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Protected Cropping Australia Industry Trade Magazine



Post-harvest research for capsicum & cucumber

Tough times hit – stories
of disaster & recovery

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SINCE 1990

HFF conference program announced



Emily Rigby, PCA board member and cannabis expert will speak at the upcoming HFF conference in Melbourne.

The HFF conference will be held in Melbourne later this year. Here's a preview of what's coming up.

The next Hydroponics Farmers Federation conference will be held in Melbourne with the theme of 'Hydroponics Tomorrow'. The 12th biennial conference will run from July 21-23 at Atura Dandenong with an impressive speaker line-up. The conference celebrates 25 years of HFF.

Attending from overseas are Jan De Smet, a soil scientist, hydroponics expert and owner and Managing Director of Knaap Substrates Mexico, part of the van der Knapp Group of companies, who will discuss coco substrates. Jan sees his most important coco substrate creations so far as the Forteco Profit Growbag (and related products), the Forteco Growpot, the Forteco Propagation Cube, the Forteco Scale and the Forteco Substrate Rack.

Paul Simmons, Crop Co-ordinator from Rijk Zwan in The Netherlands, will outline tomato

CONFERENCE INFORMATION AND REGISTRATION

The HFF conference is being held at Atura Hotel Dandenong in outer Melbourne, July 21-23. For a full program, visit hff.org.au. Early bird registrations are available until May 1.

trends in Europe, while Toby Wright, Director, Tom d'Aqui, France, will present tomato trends in France.

There will also be a focus on cannabis at this year's conference as Trevor Steinthal, Althea, US and Emily Rigby, Cannatrek, Queensland, speak on this emerging crop.

Local speakers and tours

Australian experts taking part include Paul Higgins, Emergent Futures, who will present the keynote address. Scott Matthew, Syngenta Australia in South Australia, will examine the future of crop protection while Levi Nupponen, Agrology, will discuss organics certification. James Pateras, Modular Farms, Queensland is discussing the topic of 'Small Farms, Big Cities', while Michael Russo, Fresh Herb Company, Victoria will discuss the commercial growing of herbs.

The two-day conference will also include an afternoon of farm tours on Wednesday, July 22.

Fruit Logistica Berlin drew enthusiastic crowds

Around 72,000 trade visitors flocked to the three-day Fruit Logistica 2020, which was held in Berlin in early February.

Despite the challenge of the coronavirus outbreak in China with travel bans on visitors and exhibitors from China, the show also attracted 3300 exhibitors – a record number for the event.

"We fully understand the reasons why some people missed this year's brilliant Fruit Logistica, but fortunately we were still able to bring together the largest and most international congregation of fresh produce professionals anywhere in the world," said Madlen Miserius, Senior Product Manager for the event.

"The quality of trade visitors was very high, and we know from our exhibitor feedback that a good amount of new business was done here in the halls. We really look forward to welcoming back those friends who couldn't be with us this time to our next show."

Awards

This year's Fruit Logistica Innovation Award (FLIA) went to the tomato Yoom™ from Syngenta Seeds. It was voted the gold award by trade show visitors and scored highly on both appearance and taste. Depending on the hours of sunlight, its colour ranges from purple to black. It has a high vitamin, mineral and antioxidant content as well as a sweet-sour and tangy flavour, also known as 'umami'.

With a focus at this year's show on compostable packaging it is not surprising that two compostable products took out the other top awards. The silver FLIA went to Polish company Silbo for its certified fruit and vegetable packaging with water-based dyes and adhesives, which is completely compostable.

The bronze FLIA was also awarded to sustainable packaging: the SoFruMiniPak® Eco View from SoFruPak Witold Gai also from Poland. It seals quickly, is made from renewable resources, ensures good ventilation and optimised cooling, and is 100 per cent biodegradable.



Fruit Logistic awards: The Fruit Logistica Innovation Award – the Gold Award – was presented to Syngenta Seeds for YOOM. Accepting the award (left to right) are Jérémie Chabanis, Luis Ortega and Rik Lootens.

Coming up

Asia Fruit Logistica will take place on September 16-18 this year. It will be held for the first time in Singapore, a leading business and trading hub in Asia. Fruit Logistica 2021 will be held in Berlin, February 3-5, 2021.

Keeping you up to date

In search of internal rots



Internal rots in capsicum. A new research project is set to find answers to this serious post-harvest issue.

Internal rot of capsicums and chillies is a major ongoing issue for Australian growers, including greenhouse producers. Dr Jenny Ekman, researcher at Applied Horticultural Research in Sydney, is seeking industry help to solve the problem.

Although the disease initially affects only the inedible seeds and pith, it can spread into the surrounding flesh. Even if it hasn't, consumers are usually unhappy at finding a fur ball inside their vegetables. As internal rots cannot easily be detected from the outside, infected fruit can be sent to market. This can lead to consignments being downgraded or destroyed, as well as affecting consumer confidence and future purchases.



Internal rot in capsicums is providing researchers with a challenge.

Warm temperatures and high humidity favour the disease, especially if the environment is not well controlled. Although infection is believed to occur at flowering, the symptoms do not usually develop until the capsicum starts to ripen, spreading most rapidly after harvest.

