



ONIONS AUSTRALIA | 2018

Latest research & development news



Farming without Totril



Inside: Your onion disease identification poster



Focus on exports

Page 14



2018 Reg Miller Award Winner: Lewis Lydon

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Secret Serve success sees campaign continuation

Pages 18-19



Bejo Onions

Hybrids for the premium market

Redwing

For sowing September - early October

Briella

For sowing September - early October

Red label

For sowing July - early August

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For sowing September - early October



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Welcome

Welcome to the 35th edition of the Onions Australia annual magazine.

It has been a significant year for the Australian onion industry, primarily grappling with Bayer's withdrawal of Totril from the market and gauging the potential impact.

However, our targeted investment in research and development continues and in 2018 Australian onion growers gained access for the first time to an industry-specific biosecurity manual.

Many of the research projects in place have seen a great deal of activity and are communicating positive results for the industry. You can read all about these issues and updates in this edition!

Further highlights in this year's annual magazine include feature articles including a market overview from recent Nielsen onion data generated via 'Harvest to Home'; an update on an onion marketing study carried out at the University of

Queensland; details on the Reg Miller Award Winner and a profile piece on the Shadbolt family and the 'Hope' onion.

All the regular updates are also featured, including the state round-ups, the latest minor use permit details and an update from Hort Innovation.

You are welcome, and encouraged, to contact the OA office at any time to share your ideas, and offer any suggestions related to the magazine or broader industry activities. It's important we get feedback to ensure we're responding to your needs and keeping you up-to-date on all industry happenings.

We hope you enjoy the read and we look forward to another great year ahead for the industry!

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Onions Australia Executive Committee

Peter Shadbolt (Chair)
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Andrew Moon
Dean Metcalf
Darren Wood
Darren Rathjen
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Lewis Lydon
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Chief Executive Officer

Lechelle Earl



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From the Chair

Well where did that year go? As I sit and reflect on the last 12 months, and my second term as chairman, I can't help but be amazed at what the year has brought us as an industry.



Certainly onion prices and domestic oversupply are hot topics around the table or the back of the ute. Hopefully the coming season will see a return to more sustainable prices for all growers.

One of the hot topics this year was the sudden loss of Totril to our growers, something that caught most people by surprise. We are often asked what does Onions Australia (OA) do for growers - and this is a perfect case of what it does do. The moment it was announced that Totril would be no more OA started conversations with several companies to look at ways to solve the situation. Lechelle has worked tirelessly to come up with a solution to apply for a permit to bring in an alternative product with the same active ingredient from South Africa to temporarily fill the gap. Plans are also under way to secure a more permanent solution as well (watch this space).

One of the highlights for the year I reckon was co-hosting Hort Connections in Brisbane in June. We had over 40 onion industry representatives attend our Onion Stream and I believe it was a real coup to be able to host Louis De Kock and his wife Cora from South Africa to come and talk about his vegetable growing business which included over 1000 acres of onions. Louis was most impressed with what he saw here in Australia - even considering buying some land here. He quickly changed his mind when we told him what it would cost to employ people.

Something else that happened throughout the year was that Lechelle (CEO), myself and Alan Thierry (deputy chair) attended a governance training day to get some better understanding on how to more effectively run an organisation. The training was really valuable and you will see small changes being implemented over the next few years, the first of which is the nomination process and voting for members of the Executive Committee. I personally think this adds a new level of professionalism to our Executive and will hopefully continue to attract quality people to put their hand up to help OA continue to be the voice for those in the onion industry.

Our five year strategic plan is now fully formalised with a heavy bias towards the export markets and plans are now underway to look at sending growers along to some of the large trade events held overseas each year. This will be a great opportunity for Australian onion producers to showcase our great products and hopefully continue to keep packing sheds profitable. Don't hesitate to call Lechelle if this is something that interests you.

So that's my second year wrap up. I wish you all well into the next harvest season and look forward to seeing you all somewhere in the great big blue shed.

Pete Shadbolt
Chair OA



From the Office

As yet another year draws to an end it's time to reflect back on a rather trying onion season.



High yields, poor prices and chemical access dramas have all led to a rather difficult year for growers, far from the exceptional season prior.

I've lost count of the number of growers with whom I've spoken during the year, only to hear them lament the lacklustre season.

It's heartbreaking to hear of the problems growers are facing on a day-in day-out basis, and it makes the role of the Onions Australia (OA) office even more challenging.

Everywhere I go I take the same message – try not to put anything in the ground that doesn't have a home to go to. Domestic gluts damage everyone – so we need to pull together to try to avoid that happening.

With that in mind, I've been involved in working towards a strong export focus for Aussie onions. The way I think, the more onions we can send overseas, the less oversupply there is on the domestic market, which has to be good for everyone.

I'm looking forward to OA developing a strong export plan, working in with Hort Innovation and the vegetable industry, to be able to showcase our premium onions to the world, identify frontier markets and introduce growers to international buyers.

Never before has export been such a keen focus of our industry, and rest assured that the office will be doing all that it can to capitalise on international opportunities.

The Australian onion industry is absolutely moving into new and uncharted territory – and I couldn't be more excited.

Continuing on with the international theme, as part of Hort Connections (which we again co-hosted), OA was honoured to host inspirational South African speaker Louis de Kock.

Louis' tales were mesmerising and so different from onion life here in Australia.

On the homefront, OA Chairman Peter Shadbolt has continued to work hard for our industry, and has demonstrated his ability to put the best interests of industry first and foremost.

Pete has been ably supported by a dedicated Executive Committee team, which is about to undergo a transformation through the new nomination and election system, as a result of the changes to the Constitution.

Again this is new territory for OA, and I look forward to assessing the interaction with members through this new process.

This year I've had a few people ask me – why should I be a member of OA?

To me, it's a no brainer. Who else – other than OA – prides itself on going in to bat for Aussie onion growers.

The issue surrounding access to Totril was a prime example of how OA works to serve Aussie onion growers.

OA took the lead role in working to locate an alternative supply, with strong support from industry. Many hours were spent generating – and finally receiving approval for – emergency importation and use permits, much to the relief of all involved.

It was yet another example of what a peak industry body can achieve for its growers.

And, as I said last year, OA again continues to be held up as an outstanding example of best value for money delivery of R&D funding direct to growers.

As 2018 draws to a close I would like to thank past OA chairmen Andrew Moon and Kees Versteeg for their service to the Executive Committee during recent years, following their decision to stand down from the committee. Michael Williams and Chris Eastwood have also opted not to renominate and I extend my thanks to them for their service.

I again take the chance to thank everyone who has contributed to OA during the past year, and I sincerely hope that as 2019 approaches your yields are bountiful and prices high.

Lechelle Earl
CEO OA

Farming without Totril

Australian onion growers were faced with a looming disaster after learning that Bayer had decided to withdraw Totril from the market.

Undoubtedly this was the biggest issue to hit the Australian onion industry in recent years, causing great concern among growers, with Onions Australia (OA) at the fore of trying to solve this issue.

Ioxynil (the key active in Totril) is a member of the benzonitrile class of herbicides and is used for the selective control of broadleaf weeds in onions. It is a Group C herbicide which acts as a photosynthetic electron transport inhibitor at the photosystem II, in certain broadleaf weeds.

Currently only ioxynil is approved for the post-emergent control of bell vine, burr medic, keeled goosefoot, ox-tongue, saffron thistle, slender celery and three flowered nightshade in onions in Australia.

Totril® Selective Herbicide (ioxynil) was registered for use in onions but no product was available in Australia due to Bayer Crop Sciences announcing earlier this year that it was ceasing supply globally.

Following this announcement, OA worked with representatives from RuralCo to source an alternative supply – much to the relief of industry.

Through this work, Arysta Lifesciences Australia agreed to seek a permit to allow importation of the product Ioxynil 225 EC from South Africa to cover the current situation.

As a result, OA, via Hort Innovation, also successfully sought to gain approval from the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) under an emergency use permit to allow the use of the ioxynil based product from South Africa.

Gaining approval to allow use of the South African formulation of ioxynil registered by Arysta, will provide growers with the means to better manage the weeds and lessen any impacts on yield or quality.

OA CEO Lechelle Earl said a great deal of work was done behind the scenes to try to ensure continuity of supply for growers.

“We understand that Bayer is in the process of selling the data package behind Totril, so in the future we hope that another company will be able to fulfil supply to Australian growers,” she said.



“In relation to the stop-gap measure of trying to access international stock, OA has taken the lead in working on access issues.

“While these things take time, the initial shipment of South African stock is about to arrive in Australia and we hope to have another land in coming weeks.

“This is a great outcome for Aussie onion growers and an example of the work of the peak industry body in achieving results for its levy payers.”

As many of you are aware, Bayer has taken the decision globally to exit Totril, the broadleaf selective herbicide for use in Onions. As discussed at the OA meeting in Brisbane during June, we are exploring divesting selected assets associated with Totril with the view that growers have the opportunity to continue to purchase the Totril brand in the future. The divestment process is well under way and a number of parties have expressed an interest in acquiring the selected assets associated with Totril. This process should be completed by mid-October. We thank the onion industry for their ongoing support and plan to continue supporting through our portfolio of products and services.

By Peter Sullivan

Bayer Grower and Channel Services Marketing Manager – Horticulture and Biologics

Tassie onion sector unites in face of herbicide upheaval

The old saying goes that ‘when the going gets tough, the tough get going,’ and that’s exactly the case for a group of forward thinking agronomists who hail from the Apple Isle.

Identifying a need to better coordinate the efforts of individual agronomists, the Tasmanian Onion Agronomy Group was officially formed in September 2017, and is led by Reg Miller Award winner, Tim Groom.

“We essentially started meeting because there were so many of us acting independently to get permits, we figured we’d be better off working together,” Mr Groom said.

