



Newsletter October 2019

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PCA 30th Anniversary Dinner

In September 1989, a group of industry leaders came together to form the Australian Hydroponic Association – the forerunner of PCA.

That's an amazing history – and one we plan on celebrating.

We'd love you to join us for our AGM followed by our 30th anniversary dinner from 5.30pm on Wednesday 27th November at the Atura Hotel in Dandenong.

This will be a great opportunity to catch up with old friends, and to make some new ones. Put the date in your diary – and keep your eye open for a formal invitation.



Grower Innovation Day

The Hydroponic Farmers Federation, Protected Cropping Australia and Bayer are set to host another Grower Innovation Day at Chisholm Institute of TAFE on Thursday 28th November.

As part of the day, there will be a seminar program in the morning followed by a 'food truck' lunch (those that attended last time will remember how good that was!) followed by afternoon practical workshops. Included in the workshops will be the opportunity to inspect the latest tomato varieties being grown at Chisholm as part of the De Ruiter trial program.

The event will provide some interesting and inciteful sessions. The event will be advertised widely in the next few weeks, and we look forward to seeing as many of our members at the day as possible.

Movers and Shakers

In the next issue of Soilless Australia, we'll be introducing a 'mover and shaker' column detailing key news relating to, and supplied by, PCA Members.

Members are invited to forward a 50-word description of key staff changes, award wins or other industry recognition relating to their business.

If you have news for the Summer edition, email it before 8th November to editor@protectedcropping.net.au

The editor will determine the suitability of news submitted for publication as this column is not a vehicle for advertising or commercial promotion.



Having our say

One of the key roles PCA plays is representing your interests where decisions affecting your future are made.

We aim to be recognised as the leading voice for protected cropping in Australia. In order to do that, we work to develop policy positions and deliver outcomes that enhance industry sustainability and profitability.

As part of that role, we make sure to put forward the industry's views wherever possible – and that means responding to calls for comment from many quarters.

Since the last newsletter, we have made these submissions:

- Growing for Queensland: the way forward for the agribusiness and food sector
- APVMA, review of critical agricultural, biosecurity, and permitted uses of active ingredients.

These ones are coming up:

- Federal: Inquiry into growing Australian agriculture to \$100 billion by 2030, due 14/10, <https://tinyurl.com/y2qucmho>
- NSW: IPART review of the maximum prices that Sydney Water, WaterNSW (Greater Sydney) and Hunter Water can charge for their water and other services, due 21/10
- Federal: Property Identification Reforms, due 01/11, <https://tinyurl.com/y668qgof>

- VIC: The rating of agricultural land, due 01/11, <https://engage.vic.gov.au/rating-review>

These ones are on the drawing board, with details yet to be confirmed:

- Review of Australia's Agvet chemical regulatory system
- Review of Australia's agricultural R&D efforts

Your input is always welcome.

If you have comments on any of the upcoming submission issues or would like more information, give Jan a call on 0409 004228. If you'd like copies of any of our submissions, they are available too.

Opportunities and challenges in uncertain times

The value of farm production is forecast to fall by 5 per cent in 2019–20 to \$59 billion following consecutive years of dry conditions, according to the latest Agricultural Commodities report by ABARES.

The outlook for Australia's agricultural sector is characterised by a high degree of uncertainty, but the impact on the sector has been tempered by a regionally diversified production base. The ongoing China–US trade dispute is disrupting world markets. This presents opportunities and challenges for Australia's agriculture sector. At the same time, the sector faces challenges at home, including drought and shifting societal expectations of agricultural production.

In 2019–20 the volume of farm production and agricultural exports are expected to fall below long-term averages, mainly due to ongoing drought in large areas of south-eastern Australia.

However, the extent of this fall is likely to be limited by above average crop production in Victoria—where seasonal conditions have been favourable—and close to average crop production in Western Australia and South Australia—where conditions have been mixed.

In 2019–20 the value of farm production is forecast to decline by 5% to \$59 billion.

This is driven by the third consecutive decline in the volume of farm production since favourable seasonal conditions delivered the largest winter crop on record in 2016–17.

Prices received by Australian farmers are forecast to decline due to prices falling for some of Australia's major commodity exports. These exports include barley, cotton, pulses, wheat and wool. However, an assumed 4% decline in the Australian dollar on a trade-weighted basis will provide some support to export prices and farm incomes.



Since reaching a peak in 2016–17, the volume of farm production is forecast to have declined by 15%, reaching its lowest level since 2009–10.

The forecast volume of farm production for 2019–20 is similar to levels last recorded during the Millennium Drought. The index is forecast to be about 25 percentage points above the worst years in 2002–03 and 2006–07.

The Australian dollar is assumed to fall by 5% against the US dollar in 2019–20. This will support agricultural exports, particularly of grains, fibres and beef, a significant proportion of which are invoiced in US dollars. The recent depreciation in the Australian dollar against other currencies including the Japanese yen and Korean won, is also boosting Australia's competitiveness in these markets. This is at a time when Australia is facing increased competition in many traditional export markets

The benefits of the China–US trade dispute are expected to be limited for Australian agricultural producers. Major US agricultural exports to China differ substantially from Australia's. Where Australian goods are substitutable with US products, exports to China are relatively small, or face significant competition from other major exporting countries.

