

## Final Report

# Melon Industry communication program

### Project leader:

Johnathon Davey

### Delivery partner:

Melons Australia

### Project code:

VM20006

### Project:

Melon Industry communication program (VM20006)

### Disclaimer:

Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited (Hort Innovation) makes no representations and expressly disclaims all warranties (to the extent permitted by law) about the accuracy, completeness, or currency of information in this Final Report.

Users of this Final Report should take independent action to confirm any information in this Final Report before relying on that information in any way.

Reliance on any information provided by Hort Innovation is entirely at your own risk. Hort Innovation is not responsible for, and will not be liable for, any loss, damage, claim, expense, cost (including legal costs) or other liability arising in any way (including from Hort Innovation or any other person's negligence or otherwise) from your use or non-use of the Final Report or from reliance on information contained in the Final Report or that Hort Innovation provides to you by any other means.

### Funding statement:

This project has been funded by Hort Innovation, using the melon research and development levy and contributions from the Australian Government. Hort Innovation is the grower-owned, not-for-profit research and development corporation for Australian horticulture.

### Publishing details:

Published and distributed by: Hort Innovation

Level 7

141 Walker Street

North Sydney NSW 2060

Telephone: (02) 8295 2300

[www.horticulture.com.au](http://www.horticulture.com.au)

© Copyright 2024 Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited

## Contents

|                           |     |
|---------------------------|-----|
| Public summary            | 4   |
| Keywords                  | 5   |
| Introduction              | 6   |
| Methodology               | 7   |
| Results and discussion    | 8   |
| Outputs                   | 9   |
| Outcomes                  | 122 |
| Monitoring and evaluation | 15  |
| Recommendations           | 177 |
| Intellectual property     | 18  |
| Acknowledgements          | 19  |
| Appendices                | 20  |

## Public summary

Since the submission of the Milestone 6 report in December 2023, significant progress has been made in our communications program. Particularly noteworthy is the substantial increase in engagement and followers across our social media channels, as detailed in Appendix #6. Additionally, our visibility and recognition within the industry have grown, buoyed by published articles in third-party publications and our Roadshow events.

Efforts have been dedicated to consistently enhancing the usability of both our website and member platform, refining our approach based on ongoing analysis. Relevant industry content and event updates are regularly disseminated through our digital channels to foster engagement within the industry.

The biannual online edition of Melons News magazine was launched in December 2023 (see appendix 1), with a printed version distributed in December also. This edition featured a 'Grower Spotlight' and updates on our Hort Innovation funded projects. The Melons Australia communications team are currently preparing for our final edition of Melon News under project VM20006 which will be finalized, printed, and distributed in June 2024.

Various initiatives have been undertaken to bolster engagement with the Melons Australia database and expand our contact base, in 2023 alone our database grew by 117. These include the ongoing Melons Australia Roadshow Series, forging new supplier contacts, and outreach efforts to our member database via the new portal. Notably, 42 new contacts have subscribed to our monthly e-News since the previous Communications Milestone report December 2023.

The Community of Practice (COP) is now live through the newly developed website platform in collaboration with Miton. We continue to enrich the website with valuable resources, ensuring all confidential documents are securely housed within the member platform and inaccessible to the public.



## Keywords

Melons, communications, social media, website, member platform, melon growers, community of practice, roadshows, engagement.

## Introduction

The dedicated communication program (VM20006) spearheaded by Melons Australia was a targeted initiative aimed at reforming and implementing effective industry communications. It ensured the delivery of regular, consistent, and relevant updates through innovative channels.

The Melon Industry Communication project had a primary focus on extending research and development outcomes to all Australian melon levy payers. It aimed to raise awareness about the R, D & E investments facilitated by Hort Innovation, including the melon fund, and fostered a sense of stronger connection between the industry and their investments. This initiative aligns with the broader goal of the agriculture, fisheries, and forestry sectors to achieve a GVP of \$100 billion by 2030. Embracing research outputs, fostering innovation, and promoting collaboration for mutual benefit were identified as essential components. Furthermore, the project aimed to bridge gaps between remote and isolated growers and the wider Australian melon industry, as well as connect them with domestic and international researchers, industry stakeholders, value chain members, Hort Innovation, regulators, and government agency staff.

The success of previous melon communications projects demonstrated the tangible benefits of focused industry communications. The ongoing delivery of the Melon industry communications program (VM20006) underscores the increasing sophistication of communication strategies and the stakeholders' strong interest in staying informed about industry-relevant research.

The leadership exhibited by Melons Australia and Hort Innovation in effectively delivering VM20006 underscores the Australian melon industry's readiness to embrace research findings. Melons Australia, through the delivery of VM20006, has established itself as a trusted source of information and serves as a central point of contact through various communication channels and products.

Various activities were undertaken to engage with the Melons Australia database and expand our contact base, including the ongoing Melons Australia Roadshow Series, establishing new supplier contacts, and engaging with the member database through the new portal. It must be noted that communications and their platforms need to continue to evolve and be fluid to support the ever-changing technological space in which we continue to operate, hence the review of the new website and platforms has been highlighted to continue in future Communications programs.

High-level achievements of VM20006 included:

- New website and member platform established.
- Improved awareness of levy funded investments, current and other relevant research and improved extension and adoption by Australia's melon levy-payers.
- Increased engagement by growers on levy funded projects.
- Increased readership of both digital and printed publications.
- Stronger connections between melon levy-payers and researchers.
- Stronger connections between melon levy-payers from across Australia.

## Methodology

This project was delivered by the Melons Australia's Communications Officer, with oversight, management and guidance provided by the Chief Executive Officer. The following communications activities were undertaken:

- Baseline assessment of current industry knowledge and awareness of melon research (as identified in VM20001).
- The previous website was reviewed, and changes were made on the new website to improve usability for growers and the public. Some of the updates included: changes to the layout and menu, creation of the member only platform, consolidation and changes to the way resources are presented, and hosting of the Community of Practice (virtual forum/information/interaction with other melon growers and researchers).
- Creation of the member only platform within the new website, allowing access to all levy funded growers. Resources not available to the public sit here, along with the community of practice.
- Tailored and relevant communications given to growers through:
  - Monthly e-newsletters.
  - Biannual printed publication.
  - Electronic direct mail (EDM), as required.
  - Website kept updated with media releases, events, project updates, virtual forums, webinars, podcasts.
  - Regular social media updates focusing on project updates, biosecurity, relevant industry information, and events.
  - Roadshow series presentations.
  - One-to-one communication via farm visits, phone calls, emails.
  - Notifications, messages and other means of communication directly through the new CRM.
- Provided regular coverage of contemporary issues of importance to melon growers via the above channels (export, food safety, consumer insights, chemical use), including sourcing appropriate information from researchers and information from a broad range of external sources, including quality international research and technology providers.
- Strengthened relationships with commercial service providers (agronomists), state departmental extension staff. Example: Some project leads attended Roadshow series and farm visits throughout 2021-2024, 3<sup>rd</sup> party hosted webinars directed to melon growers.
- Strengthened linkages and access to researchers for melon growers, including international researchers. Examples: communications of learning and development opportunities, Hort Connections grower funding opportunities, international study tours (Japan, US etc.).
- Maintained and adapted electronic newsletters and magazine production. Magazine production was reduced to a biannual production with a brand-new design, and significantly more grower focused content, promoting diversity with articles included. We are continually looking at ways to improve this publication.
- Provided impromptu communications to industry members on emerging and critical issues where necessary through newsletters, social media posts, EDM's, phone calls, and text messages.
- Maintained and grew Melons Australia's CRM system – our CRM system moved from an excel spreadsheet to a digital platform associated with the creation of our new website. The CRM can now segment the database into a range of areas (segment by state, suburb, role in the industry – grower, supplier, wholesaler etc.).
- Website updated weekly (media releases, recipes, events, new resources added, plus more).
- Other communications work during this project included design and development of marketing materials, creation of media releases where relevant.

## Results and discussion

While we're pleased with the success of this project, we recognise there's always room for improvement, innovation, and expansion in our communications efforts. As outlined further down in the report, we've compiled a set of recommendations aimed at boosting engagement with melon growers and enhancing our overall communication strategy.

Our online presence has been robust, with our website recording a total of 11,000 visits in 2023 alone. The incorporation of LinkedIn as a social media platform has been well-received, resulting in 504 new followers in 2023 and a total audience of 964, with our posts garnering 60,863 views in 2023. While Facebook remains a solid performer, we acknowledge the potential for further growth on this platform and are actively exploring options. Additionally, we're continually assessing the relevance of other social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok within our communications strategy. More detail on these results can be found in appendix #6.

Our Melon e-newsletter has seen significant growth during this project, boasting 1362 subscribers and consistently high open rates ranging from 40% to 52% for each monthly edition. This indicates strong engagement and interest in the content provided. Moreover, our printed publication has received positive feedback for its design and new content additions, including features like 'A day in the life' and 'Grower Spotlight', alongside updates on Hort Innovation funded projects.

The revamped Melons Australia website features a user-friendly interface with layout improvements implemented from the outset. It has become a trusted resource for growers and industry stakeholders, offering regularly updated resources, webinars, events, media, and news articles to ensure timely dissemination of relevant information. We have recognised that this is a first step in improving our industries online engagement with Melons Australia, and have already identified improvement areas for our website to further enhance the user experience.

Introducing a member-exclusive platform has created a secure space for levy-paying growers to access confidential resources and participate in discussion forums on industry matters. While this initiative is still in its early stages with 52 active users, we aim to expand its reach by highlighting its benefits in our roadshows, monthly newsletters, social media channels, magazine and any other engagement opportunities. One recommendation for future work is to promote one-to-one engagement with growers to showcase the ability of this resource to be of great value and benefit to them.

The transition of the Melons Australia CRM from manual spreadsheets to a digital platform has significantly enhanced efficiency. The new CRM facilitates easy segmentation, which has been invaluable for communicating local third-party events and melon roadshow initiatives. Furthermore, the system allows our team to add confidential notes accessible only to authorised personnel, proving especially useful in handling sensitive issues.

## Outputs

**Table 1. Output summary**

| Output                          | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Detail                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Communication strategy and plan | <p>Develop communications strategy for course of project and annual communications plans in accordance with the Melon R&amp;D Fund and VM20006, including the project deliverables. Strategy and annual communications plan to incorporate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stakeholder engagement</li> <li>Annual communication survey</li> </ul> <p>Annual review of progress against communications strategy and plan. Review may consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Changes in industry knowledge, attitudes, skills and aspirations</li> </ul> <p>Evidence of any attributable practice change, through stories of industry adoption because of communications.</p> | <p>A survey was distributed to all melon growers, and the ensuing results were carefully examined, leading to the implementation of necessary changes.</p> <p>Continuous one-on-one communication with growers, both in-person and over the phone, was maintained throughout the project. The feedback from growers regarding communications has been duly recorded and deliberated upon with the broader team.</p> <p>Comms Officer engagement in various roadshows to showcase the new Communications platform and to educate industry on accessing this.</p> <p>For instance, all growers will receive text messages and/or phone calls to discuss local melon events or crucial biosecurity updates.</p> |
| Grower and stakeholder database | <p>Maintenance of melon grower and associated stakeholder database, including contact details, basic grower profile and any specific interest areas. An appropriate collection notice will be used.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <p>We transitioned our CRM onto the new website platform, upgrading from a basic Excel spreadsheet to a comprehensive CRM system equipped with tags and the capability to segment based on various criteria such as state, suburb, and role (e.g., grower, supplier, wholesaler).</p> <p>An example of our database can be found in appendix #7.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Monitoring and evaluation plan  | <p>Develop detailed monitoring and evaluation plan including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>KPIs for outcomes and outputs.</li> <li>Program logic.</li> <li>Link to the Communications strategy and plan, including stakeholder engagement plan.</li> <li>Project risk register reviewed and updated.</li> </ul> <p>Establishment of relevant media, and communications monitoring tools.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <p>Throughout the project duration, we consistently monitored our performance by reviewing Google Analytics, social media analytics, CRM analytics, and email subscription/database analytics.</p> <p>An example of these results can be found in appendix #6.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Acknowledgements                | <p>Apply Hort Innovation acknowledgement and branding on project outputs. Insert agreed attribution in communications plan and ensure project staff apply.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <p>The Hort Innovation Melon Fund logo has been added to every Melon News printed publication, our website, newsletters, and social media posts where relevant.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