“We’ve had good engagement so far, with meetings held every two or three months where we primarily focus on chemical registration and permits, as well as more general agronomic research and development.

Supported by local agronomists, including Doug Green from Serve-Ag, James Burbury from Sumich, and Chris Merry and Peter Targett from Agronico, the group reviewed and prioritised current agronomy issues in the Tasmanian onion industry, and agreed there was a desire to gain the use of Starane in onions for weed control.

With the assistance of OA and remaining industry funds in the National Residue Survey, the group commissioned agricultural research organisation Peracto to conduct two trials to assess crop safety, efficacy and residues.

The trials, conducted on the North West coast of Tasmania in 2017/18, evaluated herbicide use in brown onions and tested crop safety and efficacy against key broadleaf weeds. The trials produced the following results:

Starane Advanced (333 g/L fluroxypyr) was evaluated in sequential sprays in tank mixtures with other registered herbicides to onions between the one true leaf and six true leaf growth stages. It proved to have good safety for brown onions when

applied up to three times at 7-12 day intervals at rates between 100 and 200 mL/ha. When applied four times at rates between 200 and 400 mL/ha, it caused significant leaf necrosis, twisting and reduced bulb yield.

Starane Advanced, in tank mixtures with Totril 250 EC (250 g/L ioxynil) and Tribunil 700 WP (700 g/kg methabenzthiazuron) was effective against common broadleaf weeds including volunteer potatoes, blackberry nightshade, fat hen, fumitory and amaranthus.

Onion bulb samples were taken at harvest for analysis of Starane Advanced residues, results, which will be used to support the continued use of Starane Advanced in onions under permit.

In just 12 months the group has also been successful in gaining a one-year APVMA permit for the use of Starane in Tasmania, a permit for Verdict, and an amendment to the withholding period for Tramat.

Chairman Tim Groom humbly admits that the working group ‘kicked some goals’ quite quickly.

“There’s always been an understood level of support between those of us who provide onion agronomy in Tasmania because we essentially all have the same goal – to have Tasmania produce top quality onions,” he said.

Just 12 months ago, no member from the Tasmanian Agronomy Group could have predicted the role they’d play in 2018.

“Bayer announcing that it will no longer be selling Totril in Australia is a decision that could have a big impact on industry,” Mr Groom said.

“On the advice of Hort Innovation, OA with the assistance of the Tasmanian Onion Agronomy Group has submitted a



► Starane Advanced trial site in Tasmania showing most common use – two applications of Starane Advanced in a tank mixed with Totril 250 EC at 200 + 400 ML/ha.

proposal to the Hort Concept Funnel to carry out research work that can support and help develop a solid ‘Plan B.’”

The group’s proposal consists of three parts, including finding an alternative to Totril using registered or permitted herbicides, or mixtures of these.

“We’ve also proposed work to find new herbicides that might replace Totril, and there are several that are used in onions overseas and are registered in other crops in Australia that we’d suggest are good candidates.

“The final part of the proposal is around non-chemical weed control, including strip till and robotic weeding, where field work could be conducted in onions.”

With the further support of Peracto, Tim Groom said a small number of simple trials will be conducted in Tasmania during spring, looking at alternative registered herbicides to Totril.

“The ideal situation is to have someone else supply Totril, but we’re working towards trying to figure out long term solutions.”

Onions: A layered performance

Vegetable cluster consumer insights program MT17017, Research Provider: The Nielsen Company, Lead contact Chanel Day, Sydney



Tammy Tan
Senior Client Service Executive,
Nielsen

FROM BASIC INGREDIENT TO HERO OF THE DISH

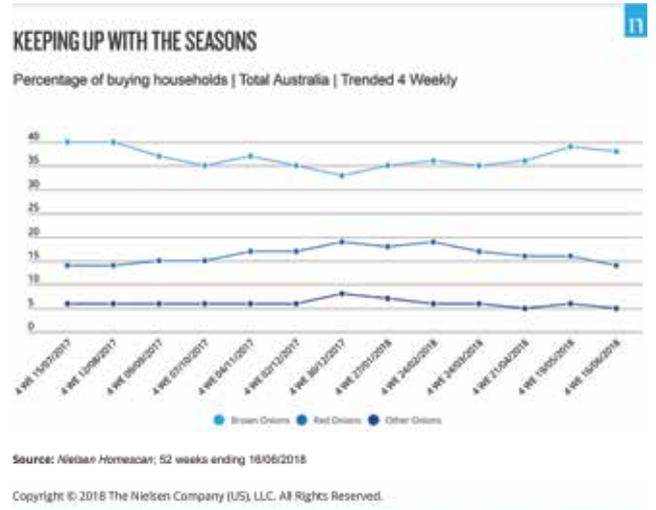
Onions are a staple ingredient found in most Australian kitchens: more than 90% of households purchased onions an average of ten times over the past year. However, recent sales trends show onions are at risk of devaluing. For the year leading up to 16 June 2018, dollar sales decreased by 6.2% while volume sales were flat (-0.5%). This means consumers paid less for the same amount, making it imperative that the onion category finds new levers to grow sales. In comparison, total vegetable sales decreased in dollar terms by 2.2% with volume stable at 1.0% for the same period.

Andrew Moon, co-owner of Moonrocks Australia, believes that marketing focused on educating consumers on how to eat onions is essential to secure future growth for the category. For example, despite coming from the same family, brown, red and other onions (such as white and pink onions), have a different taste and culinary use that is often influenced by seasonality and demographics.

KEEPING UP WITH THE SEASONS

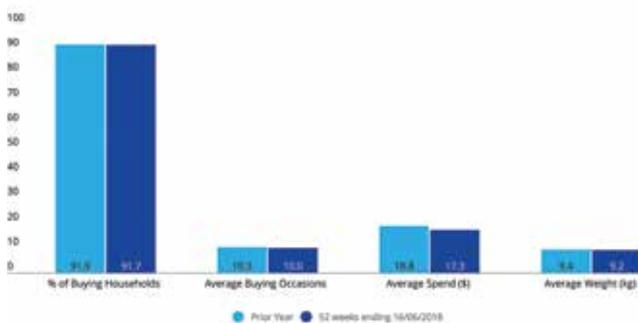
When looking at each four-week period, we see distinct seasonality shifts in terms of the types of onions purchased at different times of the year. More buyers purchase brown onions during winter, for use in soups and hearty meals. Meanwhile, red onions and other onions reflect more of a summer vibe, with use in salads and salsas during warmer months. Andrew Moon says there is an opportunity to better market the seasonality of onions and take advantage of the differences in growing regions that produce onions with varying flavour profiles.

The data shows that while most Australian households purchase onions at least once over the course of the year, the percentage of households purchasing onions each month is relatively low. If the average household increased its average purchase frequency by 0.5 times, this could add \$7.3 million to the onion category each year.



► Andrew Moon, co-owner of Moonrocks Australia

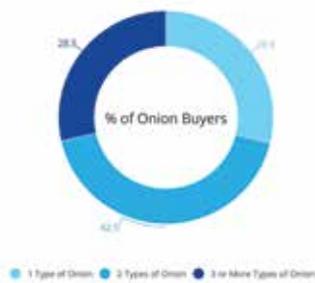
ONION KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS



THE CROSS-VARIETY OPPORTUNITY

Over the past year, brown onions made up the majority of the market, equalling 65% of total onion in dollar terms. During this same period almost three-in-ten (28.9%) onion buyers purchased just one variety, and a quarter (24%) of consumers who buy onions, only purchased brown onions. Strategies that entice consumers to buy across more onion types will provide an opportunity to drive future growth for the category.

NUMBER OF ONION VARIETIES PURCHASED



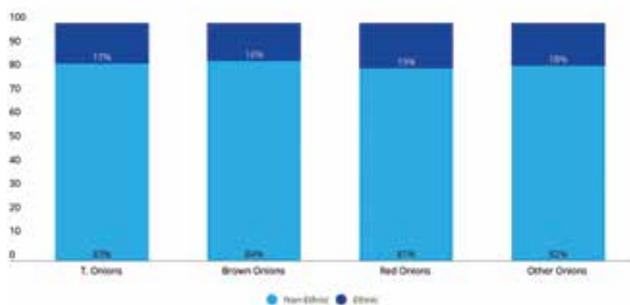
Source: Nielsen Homescan, 52 weeks ending 16/06/2018

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Regardless of type, onions have broad appeal across all demographic groups. However, a slight overtrade can be observed among ethnic households who purchased more red onions (19%) compared to brown onions (16%). Moon believes this may be the influence of the Bombay Red in India, which has a hot and spicy taste often associated with the cuisine in that region. By widening the cooking repertoires of Australians to span across a greater variety of cuisines, more cross-variety purchasing of onions might be achieved.

ONION VARIETIES BY ETHNICITY*

* Ethnicity defined by English and Non-English Speaking households



Source: Nielsen Homescan, 52 weeks ending 16/06/2018

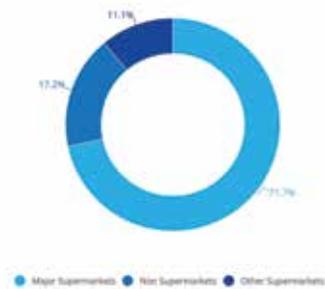
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FROM STORE TO PLATE

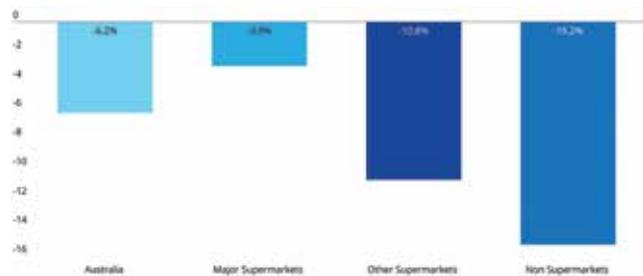
Major supermarkets hold 70% of the onion market in dollar sales. Over the past year, they maintained stable dollar sales whereas non-supermarkets declined at more than twice the rate of the national average. Major supermarkets were able to avoid the declines experienced in other channels by maintaining higher average prices.