Read the report here: <https://tinyurl.com/y5ou74gf>

Snapshots

Berry good at bouncing back

Check out the latest Turf 'n' Surf podcast from Queensland's Department of Agriculture and Fisheries to see how strawberry growers are recovering after the 2018 tampering incident. Listen here: <https://tinyurl.com/yyn7rp3f>

Power to the people

The Australian Energy Regulator is conducting a survey as part of a study into the value different customers place on having a reliable electricity supply to ensure electricity providers invest the right amount in electricity infrastructure. Have your say: <https://tinyurl.com/y2qc5hcr>

Digital checklist

The CSIRO has developed a digital maturity assessment tool designed to identify the digital strengths and weaknesses of agribusinesses in the agricultural sector. By completing the tool, agribusinesses will gain a better understanding of their current digital maturity and areas for improvement. Check it out here: <http://digital-maturity-assessment.it.csiro.au/>

How farming fits into the climate change story

A recent report from the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change put a spotlight on the way land use affects - and can be affected by - climate change. Following on from that, the ABC 'Rear Vision' program has compiled a fascinating report on how we came to farm the way we do and how that fits into the climate change story. Listen here: <https://tinyurl.com/y45qgvjw>

2020 AgriFutures™ Rural Women's Award Applications

The AgriFutures™ Rural Women's Award is open to all women involved in rural and regional industries, businesses communities. One \$10,000 bursary is awarded to each state/territory winner, providing the financial resources to bring to life a project or initiative that will benefit rural industries, businesses and/or communities. More here: <https://tinyurl.com/yxtdy84e>

New biosecurity course

There's a new biosecurity course available on Plant Health Australia's BOLT site. Reporting new pests and diseases and some of the steps that may be taken in the early stages of an incursion are covered in the course. More here: <https://tinyurl.com/y66smomp>



Tell us your story

People love hearing about what their peers are up to - and we're always on the lookout for news about what's going on in the protected cropping industry.

Our quarterly magazine, Soilless Australia, is a great place to catch up on these stories.

If you've got something you'd like to share, or there's an issue you'd like addressed, we're all ears. Give Jan a call on 0409 004 228, or drop our editor, Jennifer Stackhouse, a line at editor@protectedcropping.net.au.

Time to shine

The Weekly Times Shine awards are designed to highlight the role of women on farms and off them, in rural towns, community groups, sporting clubs, businesses and schools.

Finalists will be chosen in six categories: Passion, Belief, Grace Spirit, Dedication and Courage. On November 20, six winners will be announced. Each will be awarded a \$2500 voucher from Harvey Norman. One of the 18 finalists will also be named the overall Shine winner and receive a further \$5000. Nominations close 20th November. More details here: <https://tinyurl.com/y27pw4e>

Biosecurity Imports Levy Report

The report to the Minister for Agriculture by the Biosecurity Levy Steering Committee with recommendations has now been released. The committee made eight recommendations, including the implementation of a levy on air and sea containers and the establishment of a Biosecurity Advisory Council. View the report here: <https://tinyurl.com/y2ghw3bl>

Spotted winged drosophila

Hort Innovations has funded a project to improve biosecurity preparedness for an incursion of spotted wing drosophila. The project is being delivered by cesar pty ltd.

Following a workshop held last year in Melbourne, comment was sought on gaps and priorities. The results of the workshop and the online poll have been developed into a report, which can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/y2pgdgr2>

The team has also completed a spotted wing drosophila identification video, which can be seen here: <https://tinyurl.com/yxsn35gq>

Impacts of new Horticulture Award

In April this year, the Fair Work Commission handed down a decision to change the Horticulture Award for casual employees to include ordinary hours of work, a night loading and overtime entitlements. It also clarified the penalty rate for working on public holidays for casuals. These changes applied from the first full pay period on or after 15 April 2019.

In order to check if you are either receiving or paying the correct award rate, the Fairwork Ombudsman has some easy to use links on their website, including a pay calculator. Check it out here: <https://tinyurl.com/y5brf6hk>

Industry body Growcom wants to hear from you on the changes to the Horticulture Award in a national survey. This survey is essential to capture impacts of changes to Award, including overtime entitlements. Have your say here: <https://tinyurl.com/y5xjneyz>

Save the date

- Greenlife Australia IPM workshops
 - Broome 15/10/19
 - Kunanurra 17/10/19
- 18-20/10/19: PMA Fresh Summit, California
- 20-22/10/19 ANZ Biochar Study Tour, South Australia
- 27/11/19: PCA AGM and 30th anniversary dinner, Dandenong
- 28/11/19: HFF/PCA/Bayer Grower Innovation Day, Chisholm TAFE, Dandenong
- 30/03 – 01/04/20: Global Berry Congress, Rotterdam
- 15-17/06/20: Hort Connections, Melbourne
- 21-23/07/20: HFF Conference, Dandenong