|                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Hort Innovation Communications and Extension team                                    | Link and collaborate with any future Melon R&D Fund extension projects as well as the Hort Innovation Communications and Extension Team.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Collaboration occurred regularly, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Melon News printed publication.</li> <li>• Melon e-newsletter.</li> <li>• Website updates.</li> <li>• Social media posts to ensure growers were kept up to date.</li> <li>• Melons Australia roadshows.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Biannual production of Melon News magazine                                           | <p>The production of Melon News, magazine publication, will provide a useful and welcome resource for industry building upon the current Melons News produced by Melons Australia.</p> <p>The project component will ensure 75% of the Melon News is assigned to R,D&amp;E focused content, providing technical information for melon growers and industry stakeholders. Articles and focus to be balanced to address existing perceptions of greater focus on particular melon types over others. The magazine will include research reports submitted by domestic and international researchers. The content will also raise awareness and understanding of levy investments and outcomes, as well as other relevant scientific and technical information, recognising that traditional approaches have failed to gain traction with melon growers. Collaborative and nationally relevant research and development will be incorporated as relevant.</p> | <p>Our Melon News publication has achieved a balanced mix of content and continues to be a platform provided to RD&amp;E contractors to share updates with our industry.</p> <p>Nevertheless, we are continuously exploring avenues to enhance its quality, such as incorporating innovative articles, adopting new designs, and so forth. Over the life of this project we have continued to include more grower focused content, including 'day in the life of' and 'Grower spotlight' sections.</p> <p>See appendix #5 for our last edition of Melon News.</p>                               |
| Melon E-news (funded outside of this project but integral to communications package) | Monthly electronic newsletter focusing on issues of interest to melon growers including snap shots of current research and development projects. Articles and focus of Enews to be balanced to address existing perceptions of greater focus on particular melon types over others. The newsletter to integrate with, rather than duplicate, the information provided through the magazine. Clear communications strategy to be developed to provide guidance on the communications aims of these two publications.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <p>The Melon e-news has experienced significant growth throughout this project, as evidenced by open rates now reaching up to 50% among all newsletter subscribers. An average open rate as quoted by email platform <a href="#">Campaign Monitor</a> is 21.5% across all industries.</p> <p>The Melon Australia team collaborates closely to maintain a well-rounded content mix, aiming to keep our growers informed about levy-funded projects, pertinent industry updates, training and development opportunities, upcoming events and supplier updates and other relevant information.</p> |
| Technical notes                                                                      | Work with Hort Innovation, other research                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | We routinely reach out to our database                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

|                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| and research reports        | organisations and researchers to ensure technical notes are developed for key research projects. Technical notes and research reports will be distributed through regular communications (Enews, website, CoP portal) and events (virtual forums).                                                                                                                                    | of supply partners, researchers and project partners, soliciting contributions for inclusion in our monthly newsletter and biannual printed publication.<br><br>We have also acted immediately in periods of natural disaster in promoting support opportunities and advice notes to industry in affected regions.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Social media                | Facilitate contributions to the Facebook accounts (Melons Australia and Love Aussie Melons) in association with project communications outputs, and consider value of Instagram, while discontinuing other social media platforms.                                                                                                                                                    | Throughout this project, we've amplified our social media presence, notably leveraging LinkedIn with success (refer to Appendix #6). Moving forward, we'll consistently assess the relevance of other platforms (eg TikTok)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Resource hub                | Develop and maintain an online resource hub providing up to date industry resources and promoting new opportunities, including training and grants. Link to other relevant online resource hubs such as growAG as they become available. Hub to assist growers become involved in industry events and related initiatives.                                                            | The new Melons Australia website features a dedicated resource hub, alongside specialised grower information pages covering topics (including current RD&E) such as melon quality, food safety, biosecurity, pest and disease management, as well as training and development. These resources undergo continuous updates as new information becomes available.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Community of Practice (CoP) | Establish a Community of Practice on the current Melons Australia website, incorporating virtual forums, podcast and other relevant research publications.                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Our website now hosts a specialised page for webinars and podcasts, where all pertinent resources are centralised.<br><br>Additionally, we maintain a media page showcasing both our own media releases and relevant third-party releases, along with updates on projects and noteworthy articles from industry publications. As part of this project, we've also established a discussion forum on the member-only platform, accessible to levy-paying growers and industry stakeholders upon request.<br><br>We've initiated several discussions on topics such as melon quality, food safety and strategies for boosting melon exports. |
| Virtual forums              | Deliver virtual forums (aligned through the CoP) to provide opportunity for geographically isolated growers, or those unable to attend events in person, to engage with industry research. Provide mechanism for growers to remain engaged at their own pace via web-based meeting platforms, recorded sessions placed on Melons Australia YouTube channel and/or streaming through a | Throughout the project, we conducted 2 live webinars over the period of just over 12months, subsequently now hosted on our website for those unable to attend.<br><br>These webinars are available on our dedicated "Webinars and Podcasts" page. Collaborating with research specialists and project leads, we've                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

|  |                                                                                                                                            |                                                |
|--|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
|  | dedicated closed Facebook group. Recordings of relevant events to be available to aid information transfer and provide reference material. | delivered insightful sessions to our audience. |
|--|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|

## Outcomes

Melons Australia's new website and member platform have been operational for over a year now, with uptake steadily increasing throughout this period. In the past six months alone, 42 individuals have utilised their member profiles.

Our Melon News was revamped at the onset of the project with a new format and disseminated to our grower database biannually. Feedback on the updated format has been overwhelmingly positive. In December, the digital edition of the publication was released on the website, while 250 printed copies were also distributed.

The ongoing Melons Australia Roadshow series continues to serve as an excellent platform for updating growers on the communication strategy and the enhancements to the website, including the development of the CoP and other upcoming features.

The outcomes of this project are in line with the SIP:

- Promoted the use of existing R&D and proven management practices that improve on-farm efficiency and increase profitability.
- Undertook R&D and extension to enhance product quality, consistent with evidence of consumer expectations (with a focus on harvest and post-harvest).
- Raised awareness of biosecurity and food safety risks across the value chain, through educational programs, on-site training and monitoring and evaluation.

High-level outcomes include improved awareness of levy funded investments, current and other relevant research, improved extension and adoption and effective management of this project.

### Awareness

- Enhanced awareness and understanding of research projects (current, past) and their applicability to growers' needs.
- Enhanced awareness and understanding of use of melon levy-funded investments.
- Identified alternate communications approaches to enhance understanding of use of levy funds.

### Extension and adoption

- This project increased grower awareness and interest in seeking more information on certain projects, primarily Biosecurity, Export and Melon Quality.
- Subject matter communicated and extended to be relevant and timely, including biosecurity and food safety.

### Project management

- Effective project management was achieved.
- Positive relationships with Hort Innovation project manager, Project Reference Group and Melons Australia staff.