ONION PERFORMANCE BY RETAILER

Retailer Dollar (\$) Share of Trade



Retailer Dollar (\$) Growth



Source: Nielsen Homescan, 52 weeks ending 16/06/2018

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Source: Nielsen Homescan, 52 weeks ending 16/06/2018

Note:

- Major Supermarkets are defined here as the sum of Woolworths, Coles and Aldi
- Other Supermarkets are defined here as all other full service supermarkets
- Non Supermarkets are defined here as green grocers, markets and specialty stores

Onion data at your doorstep: Harvest to Home is here

Vegetable cluster consumer insights program MT17017, Research Provider: The Nielsen Company, Lead contact Chanel Day, Sydney

**A new data tool to help you better connect with customers
Getting to know Harvest to Home with Chanel Day, Associate Director, Nielsen.**



Chanel Day
Associate Director, Nielsen

Did you know that 91.7% of Australian households purchased onions in the past year? Or that three-in-ten of these buying households purchased only one onion variety in the past 12 months?

WHAT IS THE HARVEST TO HOME PROJECT?

Harvest to Home is an analytics tool, developed by Nielsen and Hort Innovation, which shares insights like these in one simple and mobile-friendly dashboard. It's public, free and simple to use, leveraging the investment of levy funds for vegetable, sweet potato and onion growers.

What insights can growers gain from the Harvest to Home data?

Harvest to Home provides a depth of insight on marketing performance and shopper behaviour for 28 vegetable categories, and is a go-to tool for Australian growers. The dashboard enables growers to become more informed about market opportunities, and better understand customers' specific needs, enabling industry conversations across the supply chain.

WHAT CAN PEOPLE EXPECT TO FIND WHEN VISITING THE DASHBOARD?

In addition to the hundreds of data points available in the dashboard, case studies and insights on specific vegetables are continually uploaded. All the information can be downloaded for you to keep and refer to at a later time. It can also be viewed on multiple devices, including smartphones, tablets and desktop computers.

HOW WILL ACCESSING THE HARVEST TO HOME DATA BENEFIT ONION GROWERS AND THEIR BUSINESSES IN THE FUTURE?

Having access to these consumer behaviour insights will help growers and marketers of onions and other vegetables to better adapt to market trends and keep up-to-date with the needs and expectations of the modern Australian shopper.

For the latest insights on onions and other vegetables, visit the Harvest to Home dashboard at www.harvesttohome.net.au

Thanks for welcoming me to the onion family

For those of you who I'm yet to meet in person, I'm Sam Turner – the onion industry's new Relationship Manager at Hort Innovation.

I've taken over the reins from Brad Mills, who has moved into other portfolios within the organisation.

A bit about me: I've been with Hort Innovation for around 18 months, initially holding roles with the vegetable and melon industries. Prior to Hort Innovation, I was a production agronomist working with a large Australian seed company growing Umbelliferae, brassica and onion seeds. I also have experience in live export and a background in agricultural science.

I'm excited to be working with the onion industry from a relationship management perspective and see great opportunity to support the industry to help drive returns for growers. I'm looking forward to helping implement a dynamic R&D program that ultimately builds increased profitability, and I plan on working closely with the industry's Marketing Manager at Hort

Innovation, Samantha Ferguson, to further support marketing efforts to help build domestic demand for Australian onions.

As well as supporting the onion industry, I'll be continuing my relationship management role for vegetables, as well as processing tomatoes and the apple and pear industry. From this perspective, I'm excited to drive a vegetable cluster approach to R&D investment, which I hope will lead to greater collaboration with levy funds to deliver efficiencies for all.

Please feel free to reach out to me any time at sam.turner@horticulture.com.au or on 0418 164 717. I also encourage you to:

- **Keep connected with all investments in the Hort Innovation Onion Fund** and the latest things happening in them by checking out our regular Hortlink publication – you



▶ Sam Turner - Relationship Manager Hort Innovation

can always access the latest edition from the onion grower page at www.horticulture.com.au/onion

- **Submit ideas for the research you want to see in the Onion Fund**, or in Hort Frontiers, which is Hort Innovation's strategic partnership initiative. Learn more about doing this and access the idea submission form at www.horticulture.com.au/innovation-concept-pipeline.
- **Become a Hort Innovation member.** Paying a levy doesn't automatically make you a member, but signing up is free at www.horticulture.com.au/membership. As well as providing voting rights at the organisation's Annual General Meeting, Hort Innovation membership includes exclusive email alerts with industry-specific news and opportunities, direct invitations to explore investment updates and more.

If it's onions and shallots you need, Magnus Kahl Seeds has you covered.



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How to improve control of onion thrips with fewer insecticides

IPM extension program – onion and potato MT16009, Research Provider: IPM Technologies, Lead contact Paul Horne, Hurstbridge

An integrated pest management (IPM) extension project is delivering exciting results for onion producers in growing regions around Australia.

Entomologists Dr Paul Horne, Jessica Page and Angelica Cameron from IPM Technologies are working with growers and agronomists to demonstrate how IPM can deliver improved control of onion pests (particularly thrips) with reduced insecticide inputs.

IPM is a highly effective approach to pest management that combines all available control measures rather than just relying on chemicals. IPM utilises biological control agents (predators, parasites and pathogens of pests) and cultural controls (management techniques) as the primary means of controlling pests, with chemicals used only as a support tool when necessary.

IPM Technologies has been helping growers of a diverse range of crops to develop and implement IPM since the company was established in 1992. This work has included helping onion growers to minimise insecticide use and in most cases eliminating insecticide applications for thrips.

WHAT HAS THE PROJECT DELIVERED SO FAR?

This five-year project, *IPM extension program - onion and potato (MT16009)*, funded by Hort Innovation using the onion, fresh potato and processing potato levies, with contributions from the Australian Government, aims to help onion and potato growers achieve better control of invertebrate pests while reducing their reliance on insecticides. The project introduces growers and agronomists to the concept of IPM and then offers field training and regular phone and email support to help them trial the approach on their own farms or with their clients.

The project team has already delivered IPM workshops in South Australia, Victoria, Tasmania, New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia, with more to follow during the next three years. In the 2017/18 season they supported growers and agronomists to conduct on-farm IPM demonstration trials at over 25 sites in Victoria and South Australia. For the

2018/19 growing season this service has been extended to production regions in Queensland, Tasmania and Western Australia.

ON-FARM IPM TRIALS DELIVER EXCELLENT RESULTS

The 2017/18 onion IPM demonstration trials were highly successful. Participating growers were interested to trial IPM because they had observed decreasing efficacy of insecticide applications targeting thrips in recent years. They had found themselves barely able to keep thrips damage below an acceptable level, despite spraying more and more (typically every 7-10 days).

The IPM strategies trialled by onion growers focused on cultural controls (mainly soil management techniques) aimed at bulking up populations of naturally-occurring predatory mites and beetles that feed on onion thrips and other pests. For the strategies to work, they also needed to minimise the use of the broad-spectrum insecticides that kill these predators.

Each participating grower tried a slightly different approach, but they were all successful in building up populations of predators that helped to control thrips and other pests. They got to see for themselves that if they incorporate cultural and biological controls into their pest management programs and eliminate insecticide sprays altogether (or use only one or two applications of a selective product), then it is possible to achieve equal or better results than a conventional spray-based approach.

GROWERS AND AGRONOMISTS WON'T RETURN TO HEAVY SPRAYING AFTER TRIALLING IPM

Most growers and advisors are interested in an approach that reduces reliance on insecticides. However, they remain sceptical until they have seen the results first-hand in a commercial crop. This project is successfully facilitating uptake of IPM by providing the personalised support that growers and advisors require to trial

something completely unfamiliar and seemingly impossible.



► Angelica Cameron shows growers Kevin and Yvonne Smith how to find and identify naturally occurring predatory mites and beetles that feed on onion thrips (top). Examples of such predators include Parasitus mites (centre) and rove beetles (bottom).

Having seen that they can achieve better results using fewer sprays, all participating onion growers have indicated that they will adopt the approach across their whole farms going forward. Where local agronomists were involved in the trials, they were impressed with the results and many are now promoting the approach to other clients. These agronomists have gained confidence in IPM and developed practical skills in making IPM decisions and giving IPM advice. They are already playing a critical role in driving further interest in IPM and they are excellent candidates to facilitate ongoing uptake of IPM in onions beyond the life of this extension project.



▶ ABOVE: Dr Paul Horne with growers Jarryd Dolling and Shane Ebert and EE Muir & Sons agronomist Hendri Meyer at Dolling Produce IPM trial site near Naracoorte in South Australia.

▶ Typical appearance of unsprayed bulbs at harvest from IPM trial at Dolling produce (left) compared to typical appearance of bulbs at harvest from neighbouring crop that suffered heavy thrips damage despite being sprayed with insecticides every 7-10 days (right).

BIOLOGICAL SERVICES



Thrips control in stored onions

Cucumeris predatory mites applied to bins of red onions at harvest increased first grade packout by 30–50%. SARDI trials 2007 & 2008.

Orders must be placed at least 4 weeks prior to intended use.

For more information contact **BIOLOGICAL SERVICES**

Phone: 08 8584 6977 Fax: 08 8584 5057

Email: info@biologicalservices.com.au WEB: www.biologicalservices.com.au

Peeling back the layers of market orientation

New research from the University of Queensland suggests the Australian onion industry is leaving money on the table by not connecting the dots between consumers and the farm gate.