Several different fungi can cause the internal rot, including species of *Fusarium* and *Alternaria*. However, it is unclear which is/are the main organism(s) responsible for this disease in Australia.

This new project, funded by Hort Innovation using the vegetable research and development levy and contributions from the Australian Government, is investigating internal rot of capsicums. Our aim is to identify the causal organism(s) and develop management techniques to prevent infection, reduce postharvest development and minimise the risk of sending unacceptable fruit to market.

In order to identify the fungi responsible for internal rot, we are looking for samples of infected capsicums.

Please contact either Jenny Ekman on 0407 384 285 or by email at jenny.ekman@ahr.com.au or Len Tesoriero 0447 623 487 if you have seen this issue in your crop and would like to be involved in the project. If you have samples of infected fruit then that would be even better.

For more post-harvest information and research, please turn to page 22.

Fall armyworm marches closer



Fall armyworm, a devastating pest, has just arrived a lot closer to Australia's crops with news of pests reaching Torres Strait. Indeed, authorities are concerned that the pest may already have reached northern Australia as, on February 18, a moth was discovered at Bamaga on Cape York. Six moths were captured in traps on Erub and Saibai islands in Torres Strait.

The South American caterpillar has been marching closer to Australia on its journey from South Africa through India and Asia since 2016. The adult moths fly at night and can travel up to 100km in a night. The caterpillar is known to feed on more than 350 plants including cereal crops, fruit and vegetables and is also active at night. Growers in all areas, especially northern Australia, need to be on the lookout. Contact your local department of agriculture if you have any concerns.



How to spot a fall armyworm

- Adults are 32-40mm from wingtip to wingtip, with a brown or grey forewing, and a white hindwing.
- Males have more patterns and a white spot on each forewing.
- Light-coloured larvae with dark head, become browner as they grow, developing white lengthwise lines and dark spots with spines.

Movers & shakers

Our round up of new appointments in the protected cropping industry across Australia.

If you have an item for Movers & shakers, email the details with an image to editor@protectedcroppingaustralia.net.au for consideration.

New PCA director profile: Shané Steffan

Shané Steffan joined the PCA board in late 2019.

Shané has a Bachelor in Rural science from the University of New England and was appointed Business Development Manager at Polygro 12 months ago. Brisbane-based, her role covers Queensland, New South Wales and the Northern Territory.

She joined Polygro after 15 years spent working with farms and farmers in roles that have given her extensive experience across many areas of agriculture and horticulture.

"I visit farmers in regards to Polygro's range of products, including ones tailored to protected cropping (netting and tunnels) and believe protected cropping is at the forefront for the future of agriculture in Australia.

"I can personally say some of my customers have been able to produce and maintain their

fruit quality through this recent drought and other adverse weather conditions, because of the protected cropping and hydroponics systems they utilise.

"In my opinion, protected cropping saves space (production per square metre is often higher), decreases production time windows (faster growth), and assists with maintaining production and quality during these adverse weather conditions, whether these weather conditions be drought, frost, dew, excessive rainfall or heat (sunburn).

"I am glad to be part of the journey at PCA," says Shané, who also has an avid interest in aquaponics and soil science. She has her own polyculture farm, which produces food for her family and sells the excess locally.

"At the moment I am developing/breeding some native and non-native plant varieties to determine commercial viability," she adds.



Shané Steffan from Polygro in Queensland is now a member of the PCA board.



Up and running at Priva

On the weekend, when Jeroen van Loon's not in his Priva office or in someone's glasshouse, he may be found out running, pushing his small son ahead of him in a jogging pram. An enthusiastic supporter of local parkruns, he is now the fastest pram runner. He also has two marathons in his sights for 2020.

Jeroen has had a long career in horticulture, which has taken him from his home in The Netherlands to New Zealand and more recently to Australia working in various roles with Priva dealers, a stint in the tomato industry and working as an installer. He is now Field Support Engineer at Priva and based in Queensland. For technical assistance, contact Jeroen on helpdesk@priva.com. For other queries, contact Marcus van Heijst, Account Manager, Priva Oceania: on Marcus.van.heijst@priva.com.

New GM at Stoller

Stoller is pleased to congratulate David Cavallaro on his appointment to the position of General Manager of Stoller Australia. Previous GM, Richard Emery, is now a Business Consultant while transitioning into retirement. David's knowledge of bio-stimulant technologies, plant physiology and product innovation will continue Stoller's success in the fertiliser industry. David was appointed to the role in January.

David Cavallaro (right) has become Stoller's new General Manager.



BON commits to SA expansion

Water and electrical service provider, BON, has committed to an expansion of its services to South Australia as part of an agreement with Powerplants Australia.

Already providing support services to Powerplants clients in Western Australia, the expansion will include a dedicated PRIVA technician and a second electrician to support growers to optimise their production chain.

If you want to talk to BON about the new service, please call (08) 9571 1314 and speak to Ben Bonomi.

Welcome to corporate members

Protected Cropping Australia would like to welcome new corporate members. A big welcome to:

- Monbulk Rural, Victoria
- HM Clause Pacific, Queensland
- Stoller, South Australia
- Rijk Zwaan, New South Wales
- Hortraco Viscon, New South Wales
- Toro, Victoria

For more information on membership of PCA contact Jan Davis at admin@protectedcropping.net.au or call her on 0409 004 228.