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The year to date has been a difficult one to say the least, with most markets over-supplied with onions, and the outlook over the next few months

is not all that much better.

This growing season has been very wet in southern states as of late September, with some growers having not yet planted a crop. Mother Nature may well have the final say as to what area is sown for this coming year.

This environment highlights the need to use our new communication package and OnionSTAT for access to up-to-date, accurate onion statistics as a useful tool in decision-making. The more accurate the data given by industry players, the more accurate the data that can be extracted.

Onions Australia has been busy on a number of tasks to enhance our industry. It has undertaken a strategic agrichemical review process of chemicals available to the onion industry and the likelihood of some of these being deregistered in the near future. We have assessed which alternatives will be possible for their replacement and are pressing for registration of these chemicals. Further information is available on the website (www.onionsaustralia.org.au).

A review process has also been undertaken of the compulsory onion levy. While it has served

us well in the past, \$2 per tonne is no longer considered enough to fund the cost of mandatory residue testing and the level of R&D that we currently experience. There is now a requirement through the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed to set up a Plant Health Australia levy to safeguard against disease incursion. This levy will be set at \$0 although an annual subscription is required. The levy will only kick in if and when there is a need. Consultant Jonathan Eccles has been engaged to conduct the review process, and a marketing levy will also be put up for discussion.

In the months to come, we will be conducting meetings in all onion-growing regions of Australia, and Onions Australia sees this as an opportunity to demonstrate the new communication package in depth and also to gain some positive feedback from the levy payers on industry concerns.

As a final note, it has been brought to our attention that there is some onion seed on the market in Australia that has not been tested for onion smut, and growers should be aware of the fact. While Biosecurity Australia regard this as low priority because of an outbreak in South Australia a number of years ago, Onions Australia is saying that Australia is onion smut free and are working to gain mandatory testing of seed.

From the chair of Onions Australia, I hope the coming season is kind to all concerned and the industry continues to prosper.