As part of her recently-completed Master of Agribusiness Lavinia ToVue produced a report exploring the adoption of market orientation (MO) in the Australian onion industry.

Published in June 2018, the report, which defined MO as a customer-centred approach to production and marketing, found a “lower than normal” adoption of MO within the Australian onion industry.

“Given the decline in trade revenues over the past decade, marketing has become a focus for the Australian onion industry,” Ms ToVue said.

“As consumers’ needs and expectations are changing faster than ever, MO businesses aim to exceed customer expectations, track product delivery and respond promptly to the changing needs of the market.

“Organisations that are continually gathering information on their customers’ preferences are in a better position to take advantage of opportunities as they arise.”



DIGGING INTO THE DETAIL

According to the study onions have traditionally been purchased “without much thought or involvement” from the consumer, presenting an opportunity to “reengage and potentially increase per capita consumption”.

“There is a belief that producers should focus on producing, and those at the other end of the chain will worry about marketing,” Ms ToVue said.

“Consumers have their own view of quality in relation to size, shape, variety and value-added products, but many respondents believed the onus was on the consumer to provide that feedback.”

While there is no benchmark for what makes a successful MO value chain, Ms ToVue said there were clear indicators.

“If we were collecting feedback, consumers would be the biggest indicator of how satisfied they are with the product. There needs to be engagement at the point of purchase,” Ms ToVue said.

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS TO ADOPTION

In order to take the next step, Ms ToVue highlighted relationship building as the key.

“The barriers are multifaceted; it can be expensive for an individual business to collect market information as it can mean installing new computer systems or employing an extra person; another hurdle is awareness – not all farmers are aware of or understand the different approaches to marketing or their role in it,” Ms ToVue said.

“Implementation comes down to the kinds of relationships along the value chain – it relies on wholesalers and retailers collecting the data and passing it back up the chain, and then growers engaging with that information.”

Recommendations ranged from conducting further evaluations on how to overcome resistance within an organisation, and developing a step-by-step guide to adopting MO principles.

“Little is known about the domestic onion market, consumer trends and their impact on purchases, therefore investment in industry-specific market research could identify opportunities for small producers, particularly in niche markets.”

This research was conducted as part of a Master of Agribusiness project at the University of Queensland’s School of Agriculture and Food Sciences, under the supervision of Agribusiness Lecturer Dr Phillip Currey, Australia’s leading authority on market orientation in agribusiness.

Please direct any enquiries to p.currey@uq.edu.au

► Lavinia ToVue

INFINITO® - NEW FUNGICIDE MODES OF ACTION INVALUABLE FOR SA GROWER



The Murray River in South Australia is a good place to grow onions, but it does bring with it a particular set of challenges, mainly around disease management.

That's because, as Swan Reach grower Peter Dettloff explains, being located in the river valley means his property receives a sea breeze most nights during the growing season.

"It does help cool things down overnight, but it also brings its fair share of issues with humid air and a high risk of downy mildew outbreaks," he says.

Mr Dettloff says the impact of downy mildew can be severe, depending on how the disease is managed.

"If you're not vigilant with regular inspections of your crop and nipping it in the bud at the early stage, you can get very significant crop loss," he explains.

"I'm in my crop basically every day of the week monitoring for outbreaks and as soon as I see something, we undertake a control program as soon as possible.

"Having said that, we maintain a fairly vigilant preventative program with regular preventative fungicides to keep the disease out in the first place."

Mr Dettloff says downy mildew resistance to fungicides has been a concern, as up until recently there have been a small number of active ingredients available in the marketplace to control the disease.

"The fact it's new chemistry is very significant – the biggest problem we've had with a lot of the current downy mildew controls is basically there's only two main active ingredients that suit our system," he explains.

"We applied INFINITO once and we got very good control, very effective – the plants that I'd identified in the crop that had downy mildew symptoms were definitely cleaned up in one application.

"It meant we didn't have to follow up and try to control downy mildew when the crop was at the crop fall stage.

"If you've got mildew still active inside the canopy once the canopy starts to fall and close, it's near enough to impossible to control," he explains.

INFINITO also showed good compatibility when the Dettloffs applied it on the downy mildew-affected crop, putting the product out with foliar nutrient to give the crop a boost.

However, compatibility wasn't the only bonus Mr Dettloff found with the new product.

"The fact it has only a seven-day withholding period meant that I would have no issues with chemical residue once the crop was harvested."

Perhaps the most significant aspect to the registration of INFINITO in the market is the options it will give growers to manage disease resistance.

"Disease resistance is a big issue, so as a grower you certainly look at trying to bring anything with new chemistry into the program to minimise those issues – it's a great step forward for the industry as a whole."

Mr Dettloff says the new chemistry in particular brings benefits to smaller operations like his.

"We can't afford to lose crop for whatever reason, basically we try and get a return off of every acre we grow.

"Using INFINITO as part of a disease management program to make sure we don't crop with severe downy mildew outbreaks is going to be very advantageous for us I believe."

More information on INFINITO can be found at crop.bayer.com.au/infinito

Focus on export

Faced with an oversupplied domestic market, export has become the only growth opportunity for many Australian growers this season, and Asia Fruit Logistica 2018 offered a welcome gateway to potential business in a growing Asian market.

Held in Hong Kong in September, Asia Fruit Logistica provided a forum for fresh vegetable growers throughout the supply chain to network and build relationships with potential and existing customers.

Queensland onion grower Andrew Moon attended the event and said it was a great opportunity to gauge world trends.

“It’s all about who’s buying, what they are prepared to pay, whether the volumes are right, where the shortages are, whether it’s feasible to supply and what specifications of products they are chasing,” Mr Moon said.

Similarly, for Jim Ertler from Premium Fresh in Tasmania, Fruit Logistica is a base for networking with existing customers, sourcing new markets and exploring export opportunities.

“It’s a central point to gain a global perspective of the industry and build relationships with potential buyers in the expanding Asian market,” Mr Ertler said.

“Scoping export opportunities is important as the domestic market for onions is quite static, so to be able to keep the domestic market buoyant, we need be moving product overseas.”

For Andrew Moon, having a focus on marketing is key to achieving export goals.

“Previously it was okay to plant a crop not necessarily having a market in mind, yet now the biggest thing for me is having a market for the seeds to go to before you put them in the ground,” he said.

“One of these channels is through export obviously. It’s critical to have this opportunity in your business.

“There are a lot of suppliers out of Australia that have begun exporting in the last few years and this is driven by the fact that they can’t move produce through the domestic market.

“Asia Fruit Logistica opens your eyes to what’s happening, and whether it suits your business model or your margins, there’s always huge interest and ample opportunity to collaborate and locate buyers.”

With most orders currently coming through brokers, Asia Fruit Logistica gave Pennie Patane, owner of Patane Produce in WA, the opportunity to promote their farm and establish potential contacts directly.

“Having previously exported to the Middle East and Europe, the Asian market is nearby, it’s close, it’s quick and it’s a market we could supply for a fair amount of the year,” Ms Patane said.

Hort Innovation is currently consulting with identified export-focused growers, in partnership with OA, to develop options for next steps for investments in trade activities for the industry.



▶ Andrew Moon from Moonrocks at Asia Fruit Logistica



▶ Onions on a stand at Asia Fruit Logistica



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2018 Reg Miller Award Winner: Lewis Lydon

Lewis Lydon – considered one of the Australian onion industry’s biggest supporters – has been awarded the 2018 Reg Miller Award.

January 2019 marks Lewis’ 30th anniversary in the vegetable seed industry as a plant breeder focused primarily on allium crops.

Born and raised in Brisbane, he studied a Bachelor of Agricultural Science at the University of Queensland and upon graduating, he headed for the chilly climes of Narromine, New South Wales.

There he joined Arthur Yates and Co – before it became known as Yates Vegetable Seeds – as an assistant onion plant breeder, and it wasn’t long before he took on the role of plant breeder responsible for the onion plant breeding program. In this role, he was responsible for the breeding and product development of a range of Yates hybrid onions in domestic and export markets in South Africa, South America and the United States.

During this time the first Yates hybrids, including Gladiator and Destiny were released, and Lewis was also involved with tomato and cabbage seed breeding, releasing a very successful hybrid that was marketed in the Middle East.

In October 2003, the commercial vegetable seeds division of Yates were sold to Enza Zaden, and lucky for Enza Zaden, that came with a highly respected onion breeding manager named Lewis Lydon

Lewis has worked for them ever since, and today is responsible for the company’s International Onion Breeding Program for Australia, New Zealand, the United States and Europe – essentially breeding for all major international onion seed markets.

In more recent times, Lewis was elected to the OA Executive in 2015 and remains part of the group today.

Those who have worked alongside Lewis describe him as a professional that growers are instantly enthralled with and enamoured by, always keen to share his passion and knowledge of the onion sector.



Long-time colleague and mentor Dr Richard Jones – also a previous Reg Miller Award recipient – says he has fond memories of his time working with Lewis and watching him develop into a star of the commercial breeding sector.

“Working with Lewis was an adventure because he had such marvellous, big ideas of what could be achieved,” Richard said.

“He had endless suggestions on how best to achieve these goals, and he’s always animated when shown an onion or a new trial or meets new growers – he truly loves what he does.

“His recall of information always astounded me too, especially his knowledge of geography in the Narromine and Dubbo areas. It makes him a fierce debater – he’s always ready to argue the benefits or otherwise of his favourite crop with anyone, anywhere.

“Those that socialise with Lewis know he’s a lot of fun off the onion paddock too. There’s an urban myth that one of the many talents he possesses is the ability to stand on his head and drink any beverage supplied to him!

“Beyond the professional and social accolades however, he is above all a very kind and caring person who is generous with his time and knowledge. He truly loves life and is a devoted father to his daughters.”