Table 2. Outcome summary

| Outcome                                     | Alignment to fund outcome, strategy and KPI                                                                                                                                              | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Evidence                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Quarterly production of Melon News magazine | Increase readership of magazine from less than 50% (VM 20001) to over 70% of melon growers by the end of project.<br>Expand distribution of R&D magazine to include other key audiences. | Given the delivery of this project, a single annual stakeholder survey was completed in 2022 to identify key subject areas growers would be interested in learning more about in our bi-annual magazine.                                                                        | See appendix #1.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Melon e-news readership increased           | Melon grower targets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>30% in year 1,</li> <li>32% in year 2,</li> <li>34% in year 3.</li> </ul>                                                    | Melon e-news open and click rates have increased dramatically from the start of the project.                                                                                                                                                                                    | At the conclusion of this project we are consistently seeing open rates sit between 40-50% on our monthly newsletter.<br><br>See appendix #5 and #6 for a detailed report.                                                                                                         |
| Website and Member Platform                 | Having previously has no single source of member database, the creation of a CRM and new website was identified as a core component required in VM20006.                                 | The new Melons Australia website and member platform have been built through our web developer partner Miton.<br><br>Updates are constantly being made to improve the platform and keep industry events and news up to date.                                                    | See website: <a href="http://www.melonsaustralia.org.au">www.melonsaustralia.org.au</a><br><br>Grower Platform:<br><br>Provides growers with the opportunity to create a unique username/password to unlock confidential grower only resources and reports                         |
| Grower and stakeholder database             | Segmented by audience type, location, crop, specific interest areas                                                                                                                      | Completed within the new website development.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | See appendix #7                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Social media                                | Facebook maintained and used to recruit interested people / businesses to other communications platform.                                                                                 | Facebook followers and engagement increased. LinkedIn setup with some great results.                                                                                                                                                                                            | See appendix #6                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Resource Hub                                | Website traffic increase by 50% at end of project.<br>Greater than 60% of melon growers having accessed website during final year of project.                                            | Google analytics has shown that we have had a lot of traffic to the new website.                                                                                                                                                                                                | In 2023 there were 11,000 visitors to the website.<br><br>See appendix #6 for more detail.                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Community of Practice                       | CoP established as valued resource providing access to information, discussion forum, appropriate expertise, peer to peer learning, social connection point                              | Our new website incorporates a range of new features, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Member only platform available to all levy paying growers.</li> <li>Discussion forums for growers and relevant industry stakeholders.</li> <li>Resource hub.</li> </ul> | Our new website offers a comprehensive resource hub, regularly refreshed with the latest resources on important subjects.<br><br>Additionally, as part of the project, we've established a member-only platform featuring confidential resources and a discussion forum. The forum |

|                |                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                |                                                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dedicated melon quality, food safety, biosecurity, and training and development pages.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <p>serves as a platform to actively involve growers in discussions on topics relevant to their interests.</p> <p>See the website member platform for further details.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Virtual Forums | Virtual forums well attended and improve extension and adoption | <p>Throughout the project duration, 2 virtual forums were conducted involving both the Melons Australia team and trusted suppliers and partners. We plan to increase the number of virtual forums to every 1-2 months now that the new platform has been running for over a year.</p> <p>These forums served as informative sessions for melon growers, addressing critical topics relevant to their interests.</p> | <p>See website link for past webinar examples:</p> <p><a href="https://www.melonsaustralia.org.au/news-and-resources/webinars-and-podcasts">https://www.melonsaustralia.org.au/news-and-resources/webinars-and-podcasts</a></p> <p>On average Melons Australia hosted webinars had an attendance rate of 25-30 people (approx. 20 % of national growers) and were then made available online following these events.</p> |

## Monitoring and evaluation

**Table 3. Key Evaluation Questions**

| Key Evaluation Question                                                                                                                                  | Project performance                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Continuous improvement opportunities                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Improved awareness of levy funded investments, current and other relevant research and improved extension and adoption by Australia's melon levy-payers. | <p>Through our communications program we have focused on improving awareness in these areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monthly newsletters: open rates currently sit at 40%-50%.</li> <li>• Biannual magazine: 250 printed and digital copies hosted online.</li> <li>• Social media: regular posts focused on these areas.</li> <li>• Website: regularly updated with the latest information available.</li> <li>• Roadshow events: project updates provided during these events, in excess of 390 people engaged in these events across 24 months.</li> <li>• Webinars/virtual forums: held with project leads and other 3rd parties to keep growers informed and educated on current issues.</li> </ul> | <p>Our future focus will center on sustaining our current performance while exploring innovative avenues to connect with growers.</p> <p>Our goal is to uphold our reputation as a reliable source of information for growers, ensuring that all resources and updates are readily accessible.</p> <p>Some ideas to improve we are discussing include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A mobile web-based app could allow for easily accessible information, direct notifications on vital updates and information.</li> <li>• Closed Facebook group to connect growers and post updates, events, and relevant information.</li> <li>• Translation of the website into Vietnamese for our Vietnamese growers.</li> </ul> |
| Stronger connections between Melons Australia and industry.                                                                                              | <p>Several activities taken over the course of the project has strengthened connections between Melons Australia and Industry, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roadshow event series,</li> <li>• Farm visits,</li> <li>• Regular communications on important issues,</li> <li>• Webinars/virtual forums,</li> <li>• One-on-one communications via phone and text.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <p>While significant improvements have been made in this area throughout the project, we still see there is opportunity for improvement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased one-on-one communications with growers is an opportunity for growth.</li> <li>• Develop and improve community of practice to increase engagement.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Stronger connections between melon levy-payers from across Australia.                                                                                    | <p>Connections have grown in this space thanks to our Roadshow event series, member platform, and webinars.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <p>We aim to enhance our community of practice program, particularly by refining our discussion forums.</p> <p>These forums serve as a platform for growers nationwide to engage in</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

|                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <p>conversations on pertinent topics.</p> <p>Addressing the current low engagement is a primary focus for improvement.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Increased engagement across all communication platforms. | <p>Appendix #6 details our recent engagement figures across our digital platforms.</p> <p>Our monthly newsletters have seen incredibly strong results during this project with readership sitting between 40% - 50%.</p> | <p>We have significantly increased our engagement across our Comms platforms throughout this project, and are committed to new opportunities to grow our digital presence, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expanding our social media activity to Instagram and TikTok.</li> <li>• Developing a web-based application associated with the current website to promote real-time industry engagement.</li> </ul> <p>Outside of this, we are looking to improve our member platform (including discussion forums) to increase engagement with growers.</p> |

