

Chairperson's report

Levy Review process high on the priority list for 2010.



Brian Bonde.

We are determined to get this process right, given that it will be something to help guide the industry into the future.

As Chairperson I am very happy with the way the process has been undertaken, even given the delay due to the Federal Election.

Growers should very much rest assured that it is still on track, but just slightly behind.

As part of our consultations with growers, Executive Officer Joanne Thomas-Ward and I travelled around Australia visiting a range of growing regions.

The trip in itself was very enlightening, and there was excellent feedback from the meetings.

I firmly believe that given a positive vote, which will take place after our AGM we will increase the R&D levy.

If this is the case it would be possible to drop the NRS levy and fund a project to collate and record existing residue testing data. This project would attract dollar for dollar funding and would be managed by Onions Australia, resulting in considerable savings to the industry.

In other news our concern over the threat of disease, in particular onions imported from known *Botrytis squamosa* and *Iris Yellow Spot Virus* infected areas of California, have been raised with AQIS. I commend the authorities on their swift action and willingness to work with a number of people, including growers, scientists and our own Onions Australia staff and executive who worked very hard to ensure a positive outcome, resulting in increased vigilance for these particular threats.

I am very happy with the way our Onions Australia office has been running, and it must be noted that the change to a Mt Gambier base has been positive.

The office has been extremely productive with Executive Officer Joanne Thomas-Ward at the helm.

We have just welcomed Mt Gambier woman Lechelle Earl on board, bringing with her a raft of skills garnered in her work as a local journalist and media company owner.

Joanne has been doing an extremely good job co-ordinating the levy review process, which has added a huge workload to the already busy office. It must be remembered that this levy process is over and above the usual workload, and I commend Joanne for her efforts.

There is not much to report as yet about how the season is progressing, but I do know that there are some good early onion crops about in Tasmania.

There may be some good news for Australian growers on the world onion scene, given that Europe is suffering some difficulty with its harvest.

It seems this may result in a shortfall of onions in Europe, which always augers well for our own part of the market as it may well lead to less numbers coming into our domestic market.