THE HISTORY OF THE REG MILLER AWARD



The Reg Miller Award is the onion industry's highest honour.

Open to anyone passionate about the industry, the award recognises people who have made outstanding contributions to the Australian onion industry.

The award is named in honour of Reg Miller, a South Australian who helped found OA. He worked on the family farm for some 20 years, served with the Australian Infantry in Darwin during WWII and throughout his life did committee work with grower associations, including OA.

Nominations for the Reg Miller Award are open all year round, and close of the 1st of August each year. The award is not presented every year; only when suitable nominations are received.

Lewis Lydon is in good company - past recipients:

- 2016 Andrew Moon
- 2015 Dean Metcalf
- 2014 Brian Bonde
- 2012 Richard Jones
- 2011 Peter Ivankovich
- 2010 Steve Rathjen
- 2009 Trevor Wicks
- 2008 Ken Jackson
- 2007 Don Fawkner
- 2006 Tony Rumsey
- 2003 Reg Ruge
- 2002 Timothy Shadbolt
- 2000 Tim Groom

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Post emergent from 1 leaf stage.**

**Lorox™
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**Broad weed spectrum.
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**Post emergent after 2 leaf.
Multiple applications.**



BLADEX®
900 WG HERBICIDE

**Proven favourite in Tasmania.
Post emergent after 2 leaf stage.**



**Supporting
Australian
onion
growers**

Secret Serve campaign success ensures new phase of marketing magic

2015 delivered an industry first marketing campaign for the onion sector in the form of the Secret Serve campaign: a targeted three-year PR promotion to get households with children aged between four and 12 eating more onions.

Deemed a success, the campaign has been extended with a 12 month focus on engaging not just 'small scale families' but families of all shapes and sizes throughout Australia.

Hort Innovation Marketing Manager Samantha Ferguson said the key objectives of the next phase of the Secret Serve remain the same but will be engaging with a broader audience.

"At the core of the campaign is the desire to inspire the usage of onions in home prepared meals and ensure that onions are seen as a reliable, affordable, healthy, flavoursome staple of the family meal," Ms Ferguson said.

"Through survey work done earlier this year we know we've made some significant inroads on this front to date.

"88% of respondents agreed with the statement that when prepared in the right way, onions are an easy way to include another serve of vegetables in a meal for kids.

"And more than 73% of the surveyed target market said they felt encouraged to cook more with onions after seeing the Secret Serve campaign."

AUSTRALIAN
onions

2015-2018 Secret Serve results summary (Nielsen Homescan Data)

- Small scale families (households with oldest child 6-11 years) are buying 13.61% more onions compared to three years ago
- Overall, households are buying 0.8% more onions compared to three years ago
- Overall shoppers are buying onions 10.3 times a year which has been steady over the last three years
- Amongst small scale families, the number of shopping trips where onions were purchased has increased to 10.4 per year compared to 9.8 three years ago
- Small scale families' share of total onion volume has increased to 11% compared to 9.6% in 2014
- Overall, consumers are shopping more frequently for onions, and buying more KG per trip





SECRET SERVE: NEXT STEPS

The fourth year of the Secret Serve will continue to build on the successful social media profile developed in the original phase of the project, as well as facilitate the development of 15 new recipes and continued consumer research.

“These cornerstone elements of the project will ensure a more focused plan for the remainder of the year,” Ms Ferguson said.

“We’ll have a broader target market for 2018-19 however, which means strengthening key messages, including putting further emphasis on value for money – with an aim to ultimately grow domestic consumption by giving consumers more reasons to buy Australian onions more frequently.”

“Off the back of the Nielsen data, we know there is an opportunity to encourage consumers to buy more than one variety

of onion throughout the year – recipe inspiration is one way to focus on this. Hence, we’ve developed a series of new recipes with a selection of these featuring more than one onion variety.”

ONIONS AND THE BROADER MARKETING SPACE

Exciting new elements will also be included in the next chapter of the marketing program for onions, including a pilot Foodservice Farm Tour.

“This project is run with great success in other industries and is designed specifically for industry professionals, with growers’ sharing invaluable knowledge and educational information, and attendees leaving with an increased understanding of the industry supply chain,” Ms Ferguson said.

“The pilot trial for the onion industry will involve one visit with chefs and hospitality professionals to an Australian onion

farm, with the aim of giving them greater confidence in their culinary literacy around onions and also a greater understanding of the health benefits.”

More details on this project will be announced soon.

Tenders have also recently closed for two foodservice research projects that will be carried out as multi-industry efforts with the avocado and mushroom industries.

“One is a custom study to understand which foodservice channels are using these ingredients, how much they use each week/year, where on their menu these ingredients appear, what the barriers to using these ingredients in foodservice are, and what the opportunities for more use might be,” Ms Ferguson said.

“Establishing the benchmark will then allow tracking of the impact of activities focused toward specific channels in the future, which is a great opportunity for the onion industry.”

By understanding the foodservice market size, the onion industry will be able to understand what opportunities exist and then build a strategy for the future.

The second project includes a two-year subscription for a syndicated market report of the Australian foodservice industry. The report presents data and insights on the channels that make up foodservice (ie: cafes, pubs, hotels, restaurants etc), their value and volume, their growth potential and general food trends.

“Researching this landscape is crucial to understanding the usage and attitudes in Australian foodservice and will enable a targeted approach to get more onions into the hands of more chefs,” Samantha Ferguson said.

Want to learn more?
Visit the www.australianonions.com.au

Or contact Marketing Manager
Samantha Ferguson at
Samantha.Ferguson@horticulture.com.au

Instagram: AussieOnions
Facebook: AustralianOnions

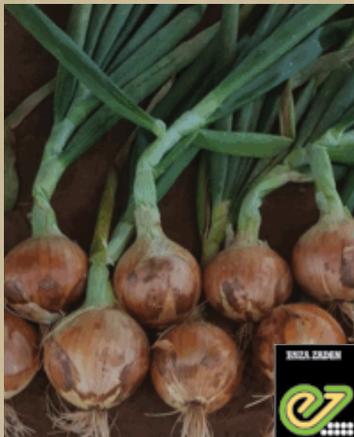


Thinking Onion Seeds? Think **Terranova** & **Enza Zaden**!

Introducing **Copperhead** our new innovative short day brown variety.

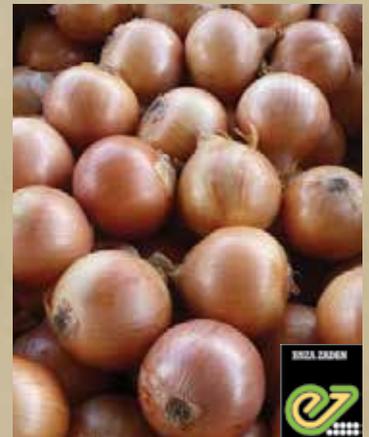
COPPERHEAD Hybrid Brown Onion

Early short day type
Very strong bolting tolerance for its type
Uniformly globe shape with extra skins and firmness for its type
The Blue Green foliage has shown strong tolerance to downy mildew and field tolerance to herbicide applications.



GRENADE Hybrid Brown Onion

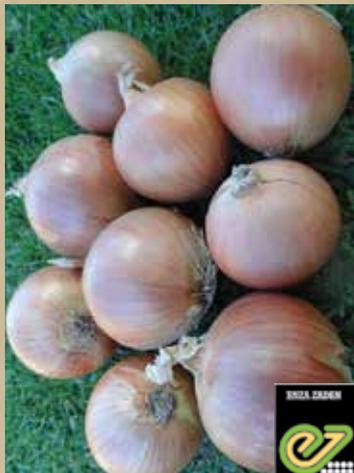
Mid maturity Short Day brown onion
Excellent colour and skin retention
Excellent firmness
Very good storage potential
Medium uniform globe shaped bulbs.



Proven & reliable performers from **ENZA Zaden**.

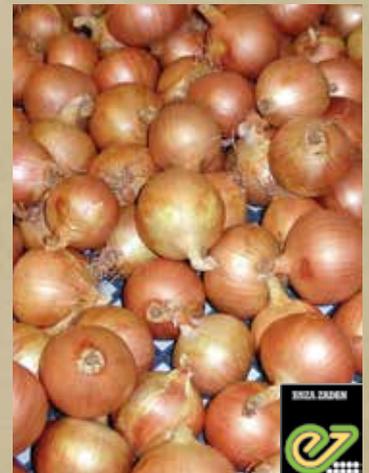
LUCINDA Hybrid Brown Onion

Consistent medium shaped onion with excellent colour
Improved skin retention and storage ability
Ideally sown mid / late May for good yield potential.



PYTHON Hybrid Brown Onion

Uniform globe, medium to large size
Thin necks
Very good storage for an onion in this timeslot.



Sales Orders: Phone: (02) 9725 1088 Fax: (02) 9725 1066. For production guides and cultural notes visit www.terravaseeds.com.au

Nth Queensland/NT
Shaun Todd
Mobile: **0437 890 920**
SE Queensland
Michael Sippel
Mobile: **0418 479 062**

**Coastal SE QLD/
Nthn NSW/Wide Bay
Burnett Regions**
Steven Williams
Mobile: **0407 256 521**
New South Wales
Charlie Vella
Mobile: **0419 286 370**

Victoria
Greg Hall
National Product
Development Manager
Dry Seeds
0417 227 873
Nick Mitchell
0418 532 650

Tasmania
Andy Doran
0497 999 987
South Australia
Greg Bragg
0419 635 548
Western Australia
Danie Oosthuizen
0417 930 233

Terranova
SEEDS



Thinking Onion Seeds? Think **Terranova** & **Enza Zaden**!

Introducing **Monastrell** our latest high quality intermediate red variety.

