

A global good time

Australia prospers in a tight global supply market



Horticulture Australia

This year has been a much better season for the onion industry, from the grass roots of the industry in the growers, right through the retail chain. This recovery is by no means confined to Australian shores but is a recovery for the industry on a global scale. Globally onion plantings were down, and so too were yields in many areas, for different reasons. This resulted in a more balanced supply and demand curve, which found profits higher for all.

Global. Yes, like it or not we are in a global market, where our competitor is not our neighbour, or our interstate cousin. Our competitor is someone on the other side of the world, in another country, who we will probably never meet. The challenge the Australian onion industry faces is to defragment ourselves, and think globally. As an industry we need to unite on a national scale to be truly competitive, and not be left behind.

It has been a busy year for the AOIA executive. Unfortunately most of the reason for this is due to the Research and Development levy proposal still being on the agenda. Be assured however, that whilst many barriers have been put before us, the determination is still there to soldier on toward the implementation of the levy. Let us not forget the reasons that we need this levy. No one can question the need for more work directed toward chemical registrations, when more and more chemicals are being taken from our shelves. Onion varieties constantly need improvement for all climatic conditions in Australia, and work is also needed to defend our profits against common and potential pests and diseases. Never forget also, that if we truly wish to control the market for our product, then we must research what it is that the market requires.

At the time of reading this report, there will still be no certainty that the levy submission will be approved; however, we will not be bullied into handing over our right to have control of our own levy. The AOIA represents onion growers in this country better than any other organisation can, and as the onion growers are to be the levy payers, that is an important fact. What other association of any kind has consistent representation from grower level, from states all over Australia? What other association encourages and trusts growers to hold office at the highest level? Perhaps there are others, but I dare anyone who questions the grower representation of the AOIA to take up this topic with me. Not all growers want to be involved with an association at an active level, but with the AOIA they can be certain that the grower's

interest is paramount, with the whole industry needs at heart.

An example of the AOIA in action is the establishment of a sweet/mild onion working party. This group has met several times this past year to discuss the development of this element of the industry. It is believed by the AOIA that we need to be driving this development, rather than being driven by other industry sectors. Members of this committee include representatives from many seed companies, also Alan Duff from the QDPI who has done extensive work on sweet onion varieties in Queensland, and heading the committee is Doug Marks, an onion grower/packer from South Australia. Doug has travelled widely researching the sweet/mild industry in the USA, due to his receipt of a Churchill Fellowship, and can offer much expertise in practicalities involved in crop management from a grower's perspective.

The AOIA continues to work with the newly developed Horticulture Australia Ltd and maintains a voice in Australia United Fresh with a representative on the National Executive Committee. As the peak industry body for the onion industry it is vital that we continue these links.

It is also important therefore that we communicate well with state representative bodies as well, and we are always open to discussion of state issues. With representatives on our executive committee from all states, and by continuing to hold meetings at regional locations, it is our hope to maintain a unified, national industry, which, by working together, can become a significant player in the global market.

I wish to thank all members of the executive committee, Tim Groom (TAS), Glenroy Logan and Des Jackwitz (QLD), Steve Rathjen and Steven Marks (SA), Mark Hickey (NSW), Mark Atkinson (VIC), Peter Ivankovich (WA), and also our Executive Officer Judi Prosser, whom I never realised did so much work until I needed her. Please get to know your state representative on the committee, and consider holding a position yourself. Never feel that you are not able to contribute, for someone once said, 'If you think you are too small to do anything, you have never been in bed with a mosquito'.

As we look toward the future in 2002 remember, 'The future is not a place we are going, it's a place we are creating'.



Yvonne Smith, Chairman.

*Yvonne Smith
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