosser, Yvonne Smith, Tim Shadbolt, Peter Ivankovich, Alan Duff, Glenroy Logan, John Bishop, Mark Hickey and Claude Testoni.

For those of you who did not vote in favour of the levy, we appreciate your concerns and this will strengthen our resolve to ensure that the money collected is spent wisely.

The Australian Onion Industry Association continues to be an effective way for people involved across all sectors of the industry to meet and exchange ideas. In these past 12 months the association will have met in Griffith, Melbourne, Gatton and Murray Bridge, with the Gatton meeting being the first held in Queensland for a long time. The AOIA is the voice of the onion industry—it gives anyone involved the opportunity to have a say—and I encourage you to do so.

*Tim Groom  
Chairman, AOIA*

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