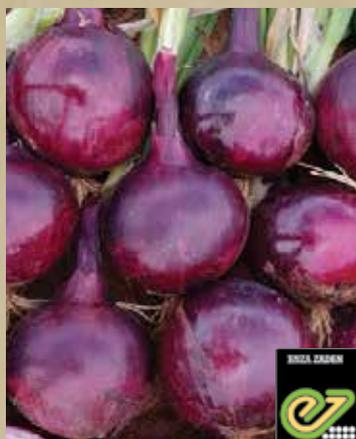
MONASTRELL Hybrid Red Onion

High yielding,
intermediate day
red onion

Extremely dark red
colour with good
gloss

Globe shaped with
high degree of single
centre bulbs

Strong root vigour.



OLIVINE Hybrid Brown Onion

Performs well in
Murray Brown
timeslot

Dark, glossy
brown colour with
excellent skin

Good vigour with
high yield potential

Excellent storage
potential.



Proven & reliable performers from **ENZA Zaden**.

PLUTONUS Hybrid Brown Onion

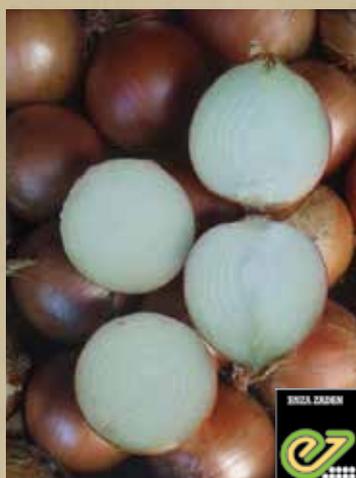
Excellent dark brown
colour

Produces very firm,
uniform high globe
bulbs

Extremely good
storage potential

Foliage is large and
vigorous and strong
against Mildew

Should be trialed in
the late part of the
PLK timeslot.



SAMANTHA Hybrid Brown Onion

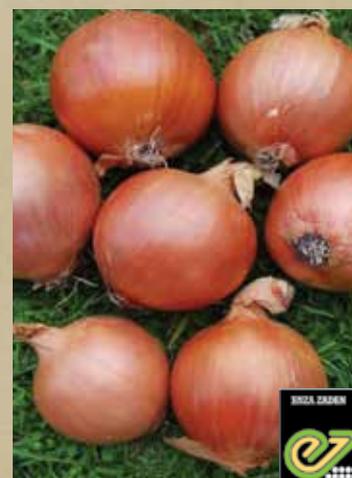
Uniform medium to
large (70-100mm+)

Attractive dark
golden brown skins

Excellent bulb
firmness

Medium to long t
erm storage

Sow mid September
– early October for
February – March
harvest.



Sales Orders: Phone: (02) 9725 1088 Fax: (02) 9725 1066. For production guides and cultural notes visit www.terrnovaseeds.com.au

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Western Australia
Danie Oosthuizen
0417 930 233



Stopping biosecurity threats in their tracks: Resources to help you protect your farm, your region and the onion industry

Onion project VN15001, Research Provider: Plant Health Australia, Lead contact David Gale, Canberra

Onion growers now have tailored advice on recommended farm biosecurity practices to minimise the risk of introducing and spreading pests, diseases and weeds and help protect farms, regions and the onion industry.

The Onion Growers' Biosecurity Manual, launched in April 2018, is for onion growers and staff, as well as contractors, researchers and consultants working in the industry. The manual includes simple procedures that can be used in day-to-day operations to improve farm biosecurity.

The manual focuses on how onion growers can address biosecurity risks related to:

- Pests and diseases already in Australia that are restricted to particular growing regions
- Exotic pests and diseases that could potentially impact onion growers if they were to enter and become established in Australia.

Also covered in the manual are new state-based biosecurity laws and the responsibilities of every onion grower. It contains a biosecurity checklist that includes measures intended to prevent the entry, establishment and spread of both regionalised and exotic pests of onions.

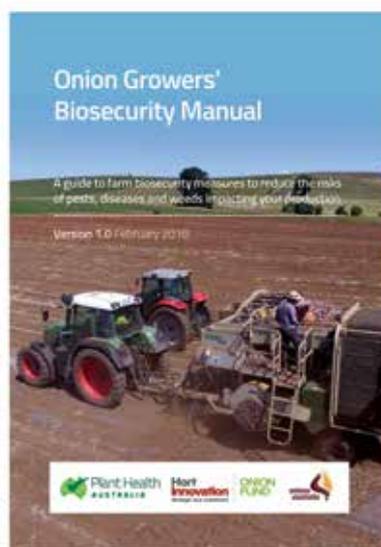
Case studies about the on-farm biosecurity practices used to eradicate onion smut and to contain the established onion disease white rot are included, along with fact sheets on established and exotic pests of onions.

Six biosecurity essentials

Consider these areas when thinking about implementing biosecurity measures on your farm.

1. People, vehicles and equipment
2. Farm inputs
3. Production practices
4. Farm outputs
5. Feral animals and weeds
6. Train, plan and record

Advice from growers and key industry representatives – including OA CEO Lechelle Earl, Executive Committee Chairman Peter Shadbolt and executive members Andrew Moon and Dean Metcalf – was sought to develop the manual and make sure it meets the needs of onion growers.



GROWER WORKSHOP

A workshop on how growers can get the most value out of the Onion Growers' Biosecurity Manual was held on the onion levy payers' day, which was organised to coincide with Hort Connections in Brisbane in June 2018. The workshop highlighted some of the simple, inexpensive and effective modifications that can be made to everyday activities to significantly decrease the risks to the health of your crop.

ANNUAL REVIEWS

As part of the five-year national biosecurity project with Plant Health Australia, annual meetings will review any new pests that may threaten the onion industry and assess biosecurity priorities. This will help ensure that the 44 activities recommended in the national biosecurity plan for the onion industry are being implemented by government and industry.

OTHER BIOSECURITY RESOURCES

The following resources are available for onion producers on the Farm Biosecurity website via www.farmbiosecurity.com.au

- Biosecurity checklist
- Farm biosecurity sign
- FarmBiosecurity app
- Onion Growers' Biosecurity Manual
- Pest surveillance sheet
- Visitor register

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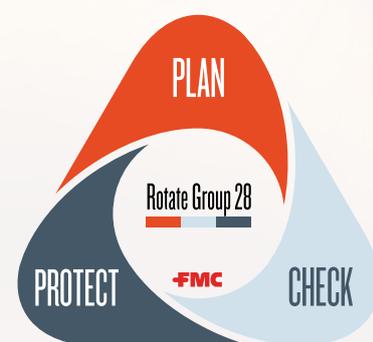
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Minor use permits for the onion industry

Onion industry minor use program VN16000, Research Provider: Hort Innovation, Lead contact Jodie Pedrana, Brisbane

While the use of pesticides and other chemicals in the horticulture industry is being modified through the increasing uptake of integrated pest management approaches, there remains a need for the strategic use of specific chemicals.

Chemical companies submit use patterns for product label registrations to the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA), and the onion industry is generally provided with a number of registrations because of its 'major' crop status in this area. However, there are instances where chemical companies consider the market size too small to generate adequate commercial

returns, based on the R&D investment required. This is where minor use permits come into play. The APVMA's national permit system adds some flexibility to the approval process and provides a legal framework that can allow access to products for minor-use purposes.

Through the *Onion industry minor use program (VN16000)* in the Hort Innovation Onion Fund, the onion R&D levy and Australian Government contributions are used to submit renewals and applications for these minor use permits to the APVMA, as required.

All current permits for the industry are in the table below. Before use, it is recommended that you confirm the details of the permits through the APVMA website at <https://portal.apvma.gov.au/permits>

UPCOMING MINOR USE PERMITS

When available, details on any newly issued or renewed permits are circulated in Hort Innovation's Growing Innovation e-newsletter, which levy-paying members receive monthly. Not a member? Sign up to the free membership program at www.horticulture.com.au/membership. Any new or renewed permits will also be searchable, along with all other current permits for the industry, at <https://portal.apvma.gov.au/permits>.

CURRENT PERMITS

Permit IDS	Description	Date Issued	Expiry Date	Permit Holder
PER13119 Version 4	Diazinon / Onions / Onion thrips TAS only	06-Mar-12	31-July-20	AOIA C/Hort Innovation
PER14602 Version 4	Boscalid (Filan), Iprodione (Rovral Aquaflo) & Chlorothalonil (Bravo) / Onion seed & Onions / Neck Rot (<i>Botrytis alli</i>)	24-Jul-14	30-Sep-23	AOIA C/Hort Innovation
PER13698 Version 3	Phosphorous acid / Lettuce (leaf and hydroponic), Fennel and Bulb (Alliums) Vegetables – bulb onion, garlic, leek, shallot, spring onion and tree onion / Downy Mildew	01-Oct-12	30-Sep-22	Hort Innovation
PER14773 Version 3	Bentazone-sodium (Basagran) / Onions / Broadleaf weeds	16-Apr-14	31-Jan-23	AOIA C/Hort Innovation
PER80282 Version 2	Alpha-Cypermethrin / Onions / Onion thrips	16-Dec-14	30-Nov-20	AOIA C/Hort Innovation
PER84734	Haloxyfop (Verdict) / Bulb onions / Storksbill & various weeds	19-Dec-17	31-Dec-21	AOIA C/Hort Innovation
PER85484	Fluroxypyr (Starane Advanced Herbicide) / Bulb onions / Broadleaf weeds as per label Emergency permit issued for TAS only	30-Nov-17	1-Dec-18	AOIA
PER84808	Ethofumesate (Tramat) / Bulb onions / Broadleaf and grass weeds as per product label	20-Feb-18	28-Feb-23	AOIA C/Hort Innovation
PER86865	Ioxynil (South African formulation) / Onions (field grown) / Annual and broadleaf weeds as per Triril Selective Herbicide label	10-Aug-18	31-Aug-20	AOIA C/Hort Innovation

CURRENT DATA GENERATION PROJECTS IN THE ONION FUND

The generation of pesticide residue, efficacy and crop safety data is required to support label registration and minor use permit applications made to the APVMA.