## Recommendations

- Build on the baseline of current industry knowledge and awareness of melon research progressed successfully through VM20006. Ensuring all levy projects are reported on regularly to the Melon industry.
- Progressive revision and update of the website (based on observed traffic), including the creation of an App based web service – supporting more direct and regular communication and notifications directly to industry members.
- Ongoing reform and consolidation of the [www.melonsaustralia.org.au](http://www.melonsaustralia.org.au) website as resource hub and hosting of the Community of Practice (virtual forum/information/interaction with other melon growers and researchers).
- Ensure tailored and relevant communications through development of communications strategy and associated plans, budgets, and M&E requirements.
- Ensure coverage of contemporary issues of importance to melon growers are regularly reported on (export, food safety, quality improvement, waste reduction, sustainability, consumer insights, chemical use, etc), including sourcing appropriate information from researchers throughout their investigations and information from a broad range of external sources.
- Melons Australia website has links and designated pages for projects that are being undertaken. We also have links to final reports available on Hort Innovation's website, and these are managed within our broader Comms program. There is in-kind project contributions from Melons Australia, however breaking this down from project vs in-kind is extremely difficult from a financial perspective. We are committed to providing industry with the closest connection possible throughout the life of the project.
- Ensure one-on-one conversations with each grower annually through Melons Australia to evaluate areas of important and improvement.
- Ensure all growers are called to discuss local events as sometimes emails can get missed.
- Strengthen linkages to alternate communications and extensions routes e.g. strengthen relationships with commercial service providers (agronomists), other PIB Comms programs, state/territory departmental extension staff.
- Strengthen linkages and access to researchers for melon growers, including international researchers.
- Maintain and continue to adapt electronic newsletters and magazine production. Ensure clarity of the role of these communications mechanisms to minimize duplication and dilution of message and appropriate branding associated with funding providers.
- Additional impromptu communications to industry members on emerging and critical issues.
- Develop clear means of reporting R&D levy expenditure through industry recognised platforms to avoid this information being lost in broader communications or ad hoc communications from project contractors.
- Review, maintenance and growth of existing Melons Australia CRM system.
- Ongoing website maintenance and general administration associated with the communications work of Melons Australia.

## Intellectual property

No project IP or commercialisation to report.

Melons Australia database has been collated and collected by ensuring contacts that their data would be held securely, in accordance with Melons Australia's Privacy Policy<sup>1</sup>, and that it will not be shared with external parties. These databases are reflected as Appendix 5 & Appendix 7 to this report and must be treated as strictly confidential.

---

<sup>1</sup> [Privacy Policy | Privacy Policy \(melonsaustralia.org.au\)](https://melonsaustralia.org.au/privacy-policy)

## Acknowledgements

The project team at Melons Australia would like to acknowledge the support and Strategic Guidance of the Melons Australia Board, the members of the PRG who continued to provide input and a confidant of the project progression. We acknowledge the continued support and engagement from all Australian melon growers, especially those who provided their time in contributing to our survey to support the ongoing development and delivery of this important initiative. We also acknowledge the support and engagement of Lauren Jones and Sharon Watt from Hort Innovation for the collaboration and commitment in working with Melons Australia to ensure the success of this project. This was a project funded by Hort Innovation using the melon research and development levy and funds from the Australian Government.

## Appendices

- Appendix #1 – Melon News December publication
- Appendix #2 – Melons Australia Communications Strategy
- Appendix #3 – M&E Report
- Appendix #4 – Risk Register
- Appendix #5 – March melon e-News data (confidential)
- Appendix #6 – Digital reporting including engagement stats
- Appendix #7 – CRM export example (confidential)



# MELON NEWS



**MELONS**  
AUSTRALIA

**The voice of the Australian Melon industry**

**VOL 2 - 2023**

## **WHAT'S INSIDE?**

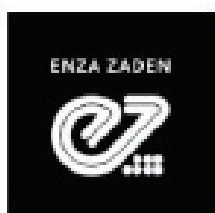
**MELON QUALITY PROJECT - GROWER SPOTLIGHT - BIOSECURITY UPDATE  
- EDUCATING HEALTH PROFESSIONALS ON AUSTRALIAN MELONS**



## GOLD STRATEGIC PARTNERS



## STRATEGIC PARTNERS



For further information on any stories in this edition, please contact  
Melons Australia Executive Officer  
E: [execofficer@melonsaustralia.org.au](mailto:execofficer@melonsaustralia.org.au)

### DISCLAIMER:

The purpose of Melon News is to communicate with the Australian Melon Industry.  
The information provided is not necessarily the position of Melons Australia, and presents the views and findings of the author.

*This industry communication has been prepared by Melons Australia and is largely funded by Hort Innovation using the melon R&D levy.*

### Hort Innovation MELON FUND

This project has been funded by Hort Innovation using the melon research and development levy and funds from the Australian Government. For more information on the fund and strategic levy investment visit [horticulture.com.au](http://horticulture.com.au)



## SUMMARY

- 4 A Message from the Chair
- 6 A Message from the Executive Officer
- 7 Supporting Compliance with Primary Production and Processing (PPP) Standards
- 9 Educating Health Professionals on Australian Melons
- 11 Melon Quality Improvement
- 13 Grower Spotlight - Daintree Fresh
- 16 On-Farm Biosecurity: What Are the Real Costs and Benefits for Growers
- 17 Identification & Management of a Fungal Disease Complex in Melons
- 19 A Year of Success: Multi-Industry Export Program
- 20 Melon Australia Roadshows
- 21 Healthy Honey Bees Support the Melon Industry
- 24 Grower Spotlight - Overland Corner Estate
- 25 Varroa Mite Update
- 27 Soil Wealth ICP Melon Project Nurturing Growth and Innovation
- 29 Training Opportunities for Melon Growers
- 31 Biosecurity Resources and Tools
- 32 Keeping Up To Date with the Latest Industry News
- 33 BASF Burdekin Field Day

**Melons Australia:**  
Phone Number: 0407 032 023  
E-mail: [execofficer@melonsaustralia.org.au](mailto:execofficer@melonsaustralia.org.au)  
Website: <https://www.melonsaustralia.org.au/>

**Editor**  
Courtney Archer



# Prevent gummy stem blight and powdery mildew in one pass.



## Luna<sup>®</sup> EXPERIENCE



Protect your yield with  
Luna<sup>®</sup> Experience fungicide.

