



# GROWING UNDERCOVER

MARCH | 2024

## UPDATES

### From The Chair

*Andrew Tout*

I hope this report finds you well and energised by the growth and innovation in the protected cropping industry.

In the January edition of edition of Growing Undercover, I reflected on feedback from our members where it was evident that sustainability remains at the forefront of our agenda.

As an industry, our commitment to sustainable practices has seen reductions in waste, enhanced resource efficiency, and strengthened community engagement but we are still under significant cost pressures, particularly on the labour and energy front.

One recent highlight for the industry was a trip I took to Mount Gambier to explore new bioenergy technology. This visit showcased the collaborative efforts between growers, industry stakeholders, and government agencies to pioneer advancements in managing energy costs sustainably.

At the heart of this technological breakthrough lies Rainbow Bee Eater's innovative process, ECHO2. This revolutionary system transforms organic residues, such as agricultural crop and timber wastes, into low-cost, hydrogen-rich Syngas and high-quality Biochar.

The wood residues are supplied by local organics recycler BioGro who use the biochar in their composted products. The CORCs are sold in the international voluntary carbon market to corporations actively striving to become carbon neutral such as Microsoft, Shopify and SwissRe.

The biochar benefits soil and crop health and sequesters (locks up) atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> for millions of years.

The overall Holla-Fresh growing system for growing and delivering herbs to supermarkets changes from emitting CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere to withdrawing CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere.

Not only does this process mitigate waste, but it also produces a valuable resource that improves soil health, enhances agricultural productivity, and isolates atmospheric carbon dioxide for millions of years.

Ian and Peter said, *"We see this circular economy system as an economically and environmentally sustainable win for everyone involved."*

Let us continue to work together towards a future where our industry thrives in harmony with the environment. Together, with companies like Rainbow Bee Eater, we can cultivate a legacy for generations to come.

RBE & the ECHO2 Technology is 100% Australian designed and owned. ECHO2 Systems are manufactured in Melbourne. The Australian content is over 75% and we have specific plans to drive that higher.

At the Mount Gambier site, the automated MK 4 ECHO2 module will convert local wood residues into clean syngas that is combusted to:

- Continuously produce up to 800kW of hot water and 300kg/hr of flue gas CO2 for the adjacent Holla-Fresh glasshouse.
- 400kg/hr of moist high carbon biochar.
- 1,000kg/hr carbon removal certificates (CORCs).



*Ian Lines (L) co-founder/director of Holla-Fresh and Peter Burgess (R) co-founder/director Rainbow Bee Eater installing a Mk4 ECHO2 module Holla-Fresh this week.*



## Projects

*Tony Bundock*

The Early Needs Recovery Project has been very active to date and this has seen us hitting a couple of notable milestones.

Firstly, the project ran a workshop/seminar on the 11th of March for growers in the Coffs Harbour region focussing on the formulation of nutrient recipes for both run to waste and recycling systems. The workshop was presented by Levi Nuppenen and saw 25 growers and consultants attend the event. At the conclusion of the seminar the participants were able to access a dedicated spreadsheet that will assist them in interpreting water tests and modifying their A and B tank recipes. Watch the recording [here](#).

Secondly, next week will see the launch of the online learning resources that have been developed for the project. The first topic is 'Irrigation 1.01' and is a basic guide to the various components that growers will have to consider when installing a dedicated irrigation system. The resources have been placed on the Zoho platform, and we will be publishing details of how this can be accessed. Following on from this there are four other courses that will be launched which are:

1. Why Protected Cropping?
2. Pest and Disease Control
3. Business considerations for growing
4. Climate management 1.01

## Did you know we have an Industry Advisory Council?

The Industry Advisory Council (IAC) meets every second month and is led by our Deputy Chair, Andrew McIlwain.

If you would like to hear more or become a part of this vital group, please **get in touch** with us.

# Crop Protection In Transition: Rapid Improvements Possible With Better Spraying Technology

*Groenten Nieuws*

Tholen - "There is no silver bullet," Caroline van den Hoek of Syngenta helped growers out of the dream during a grower's meeting about spraying techniques last week. Insofar as growers themselves are not realistic enough. They see the resource package shrinking year after year.

Making optimal use of the resources available was the focus on Wednesday afternoon, February 28. The afternoon was organized for the third time by Vertify and Glastuinbouw Nederland.

Eight workshops focused on 'green resources' and how to use them as best as possible, on additives and, above all, on spraying technology. Because how do you ensure, for example, that you also properly touch the underside of the leaf, which is very useful when it comes to a 'green' contact medium. And if possible, try using lower pressure when spraying. This produces fewer emissions. [Read More.](#)



## EVENTS

APRIL

MAY

APRIL



## Blueberry Research Facility Open Day

[Learn more →](#)



## HFF Conference - Early Bird Registrations

[Learn more →](#)



## LLS - Coffs Harbour Follow Up Event

[Learn more →](#)

# INFORMATION

## NATIONAL

### AWARDS



## Horticulture Awards for Excellence 2024

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### NEWS

### ADVICE



## Delivering and Storing Bulk Fertiliser Safely

[Learn more →](#)

### NEWS

### NEWS



## Hort Innovation - Impact Update

[Learn more →](#)

### NEWS



**Growers need protection from Bunnings and other big box retailers**

GIA appeared at the Senate Supermarket Prices Inquiry on Tuesday to call on the Federal Government to protect greenlife growers from unfair trading practices by including them in the Food & Grocery Code of Conduct and to make the Code mandatory.

GIA CEO, Jo Cave said "Growers are simply asking for a fair go, so they can make a living from growing plants. The Code of Conduct provides the framework for a fair and equitable trading environment. If Bunnings is committed to doing the right thing, it has nothing to fear from signing up to the Code."

[Read the media release](#)

**Have your say on**

**Help protect growers from big box retailers**

[Learn more →](#)



**GreenTech - Investing In Horticulture**

[Learn more →](#)



**GreenTech - Reducing Greenhouse Energy**

[Learn more →](#)

**NEW SOUTH WALES**

**NEWS**



**Lostock Dam to Glennies Creek Dam**

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**NEWS**



**Biosecurity Response - Red Imported Fire Ants**

[Learn more →](#)

**SUPPORT**



**A Stronger Relationship With Small Business**

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**VICTORIA**

**GRANT**



Netting Grants for  
Victorian Growers

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MONTH 2024

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MARCH 2024

MARKET UPDATE

**Snapshot of ornamental horticulture in Germany**

PLANT HEALTH

**Don't give up on box just yet**

VITAMINS FOR THE SOUL

**Tulips brighten up the dark Finnish winter days**

## 40TH IPM ESSEN

Gauging the temperature of the international industry

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