In May 2018, Hort Innovation announced the securing of more than \$1 million in assistance grants under the Federal Government's Access to Industry Uses of Agricultural and Veterinary (Agvet) Chemicals program. This funding is being used, along with levy contributions, to generate the data required for a range of registration and permit applications across a variety of horticulture crops. For the onion industry, the grant investment will support a minor use permit application for MainMan (flonicamid) for the control of thrips including onion thrips and western flower thrips in onions, spring onions and shallots. This is happening through the multi-industry project *Generation of data for pesticide applications in horticulture crops 2018 (ST17000)*.

From a previous round of Agvet funding, the project *Generation of residue, efficacy and crop safety data for pesticide applications in horticulture crops 2017 (ST16006)* is producing data to support a new label registration for Agnova Zampro in the control of downy mildew.



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Hoping for an onion success story

Shakespeare famously penned the line, “What’s in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet.”

For an onion farmer’s daughter though, there’s nothing quite as sweet as having a new onion variety named after her.

Hope Shadbolt, daughter of Onions Australia Chairman Pete, jumped at the opportunity to travel with her father and mother, Tracy, to Brazil for an Enza Zaden conference in 2015.

“Having grown up on the farm, I obviously had an interest in onions, but I was only 16 at the time and was mostly keen to travel to a country I had never visited before,” Hope said.

“We spent a lot of time in the north of Brazil looking at onion production in that region, and I couldn’t help but notice that a lot of the onion varieties that were being talked about had female names like Rebecca and Patricia.

“I made a few comments here and there that maybe there should be a new variety named ‘Hope’ but I didn’t expect too much to come from it.”

With a keen eye and a camera documenting the experience, Hope took on the role of unofficial photographer at the conference.

At the farewell dinner on the final evening of the trip, Hope presented the conference cohort with a photo she had taken of the entire travel group, as well as a short video of highlights from the week in Brazil.

The highlight reel impressed the crowd, and not long after, Australian-based Enza Zaden Crop Breeding Manager Lewis Lydon – who was also on the trip – approached Hope with a promise.

“He just smiled and said, ‘Yep, I reckon we can get you that onion after all!’” Hope said.

And at the start of this year, the ‘Hope’ onion was released for trial.

Lewis Lydon said some of its benefits are

that it is a quite adaptable and versatile variety.

“It is handling different environmental conditions better than most other onions in its timeslot, which is transitional between short day and immediate day varieties,” Mr Lydon said.

“It has a good combination of strong bolt tolerance, vigour & yield potential, foliage disease quality and bulb quality for its timeslot, so it can be used as a late variety in places like south east Queensland, and an early variety in the southern states.”

At the Shadbolt’s property in northern Victoria it was planted for the first time.

“Dad and my brothers have planted it for the first time this year and come December I’ll be harvesting it with the boys, which is pretty cool,” Hope Shadbolt said.

Pete Shadbolt, couldn’t be prouder.

“If the variety is anything like its namesake I think we’ll be on to a winner,” Pete said.

“I’m hoping it will be a beautiful, authentic and a hard-working producer that will be around a lot longer than I am.”

The variety should be commercially available via Terranova Seeds in Australia and New Zealand in the coming months.



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Project: Enhanced National Bee Pest Surveillance Program (MT16005)

Research Provider: Plant Health Australia, Project Leader: Sharyn Taylor, Report Author: Jenny Shanks

Australia's honey bee industry is fortunate enough to experience freedom from many overseas pests that can adversely impact on the production of honey, bee products and the delivery of pollination services.

An estimated 65% of agricultural production involves pollination from honey bees, including the onion industry, where onion seed is 100% dependent on pollination.

Plant Health Australia (PHA) has been coordinating surveillance activities across ports nationwide as part of the National Bee Pest Surveillance Program (NBPSP) since 2012. The NBPSP is an early warning system to detect new incursions of exotic pest bees (such as Asian honey bees) and bee pests (such as Varroa mites). The program also provides technical, evidence-based information to support Australia's pest free status claims during trade negotiations and assists exporters in meeting export certification requirements.

The *Enhanced* NBPSP came into effect in December 2016 and uses a variety of activities to detect 16 exotic bee pests and pest bees, and two regionalised, but significant, bee pests.

As at 30 June 2018 there are 140 active European honey bee hives (called sentinel hives) deployed across 28 sea and air ports. These sentinel hives are inspected regularly to detect Varroa mites, *Tropilaelaps* mites, *Braula cocea* and tracheal mite. At 30 June 2018, no exotic bee pests were recorded in sentinel hive surveillance.

New swarms of European honey bees travelling on cargo and vessels could be carrying mites and are a high risk. To target these swarms, empty catchboxes are strategically positioned in suitable locations around the riskiest ports. At 30 June 2018, 109 catchboxes had been deployed nationally by biosecurity apiary officers. In addition, all biosecurity officers are active on port grounds ready to respond to any new swarms at the

ports. All swarms are captured, destroyed and inspected for pests that could be hitchhiking into Australia. Between 1 January and 31 May 2018, 25 swarms were captured, of which 15 were Asian honey bee and 10 were European honey bee (across Melbourne, Cairns, Tasmania, and Brisbane ports).

The NBPSP also undertakes biannual testing of 140 sentinel hives for five exotic viruses that could significantly impact the health of our European honey bee population. Through this scientific evidence-based data, Australia can report absence of deformed wing virus, acute bee paralysis virus and slow paralysis virus.

There are further ongoing enhancements and activities planned for roll-out over the next 12 months including improvements to techniques and updating of methodologies for floral sweep netting to capture foraging exotic pest bees (Asian honey bee, bumble bee, red dwarf honey bee, giant honey bee and European honey bee), sensitivity and attractiveness of catchboxes and data collection and national and international reporting. These ongoing improvements add significant value to an already world leading bee pest surveillance program and continue to enhance the ability to detect exotic bee pests. These efforts protect the honey bee industry, which in turn supports seed production that underpins the onion industry.

The *Enhanced National Bee Pest Surveillance Program 2016-2021 (MT16005)* is funded by \$2.5 million from Hort Innovation's Hort Frontiers Pollination Fund, part of the Hort Frontiers strategic partnership initiative. This consists of research and development levies from nine pollination dependent industries, \$500,000 from the Australian Honey Bee Industry Council, \$100,000 from Grain Producers Australia, and matched contributions from the Australian Government.

Through the Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper, the Australian Government has provided a further \$587,000 to enhance the program.

In-kind contributions for the implementation of the program are also provided through each state and territory's Department of Agriculture and volunteer beekeepers. At a national level, PHA coordinates and administers the program.

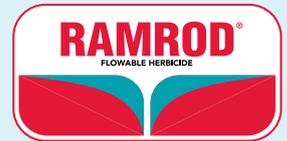


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Key findings from onion white rot research released

Development of an onion white rot forecast model for Tasmania VN14001
Research Provider: Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture, Lead contact Dr Suzie Jones, Hobart

A current research project on the serious fungal disease, onion white rot, has uncovered initial findings to help Tasmanian growers better understand and manage the disease risks.

Led by Dr Suzie Jones at the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture, the project has collected valuable data from the state's commercial onion fields and outdoor planter bags for the past two years.

"Onions are grown over a long period in Tasmania, from May until February, so we collected data from three planting windows that was representative of the whole season; May as an early crop, July as an intermediate and September as a late crop," Dr Jones said.

Data was collected for the key factors that influence onion white rot development and subsequent bulb infection, most notably planting times, soil temperatures and moisture levels, root biomass and timing of infection.

At the conclusion of the project, this data should enable the development of a separate onion white rot forecast model for each of the three representative planting windows; May, July and September.

"Findings so far have shown that root biomass in field crops was highest in the top 100mm of the soil. In the planter bag trials, the disease incidence was highest for the early plantings, as well as when inoculum was in the top 100mm of the soil.

"We recommend that if a field is likely to be affected by white rot then it's better to plant late. The top 100mm of soil should also be targeted with fungicide control, and watered in to ensure the fungicide reaches the depth in the soil."

Looking ahead, the results and recommendations will be delivered as a fact sheet detailing the conditions and crop growth stages that signal the likelihood of infection periods for each planting window.

Dr Jones said while the disease control recommendations won't necessarily mean the pathogen will be eliminated altogether, they will provide growers with management strategies to help them control onion white rot and minimise the risk of bulb infections.

Tasmanian onion grower George Griffin, from the north-west coast of the state, said the findings and support resources are welcomed benefits to the industry.

"We need plenty of research on this disease given the size and contribution of Tasmania's onion industry, especially on the north-west coast and surrounding districts in the state. We need to get a handle on it and gain some sort of control, so that we can be profitable in the long-term," Mr Griffin said.

Mr Griffin said firsthand experience with the disease had taught him a lot about how devastating white rot can be and also how to manage it.

"We'll be planting on a site that's been previously affected later this year and we've been working hard to make sure we do everything we can to keep the new crop safe," he said.

"We will be planting a late crop and following the industry recommendations of fungicide applications, which might be three or four applications over the growing life of the crop. We seem to think that we'll have reasonable control by taking this approach."

The project, *Development of an onion white rot forecast model for Tasmania (VN14001)* is still in the data analysis stage with an expectation to generate further outcomes from this research over the coming months.