- Provides powdery mildew and gummy stem blight control\*
- Built-in resistance management with Fungicide Groups 7 & 3 in one formulation, no need to tank mix
- Soft on most beneficial species\*

Speak to your advisor or visit [crop.bayer.com.au](http://crop.bayer.com.au) to find out more.



\*When used as directed.

Bayer CropScience Pty Ltd, ABN 87 000 226 022, Level 4, 109 Burwood Rd, Hawthorn VIC 3122. Technical Enquiries 1800 804 479. [crop.bayer.com.au](http://crop.bayer.com.au)  
Luna<sup>®</sup> is a Registered Trademark of the Bayer group. BH02023B.



## A Message from the Chair — **Paul McLaughlin**

It is hard to believe that 6 months has passed since our last Melon News publication and, hasn't 2023 raced by. In such times we have however seen our Melons Australia team going from strength to strength and this must be commended.

We held our Annual General Meeting on Thursday 14th September 2023 via video conference, and it was evident that the organisation continues to build. We had three new Board members appointed at the AGM and I congratulate Shaun Jackson, Doug Smith, and Luca D'Arsie for their appointment. The Board continues to meet monthly and focusses on the progression of our Strategic Plan, and I must note that we anticipate bringing a revised constitution to the Membership in early/mid 2024 for consideration.

The Melon Quality Improvement project continues to progress with Retail and Wholesale monitoring continuing until the end of January 2024, and the pending introduction of Phase 2 - from farm through the supply chain. This will be the key component of work to support growers with the tools and resources to meet the Interim Standards that are presented in the project specific article later in Melon News. My thanks go out to growers and the broader industry who have supported this work progressing over the past 16 months.

Our industry engagement with members, non-member growers and our Strategic Partners continues to be developed and refreshed by our staff, and we hope you appreciate the level and content of our communications.

I recommend that you all make time to visit our new website, if you cannot find or do not have a login please contact Courtney Archer ([comms@melonsaustralia.org.au](mailto:comms@melonsaustralia.org.au)), and then proactively engage with our team via this platform.

The team has recently kicked off the next round of industry roadshows for 2023/24 with successful events delivered in Barmera, SA; Mildura, VIC; Griffith, NSW and Ayr, QLD. Across these four events we have had in excess of 70 attendees and a very strong turnout from our regional growers. I thank those of you who have attended these events for your proactive engagement with our team and the researchers presenting, and any feedback you may have please feel free to provide that through Johnathon ([execofficer@melonsaustralia.org.au](mailto:execofficer@melonsaustralia.org.au)).

I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a safe and Happy New Year to start 2024, which I believe will be an extremely productive and rewarding year for our growers and broader industry. I also extend a warm thanks to our members and strategic partners for your support throughout 2023 and into 2024 as we continue building our great industry.

We look forward to having our team in your region in the near future and continuing to represent the needs of our members and Strategic Partners.

Kind Regards, Paul McLaughlin.





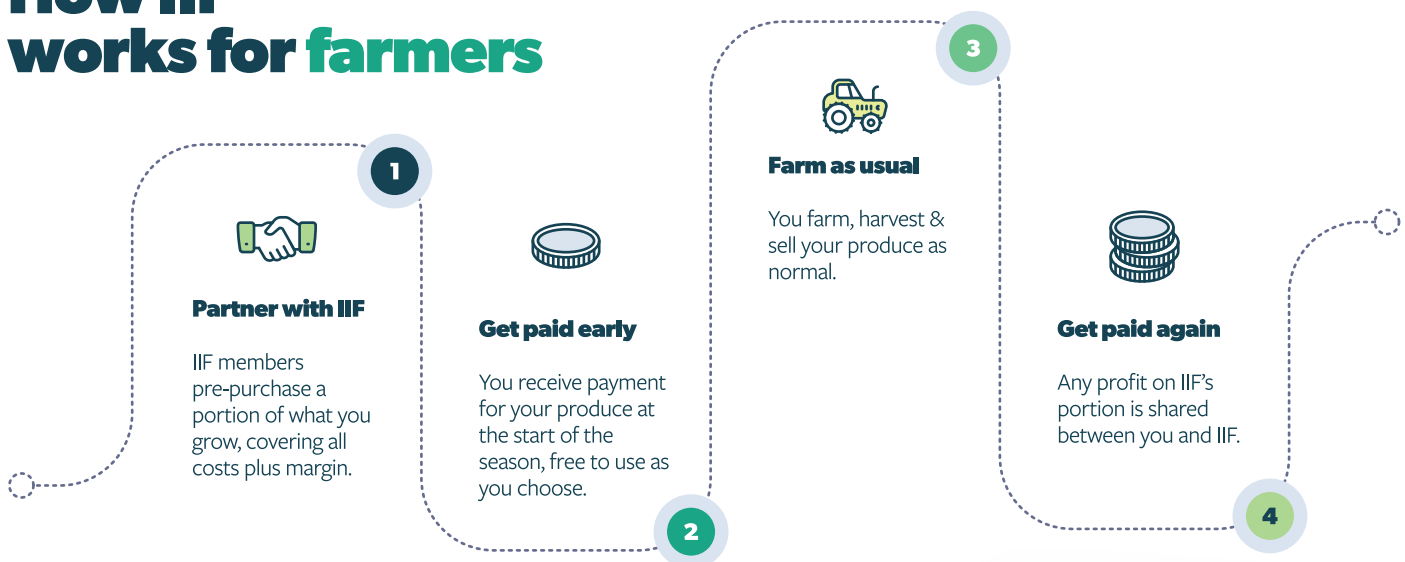
# Transforming the way farming is financed



**Farm with the direct support of the people who consume your food or fibre.**

IIF is a platform that allows everyday people to invest in what you grow, straight from their smartphone. This consumer-sourced capital can improve your cashflow, minimise your risk, and foster a connection with consumers that you won't find anywhere else.

## How IIF works for farmers



## Partnering with Daintree Fresh

Queensland melon grower **Shaun Jackson of Daintree Fresh** was one of the first melon growers to partner with IIF and invite consumers to invest directly in his farm's production.

In the last three years Shaun estimates his inputs have increased by more than 30%, and based on current figures he's preparing for another 30% hike in the next year alone.

