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Hazelnut Newsletter Number 14 – Winter 2006

Presidents Report - by Stewart Deans

Winter is normally the time when you can take a break from the orchard as most of the hard work is done.

Jennifer Wilkinson asked what advantages do we have in producing hazelnuts over other producers. I don't think there is anyone in Australia who would be able to produce kernel at a lower cost than imports, but it should be possible. Most of the ANIC members are looking at sales of \$100M and increasing. The economics of hazelnut production is not dissimilar to that of other nuts. There is a great potential establishing a lucrative industry but it requires much larger scale plantings than what we have seen to date.

A researcher from SA wanted to know why the industry has not developed. Perhaps it is due to poor cultivars, although, Olives and others had similar problems. Perhaps people who have been attracted to the industry have been keen on the potential for small-scale in-shell operations.

If the growing of hazelnuts in Australia is to be economically viable then it seems necessary an orchard size of at least 40,000 trees is required. The business would be based on kernel only. Growers would aim to dry, crack and grade the kernel on site. The business would be Capital Intensive but minimal labour inputs. The growers would be improving productivity to the best in the world through applied quality research.

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Executive Positions

Nominations are still required to fill the Executive positions.

If you think you may have the time or know someone who may like to be nominated, please make your interest known to the President or your Regional Council member.

Nomination forms will be sent out to members in September, along with final details of the Special General Meeting to become an incorporated association.

Big-Bud Mite

Tasmanian HGA delegate, John Zito, has expressed concern about the possibility of big bud mite spreading to the mainland from Tasmania.

John suggested growers take a careful look at the buds on their hazelnut trees as this mite causes considerable damage in Tasmania and is also to be found in New Zealand. So far it has not been identified on the mainland of Australia but mainland HGA members should be vigilant.

At this time of year, dormant infected buds look like popcorn. The mites migrate when the buds are opening and the current control method is to spray with lime sulphur.

Should you find a suspicious bud, please contact Lester Snare of the NSW Department of Primary Industry (phone 02 6391 3800). Lester will provide directions on how the suspicious material should be sent to him for identification, and will be able to provide information on control.

R & D Committee Report – by Lyn McRae

The Committee met recently to review HGA's prioritised list of Research and Development projects.

The list was established in 2001, and required revision in the light of what has been achieved to date and emerging priorities. The Committee developed a new list of projects to put to the members at the Annual Conference in October.

Emerging needs included the climatic requirements for growing hazelnuts – particularly greater understanding of 'marginally' suitable areas in the light of global warming. Irrigation needs of mature orchards, canopy management and bird management were identified for further attention.

Following completion of the Pest and Disease Analysis, the Committee noted that the list of chemicals registered for use in hazelnut orchards needs to be extended.

Canberra Field Day

Around 16 people attended the HGA Southern Highlands Region Field Day on 20 May. Attendees included Members and potential growers from areas including Sydney, Canberra, Crookwell, Braidwood, and Mansfield in Victoria.

The Field Day provided visits to three properties in the area surrounding the ACT.

Members were shown over 1000 tree orchard developed as a Pick-Your-Own operation.

Issues of establishing a new orchard were discussed including aspects of planning, including, tree spacing, irrigation requirements, council regulation, vermin control, etc.

Finally visitors inspected bird netting structure and saw a demonstration of the construction of tensiometer tubes. Later on Members were able to discuss the impact of pruning in the orchard.

HGA Member Survey

Members are reminded of the importance of completing the survey form so HGA can meet its obligation to the Australian Nut Industry Council and others who require data on the industry.

Response has been pleasing, with 40 completed forms returned and forwarded to the Survey Co-ordinator for data entry. Results will be announced at the AGM.

Do Bees Help? By Stewart Deans



On a still winter day the strong perfume from the tree attracts hundreds of bees to the catkins. There may be two or more bees per catkin, working feverishly accumulating mounds of pollen on their back legs.

As the hundreds of bees return home they must act as flying catkins streaming pollen far and wide.

A fair conclusion is that the tree has enlisted the assistance of the bees to help disperse the pollen to the winds.

Looking Back – Looking Forward

By Vanessa and Clem Cox

HGA ended Financial Year 2006 with 126 members, a healthy increase over the previous year. To-date 66 members have already renewed and laggards will receive a reminder with this newsletter.

Four members sent in resignation letters, three due to retirement or other commitments, and one as his hazelnut growing experiment in Southern Qld, had not worked out. (Inquiry from 'climatically marginal' areas continues strongly and greater understanding of interaction of climate and varieties is needed.)

Two farm walks, Orange and Myrtleford, were extremely well attended - revenue (after meals) boosting HGA finances. Jean Baldwin, Alexandra Tuson and Sarah Guthridge (& ladies) deserve mention for their catering.

HGA entered 2006- 07 financial year with money in the kitty after meeting funding obligations to Sydney University for the final year of the RIRDC Varietal Evaluation Trials, and to Horticulture Australia Ltd for the Hazelnut Pest and Disease Analysis and Identification of Clonal Material Project.

HGA projects that were not completed included upgrade of the web-site, revision of the HGA Handbook and release on CD Rom, and development of HGA display board material for field days.

The proposal that HGA become an Incorporated Association will lighten ASIC reporting commitments and fees, but not the general work load which with some creative thinking could be effectively shared.

Corporate Responsibility – membership fees & data base, income and expenditure, banking, receipting, reconciliations, financial reporting. Joint Secretary Treasurer – or two persons in the same household, or town or district who can meet regularly.

Correspondance (other than above). Replying to general inquiries on hazelnut growing or HGA membership, sending out HGA application forms or standard HGA information (see publications below).

Minutes Secretary – taking and writing up meeting minutes, sending out notices of meetings etc.

Publications could include:- the HGA web site, development of stock reply sheets (eg '*Frequently Asked Questions About Growing Hazelnuts*', '*About HGA and Membership*'), display boards for field days, quarterly column 'Around the Associations' – in the Australian Nutgrower; and the seasonal HGA Newsletter. The Hazelnut Growers Handbook is separate.

A small group of people with special skills or experience co-ordinated by a Publications Officer could be responsible, with most of their communication achieved by e-mail – any takers?