► Onion grower George Griffin and researcher Dr Suzie Jones, UTAS

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Tackling new frontiers: the horticulture industry brings future into focus

A focus on long-term, cross-industry collaboration will underpin the Hort Frontiers Strategic Partnership Initiative as the horticulture industry looks to the year 2025.

The initiative expands Hort Innovation’s funding model by facilitating cross-industry investments focusing on complex, traditionally under-funded projects that have been identified as critical for the industry’s future.

Alongside commonwealth money, Hort Frontiers invests funds from the wider research community, the value chain and levy funds. Investors may also be from non-horticulture commercial industries, universities, public and private research institutes and state government agencies.

The program works with individual co-investment partners to produce outcomes that meet the needs of the whole horticulture industry.

YOUR LEVIES AT WORK

There are currently seven strategic investment funds, each addressing an individual theme:

- Advanced Production Systems Fund (stimulating productivity)
- Asian Markets Fund (driving growth)
- Fruit Fly Fund (managing risk)
- Green Cities Fund (ensuring sustainability)
- Health, Nutrition & Food Safety Fund (driving growth)
- Leadership Fund (building capacity)
- Pollination Fund (ensuring sustainability).

Pollination is critical for 60% of agricultural production, including the onion industry. In Australia, pollination-dependent crops are estimated to be worth more than \$4.3 billion per annum, with a direct contribution by honey bees estimated at more than \$1.6 billion. The Pollination Fund, which receives direct levy fund contributions from the onion industry, has three focus areas: managing the European honey bee, optimising crop pollination efficiency and identifying alternative crop pollinators.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

Each fund is governed by a Co-Investment Strategic Intent (CSI) that outlines key investment themes and is guided by an Expert Advisory Panel that assesses and provides input into proposed projects and research.

Hort Innovation is constantly seeking new investment and partnership opportunities. For more information or to submit an idea, access the concept form at www.horticulture.com.au or contact a Business Development Manager:

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Dr Alok Kumar
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Onion Disease Identification Poster 2018/19

In this edition of the Onions Australia Annual Magazine you will find your own copy of the Onion Disease Identification Poster 2018/19.

The poster features 12 diseases that have recently been identified as having a high combined risk of entering, establishing, spreading, and causing economic impact in Australia.

OA CEO Lechelle Earl said Tasmanian Agronomist, Tim Groom, has been instrumental in ensuring the poster content contained relevant information on key domestic diseases.

“Following industry feedback, this poster includes more of a focus on the optimum environmental conditions of each disease, details of where disease pathogens come from and both the scientific and common names of each disease.

“The poster is an important resource that we hope all growers can add to their biosecurity awareness toolkit, whether this is in packing sheds or on farm office walls.

“It’s also a timely reminder that it is possible to have more than one disease on a single onion plant or bulb, and to confirm the presence of a disease it is recommended that sampling and testing be undertaken by a plant pathologist. It’s best to consult your local agronomist,” said Ms Earl.

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Pests	Seeding	1 – 4 True leaf	4+ True leaf	Bulb initiation	Bulb swelling	Leaf folding maturity
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Insect Control						
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Non Group 28 MOA application					↓ ↓	

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Bulb vegetables, including; Chives, Fennel bulb, Garlic, Leeks, Onions, Shallots, Spring onions	Rasping pests: [Suppression only] Onion thrips (<i>Thrips tabaci</i>)	750 mL + non-ionic surfactant	7 days

Need help? Please visit www.fmccrop.com.au/contact for your local representative for help with determining the best application parameters for your Benevia[®] spray.

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State round ups - 2017/18 season

Queensland

Michael Sippel

The 2017 harvest was hampered by wet weather arriving in late October/early November but December saw a return to dry conditions, allowing growers to get their late onions out of the ground without hassle. In the black soil around the Lockyer Valley the wet weather made the harvest as challenging as any we've had. Growers did exceptionally well to get their onions out given the conditions. The wet weather meant a lot of extra money was spent on drying and grading produce, and all of this was on the back of pretty ordinary prices. Despite the challenges the quality of the produce was exceptional, and yield was on par with previous years. Though heavy rainfall made for a difficult season in the Lockyer Valley, the downpour came just in time to finish off crops on the Darling Downs. Late crops on the Darling Downs however experienced problems with thrips in December last year as the insect moved from the haying-off grain crops onto the green onion crop.

Despite a wet start to the season, growers have seen little to no rain since last spring/early summer. While the ongoing dry has helped to keep mildew and disease at bay, plantings for this season are down about 20% from last year. We've had a pretty good run on getting onions in the ground because we haven't had any wet weather interruptions. Crops have seeded well and establishments are high. Some heavy frosts on the Darling Downs knocked back a few young crops, but I expect them to bounce back by harvest time. The crops look outstanding but we need rain to replenish sub-soil moisture as bore water is in increasingly short supply.

New labour hire legislation in Queensland will be an unknown factor this coming season. As the cost of production increases we are waiting with bated breath to see how the new laws will impact the onion industry.

Tasmania

Andrew Doran

The packing and marketing of the 2018 harvest is in full swing. Crop yields are up and the quality of onions this season has been excellent. Drilling in 2017 commenced on time in late April/early May with the planting of regular crops completed by late September/early October. The growing season was particularly good, with some timely rainfalls and a fairly mild summer, well irrigated crop yields were above average this year. Annual rainfall so far is on average. Due to favourable growing conditions there was little to no pressure from downy mildew, white root rot and thrips. It is expected that the total planted area will be consistent with previous years, and markets will be relatively stable. An extremely difficult season in New Zealand has impacted on quality and yields, which has opened up a window of opportunity for Australian exporters.

Planning and planting for the 2018/19 onion season is well and truly underway, starting about the same time as last season in late April/early May with small opportunities to drill in June and July also. With good rains during July crops are emerging evenly, despite the cold Tasmanian winter.

Here's to a good growing season and good quality onions.

Victoria

NORTHERN VICTORIA

Peter Shadbolt

Northern Victoria plantings this year remain very much the same as last year.

Planting went on without any hold ups due to the fact we've had no rain, and still none at time of writing.

All going to plan, yields and quality will be the same as the previous few years. Water for irrigation won't be an issue this year with 100% allocations looking promising despite the lack of rain.

SOUTHERN VICTORIA

Frank Powell

Last year we managed to supply onions for 51 weeks of the year and we're aiming for the same this year. We didn't run into any problems with disease or pests last season and the dry weather at harvest helped to ensure the onions were high quality and kept for a long time. We were able to keep our out-of-store onions until the end of December, and cool-stored onions through January. However, ongoing poor prices have been challenging. We exported some jarrah onions this year into the Malaysian, Singapore and Philippines markets but prices have been below the cost of production.

We've received about 100ml of rain throughout autumn and winter, which has put this season's early plantings a few weeks behind, but our ground here is pretty porous so we should be able to catch up on that fairly easily. Hectares planted will remain about the same this year.

South Australia

Greg Bragg

It has been a challenging growing season in South Australia (SA). The northern regions were much drier than the previous season, but for some southern areas like Bordertown it was the exact opposite, with growers experiencing a wet spring. Consecutive overcast days led to decreased yields. The quality of onions harvested in January were hampered by hot conditions with temperatures reaching the mid to high 40s, which coupled with a number rain events, led to unusually humid weather. Temperatures remained warm right into May, which has not helped the storage of ambient stored onions.

Southern areas experienced a higher incidence of downy mildew due to the wet growing conditions, while northern growers saw higher than normal levels of aspergillus.

As is the case right around the country, many growing regions in SA are facing drought conditions, with rainfall well below average. The only exceptions to this are around the Mallee where rainfall is about average, and Naracoorte south

where they don't want any more rain. As the Coonawarra water table is still high from last year. If rain doesn't ease up soon, sowings will start to fall behind.

Similarly to the rest of Australia, onion prices have been well below cost of production for browns, and until recently demand for brown onions has been poor. Prices for reds and whites however have been good all season, driven by strong demand.

After such a poor season, where there has been a huge over supply of onions in SA, growers are cutting back for this season, which will hopefully have an impact on demand in the coming months.

Early crops have germinated well however, they are a bit slow-going in the cold conditions. Due to the lack of rain there has been a number of heavy frosts, and cold days made worse by severe wind events, the likes of which we wouldn't normally see until spring. Once again, it's shaping up to be a very challenging growing season.

New South Wales

Lucy Gurcuillo

Drought conditions and consistently low prices have made for a challenging 12 months for New South Wales onion growers. While low rainfall added pressure to the season, the yield and quality at the end of last year was above average. On the back of the tough conditions, market prices have been below the cost of production.

Western Australia

Peter Ivankovich

Last year's growing season was a relatively good one with above average yields and quality, but unfortunately the domestic market was again oversupplied and local prices were quite poor. This saw many growers turn to export markets where they accessed higher prices in the Middle East, South East Asia and Japan.

Early plantings this season from June/early July are much the same as last season, however a wet and cold winter which saw above average rainfall and a strong wind factor led to a relatively low-quality product with significant wind damage.

In terms of disease and pests pressure, it's still too early to say for this season. Last season we had a problem with mildew in the early crops, while the late crops planted from mid-August through to September were of high quality.

It's hard to predict what's going to happen this season due to the lack of Totrill on the market. This will have a significant impact on this year's crop in terms of yield and quality as there's not many chemicals we can use here in WA due to the sandy nature of the soil.



Business directory

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Willow Produce

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Machinery

Dobmac Agricultural Machinery

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Miscellaneous

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Colquhouns Adelaide Bag Company

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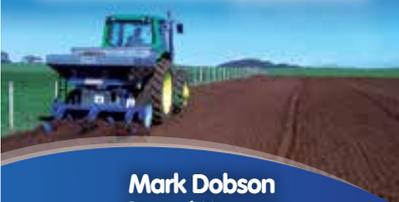
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