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Protected Cropping Australia

Monthly Newsletter

February 2023



Growing Undercover

PCA STRATEGY

The PCA organisational strategy is coming to an end in June 2023. Perfect timing to allow us to reconsider our mission and reimagine how we best support growers and the protected cropping industry. Member consultation will be coming out shortly to ensure that your voice is heard. Now is the time to think about what your PCA can do to help your business thrive in the face of complex challenges and exciting opportunities.



GROWING UNDERCOVER FEB '23

2023 has kicked off with all the complexities of 2022. As many of us roll up our sleeves for a 5th(!) vaccination, the world, and China in particular, is still trying to shake the COVID flu that is lingering. As the global supply chain settles into a new, new normal and the death of just-in-time supply chains, commodity prices and farm inputs remain volatile. Navigating the new world order is shaping up to be the challenge of 2023 as we come to grips with a high inflationary environment and a more skittish global money market.

While the global economy is finding its feet, investment and interest in protected cropping has never been greater. Record investment in PC systems, including new builds and exciting new technologies, shows that the industry is in a great position to support food security and nutritional outcomes into the future.

Closer to home, Australians continue to dip into savings to relieve skyrocketing cost of living pressures as household saving ratios drop to 6.9%. Australian food inflation has been running at its highest levels in 20 years across all food and beverage categories, but relief is on the horizon as food inflation is expected to peak in 2023.

The complexities of the market and tightening of household budgets represent an opportunity for growers to ensure that their business processes and fundamentals are sound to allow them to make the most of a difficult situation.



EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Over the next few months PCA will be rolling out a suite of resources and training opportunities for growers. These will include webinars, podcasts and videos, as well as online e-learning, grower case studies and face-to-face workshops. If you have an idea for training or would like to be involved in the delivery of these programs, please get in touch.

2023 STUDY TOURS

PCA are currently in the planning stages of the 2023 study tour program. Study tours are one of the most impactful learning opportunities that members have and we love bringing people together to share ideas, solve problems and learn. If you have an idea for some training for study tour topics in your region or would like to host a tour of your farm, please reach out.



CONFERENCE 2023

The program for the upcoming PCA '23 conference is moments away from being released and it is a value packed line up. With practical grower workshops, including Plant Empowerment training from the European experts, thought provoking and inspiring keynotes and a range of topics to help you build your business. PCA is proud to offer 150 free conference passes to growers, so get in quick to secure your spot at the premier PC conference in the country. More information and ticketing can be found in the link below.



PCA 2023
BRISBANE CONFERENCE
17 - 20 JULY



SAVE THE DATE

DIRECTORS' STORIES



NARRE WARREN FIRE BRIGADE RUNNING FIRE ENGINE

Whilst he is the first to admit that in the scheme of things the good Lord designed him for comfort not speed..... our Deputy Chair and three of his fire brigade colleagues are rolling up their sleeves to run in the Melbourne Royal Children's Hospital - Run For The Kids event on Sunday the 19th of March.

But apparently just taking on a 14.5 km run isn't challenging enough for the 'Fab Four' so they are repeating their previous performance from last year of completing the course in their 'Running Fire Engine'. The fire engine itself does have a vague horticultural connection - it is built out of plastic irrigation pipe - and covered in printed shade cloth, but still weighs a fair bit!

"We've always run in the event but last year we thought we would take a different approach and run it in a Fire Engine." said Tony. Whilst the fire engine itself doesn't have a great deal of water holding capacity (that's mostly consumed during the run!), it does have flashing blue lights and horns to alert unsuspecting runners on the course!

This year's team will be made up of Tony Bundock, Karen Bundock (long suffering wife of TB!), Rob Beard and Adrian Jones. All four are volunteer firefighters with Country Fire Authority at the Narre Warren Station.

Last year they made the six o'clock news on all channels so there is a high likelihood they will do the same this year.

If you want to run with the team feel free to register for the event, or alternatively you can help them with their \$2000 fund raising target by going to:-

<https://runforthekids.gofundraise.com.au/page/NARREWARRENFIREBRIGADERUNNINGFIR>

The COVID-19 pandemic impact on the Protected Cropping Industry, with disruptions to supply chains and changes in consumer demand has been the key drivers for growers to be able to adapt to constant changes, whether it labour hire, environmental or building approval for tunnels.

However, the industry has shown resilience and adaptability, with some growers shifting their production towards more in-demand varieties and investing in properties interstate.

Overall, the protected cropping industry in Australia is in a relatively strong position, with ongoing growth and opportunities for innovation and sustainability.

Growers are also investing in greenfield sites, to possibly achieve better year production throughout the year and maintain their labour by rotating them throughout the seasons.

One of the major challenges facing the industry is the high cost of production, with labour being the biggest challenge.

Some of the key advantages of protected cropping include increased yields, reduced water use, improved pest and disease control, and extended growing seasons. However, the industry also faces challenges such as high capital costs for infrastructure and technology, energy costs, and competition from imported produce.

The PCA is currently working with government bodies to ensure that tunnel structures being on farms are building code compliant and manageable with local council laws, to find out more on this, check our website [here](#).

Article by Zak Iqbal



Biosecurity Alert



Image: *Xylella fastidiosa* is attacking fruit tress and other plants in Europe.

Situation

The Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) initiated a pest risk analysis (PRA) in response to the introduction of emergency measures to manage the bacterium *Xylella fastidiosa* Wells et al. 1987 associated with the trade in commercially produced plants for planting (live plants, referred to in this PRA as nursery stock) and seeds for sowing in 2018. No *Xylella* species is known to occur in Australia and no known *Xylella* vectoring insects are present in Australia.

The draft PRA report also proposes a range of risk management measures that target *Xylella* species with the aim of preventing the bacteria's entry into Australia. The proposed measures are differentiated according to the assessed *Xylella* status of the country of origin, the host status of the plant taxonomic grouping, any offshore measures applied, and the form of the commodity imported: non-tissue culture (rooted plants, cuttings, budwood, corms and bulbs), tissue culture or seed.

Importance to industry

Xylella fastidiosa is one of the most significant emerging plant pests worldwide causing a broad spectrum of diseases across a wide range of horticulturally important host plants. A second species in this genus has also been described, *Xylella taiwanensis* (Su et al. 2016), identified as the cause of pear leaf scorch in Taiwan. Both *Xylella* species have similar biology; the bacteria are transmitted from host to host by xylem-feeding insects in the sub-order Auchenorrhyncha (Hemiptera), commonly known as leafhoppers and sharpshooters, and seed to seedling transmission of *Xylella* has been confirmed in *Carya illinoinensis* (pecan). Infected seeds will generally be asymptomatic and infected plants may show delayed symptom expression or be asymptomatic, presenting great risk when host seeds and live plants are imported into Australia.

Soilless Autumn

The latest Soilless magazine will be hitting your mailboxes over the next few weeks and it's packed with the latest research, information, and grower stories. If you aren't a member of PCA, sign up now to receive the PC industry magazine.

Here are some limited-page tasters of our Soilless Australia Magazine. Full copy is available to Corporate, Individual and Student Members only.



Become a Member

Corporate	Individual	Student
\$1000 /yr	\$250 /yr	\$50 /yr
+ GST	+ GST	+ GST

In the meantime, you can learn more about biosecurity risk analyses as follows:

Visit: www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/policy/risk-analysis

Email: imports@agriculture.gov.au

Phone: 1800 900 090 (Press option 1, then option 1)



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