*"To have IIF come along and help us cover those high early costs and share the risk, that's a big thing for me for the future."*

Shaun says not having to wait until harvest to access capital meant *"I could sleep and my poor wife could sleep."*

It also allowed him to share the realities of farming with consumers and educate them about the effort that goes into growing clean, green, high-quality melons.

*"We hand plant, hand pick, hand grade and ship these melons and at the end of the day the supermarkets tell customers a melon's worth \$4. It's ridiculous."*

*"Farming is a very difficult, stressful and expensive business. You go through six months not knowing if you're going to make money at the end of the year. The partnership with IIF takes some of the stress away. It's been a really rewarding relationship and we're going to offer even more of our production to IIF investors next season."*



**DAINTREE FRESH**  
WATERMELONS  
SEEDLESS JAVELIN

**LEARN MORE AT**  
**[iif.today/farming](https://iif.today/farming)**

# A Message from the Executive Officer **Johnathon Davey**



## **Melons Australia: Embracing the Future in 2024**

As we begin to call a close to the year, Melons Australia is delighted to present the final volume of Melon News for 2023. Reflecting on the milestones of the past year, this edition offers a thorough review of our recent endeavours, highlights new product offerings from our Strategic Partners, and shares the latest developments in research and industry advancements that are shaping the trajectory of the Australian melon landscape.

## **Empowering the Industry: Regional Roadshows, Training and Development and Study Tours!**

Our commitment to industry engagement is showcased through the ongoing successful execution of the Hort Innovation Melon Fund supported regional roadshows. As we close off 2023, by May we had delivered the first round of roadshows and in October we kicked off round 2 of the series having recently concluded four regional roadshows in Ayr, Barmera, Griffith and Mildura. We are excited to be finalising our plans for upcoming roadshows in Perth, Carnarvon, Kununurra, Katherine, Bundaberg and Tully in the first half of 2024. We also have ongoing training and development opportunities on offer for industry participants as part of a three-year funded development program and our most recent project approved is the delivery of a three-year study tour program (beginning in mid-2024). These initiatives underscore our dedication to fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange within the melon community.

## **Innovative Collaboration: Melon Quality Improvement**

We expect exciting times ahead as we continue to work through the collaboration with Delytics Ltd on the existing Melon Quality Improvement project. We have ensured the live quality assessment data remains available for industry through our member's secure platform and we are looking forward to Phase 2 of this project beginning in early 2024.

## **Global Presence: Beyond Borders**

Melons Australia, in partnership with AUSVEG, proudly represented the Australian melon industry at Asia Fruit Logistica 2023 in Hong Kong in September and at Foodex in Japan (earlier this year). Our collaboration with AUSVEG remains strong as we continue to implement our 5-year Export Strategy, conduct industry export training and development programs, and progress priority market access arrangements throughout 2024 and beyond.

## **Championing the Industry: Advocacy and Governance**

While celebrating our achievements, we remain dedicated to our role as industry advocates and spokespersons. As we bid farewell to 2023 and embrace the opportunities of 2024, Melons Australia continues to evolve. Our ongoing internal governance review and reform efforts ensure operational efficiency, positioning us to navigate the evolving landscape of the Australian melon industry.

## **A Heartfelt Thank You and Best Wishes for the New Year**

As we navigate the exciting prospects that lie ahead, I extend my sincere thanks to the Melons Australia Board for their unwavering support and strategic guidance. To our growers, members, and Strategic Partners, your continued engagement and support are the bedrock of our success. As an organisation, we are eager to embrace a positive future for the Australian melon industry.

Should you have any inquiries or require information about our organization or membership, please do not hesitate to reach out via [execofficer@melonsaustralia.org.au](mailto:execofficer@melonsaustralia.org.au). Wishing you all a joyful festive season and a prosperous New Year. Our team will be on a well-deserved break from December 21, 2023, to January 5, 2024, and we eagerly anticipate re-engaging with the industry in the coming year.





# Supporting Compliance with Primary Production and Processing (PPP) Standards



**Dr. SP Singh**  
NSW Department of  
Primary Industries

Change is constant and can often pose challenges. Since the 1990s, the landscape of food safety systems has continuously evolved with the introduction of voluntary Quality Assurance (QA) schemes. The adoption of QA schemes gained significant momentum in the early 2000s, becoming an integral part of suppliers' requirements. However, regulatory bodies overseeing food standards have vigilantly observed the developments in fresh produce safety both in Australia and globally. Consequently, new food safety standards are being developed and rolled out as part of the produce safety standards evolution process.

Food Standards Australia and New Zealand (FSANZ) serves as the national agency responsible for developing new food standards, which are subsequently enforced by state and territory food and health regulators. In recent years, FSANZ has focused on developing Primary Production and Processing (PPP) Standards specifically for melons, berries, and leafy vegetables. All commercial melon growers and processors will be obligated to adhere to these standards. Naturally, growers may have various questions regarding the necessity of these standards, the specific requirements they entail, and how they will impact their businesses.

This article aims to address these questions using the information currently available. The standards have already been developed, gazetted, and notified with an implementation date (12 February 2025). However, the specific implementation procedures in each state or territory remain unclear at present. The 'Safe Melons' team, in collaboration with Melons Australia, is committed to providing you with the latest information as it becomes available.

## What is the need for the PPP standards?

Most commercial melon growers invest in adopting QA schemes aimed at minimising food safety risks. The data suggest 95% of melon growers are compliant with a global food safety initiative (GFSI)-benchmarked scheme (e.g. Freshcare, SQF) which represents approximately 99% of the production volume. Maintaining these schemes comes with significant costs and it is argued that some growers might supply melons without any QA schemes in



**Johnathon Davey**  
Melons Australia

place, posing risks to public health and potentially causing collateral damage to the industry. The standards play a crucial role in creating a level playing field.

Fresh produce safety has come under regulation in many countries in the last decade. The introduction of these standards will align our industries with those in countries that have already transitioned into the regulatory phase. The standard aims to reduce the presence of hazards on melons, ensuring they are safe for consumers to eat raw. Melons can become contaminated through various factors, including animals, growing location, weather events, soil, manure and composts, water, postharvest washing and sanitization, as well as poor worker and equipment hygiene. The standard establishes minimum requirements for food safety, addressing the primary risks during melon production.

## Who is covered under these Standards?

This standard aims to reduce the incidence of foodborne illness associated with melons. The standard requires growers and primary processors (e.g. pack-house) to identify and control food safety hazards associated with growing and primary processing of melons and to have an approved food safety management statement which includes notifying regulators of their activities.

The PPP standards for melons (4.2.9) requirements will apply to all primary producers and primary processors of melons. Melons have been defined in the standard as fresh melons and includes watermelon, rockmelon, honeydew melon and piel de sapo. Examples of melons included are, but not limited to those listed and galia melon, charentais melon, Korean melon, hami melon.

The definitions of primary producers and processors in the standards are as follow:

- A primary producer is a business that grows and/or harvests melons.
- A primary processor is a business that does any of the following: washing, sorting, trimming, sanitising, storing, combining and packing melons, and transporting melons between pack houses.



What are the requirements?

An illustration summary of requirements for the Standards is shown in Figure 1. The requirements of Standard 4.2.9 include an approved food safety management statement showing how risks are managed. Melon producers and processors should be able to track where melons have come from and who they have gone to. All inputs including soil, fertiliser and water should be managed in such a manner that they do not make melons unsafe to eat. Good personal hygiene and health practices of people that handle melons, as well as good hygiene of the premises and equipment used are also important food safety components.

The melon food safety best practice guidelines developed for the industry cover the major requirements for compliance with the standards. However, targeted resources will be provided to melon growers and processors to facilitate their compliance.

What are the requirements?

12 February 2025 is the date earmarked for implementation of the Standards, following a 30-month implementation process. The date allows sufficient time for understanding and preparedness for the Standards.

How will you receive support from the ‘Safe Melons’ program and Melons Australia?

The NSW DPI’s project team has cultivated strong relationships with melon growers across Australia. One-on-one consultation has proven to be the most effective approach in delivering food safety best practices and ensuring their adoption. Once again, the project team is poised to extend similar support to melon growers and processors, aiding them in developing and revisiting ‘Food Safety Management Statements’ to facilitate compliance with the PPP Standards.

As part of our food safety monitoring and surveillance efforts, we have been actively educating and training growers in assessing food safety risks not only on their farms but also from a regional perspective. This involves considering microbial food safety risks stemming from neighbouring land use, wildlife in the area, and potential upstream water contamination. Historical data and business-specific risks will be integrated into the management statement.

We are anticipating that by mid-2024, the project team will commence working individually with melon growers and processors to enhance their preparedness for compliance with the Standards. Given uncertainties surrounding

the standard’s implementation in different jurisdictions, we commit to providing regular updates and pertinent information.

Resources and tools necessary for compliance with the PPP Standard will be made available through the Melons Australia website. The food safety helpdesk service will persist in remaining open for any technical inquiries.

What do I need to do?

- Maintain a QA scheme (e.g. Freshcare, SQF or GlobalGAP to name a few) which should be GFSI benchmarked. Follow the best management practice in food safety controls.
- Revisit or develop your comprehensive ‘Food Safety Management Statement’ which is a major requirement for all melon growers as part of the new standard.
- Continue participation in the ‘Safe Melons’ program through the monitoring and surveillance activities.
- Wait for further information on the PPP Standards implementation plan for each state/territory. This information will be provided to you, or contact Johnathon Davey at Melons Australia to understand your regions requirements.
- Contact your state/ territory food regulatory authority to ask for further information. Read more on each requirement in the standard and what it means for your business at FSANZ’s Food Safety in Horticulture webpage.

Acknowledgment

This article is a contribution from the project VM20005 ‘melon food safety monitoring and support’.



FIGURE 1. A SUMMARY OF FOOD SAFETY REQUIREMENTS UNDER THE PPP STANDARDS FOR MELONS (4.2.9). SOURCE: FOOD STANDARDS AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND.

# Educating Health Professionals on Australian Melons

Hort Innovation MELON FUND

This project has been funded by Hort Innovation using the melon research and development levy and funds from the Australian Government. For more information on the fund and strategic levy investment visit [horticulture.com.au](http://horticulture.com.au)

Jutta Wright  
FoodIQ



PROJECT CODE: VM20003

The FOODiQ Global (formerly Nutrition Research Australia) project team continue to be busy communicating the key messages about the goodness in melons to healthcare professionals (HCPs), as part of strategic investment funded project VM20003: Educating healthcare professionals on Australian melons.



To further extend the current resource brochures previously developed and continue to educate on the latest science and the value of adding colour to the diet using Australian melons, an engaging 2 minute video has been created along with two podcasts. Video and podcasts are dynamic mediums that offer unique ways to engage and communicate compared to traditional brochures and factsheets. Both utilised and built on the project's key communication strategy, centred on leveraging the topical new news from the project's published research to create engagement and interest as a platform to then hero and showcase melons as a family of fruit that can help people achieve colour variety targets, while simultaneously educating on their key nutrition benefits.

Two 35-40 minute podcasts were strategically undertaken with Leanne Ward Nutrition and Dietitian Connection, both highly respected HCP podcasters that provide credibility and further reach to the messaging. Podcasts are a great way to provide more in depth discussion on a topic, allowing an interactive experience for the listener that can build engagement and greater connection with the audience and messages. They also exist as evergreen educational resources on the podcaster's platform, available for their audiences to watch anytime.

Leanne Ward is a renowned Australian media dietitian, nutritionist, sports dietitian and online social media influencer known as The Fitness Dietitian. Her 5 star rating podcast series Leanne Ward nutrition is one of the most popular nutrition podcasts in Australia on Apple podcast and spotify, currently rated in the top 10 and attracts a high HCP following. In her June episode 'The Latest Research Behind "Eating the Rainbow" with Melons', Leanne interviewed Dr. Flavia Fayet-Moore (Dr. Flav) on the recently published research, and discussed the nutritional benefits of different types of melons and best ways to incorporate melons into the diet, to "Eat the Rainbow". To date it has had nearly 13,000 downloads putting it in the top 3% of podcasts. As Leanne has communicated, "Colleagues have loved it and it has also certainly encouraged them to eat more melons".

Dietitian Connection is a key dietitian member organisation that supports dietitians to keep up to date on the latest food and nutrition research, products and news. Their podcast series is well regarded by members to support their professional development. In their September episode, DC interviewed Dr Emma Beckett from FOODiQ Global who took a deep dive into the latest research for dietitians and discussed how and why nutritious melons are the perfect example of the pot of gold at the end of the fruit and vegetable rainbow. It proved a popular episode achieving downloads higher than the 2022 average for their sponsored episodes.

Two further video animations are currently in development, due to be finalised in December 2023. The next and final milestone period will see all the developed resources for the project leveraged in communication through digital outreach communication to drive greater awareness and reach of both the available resources and messaging with the target audience.

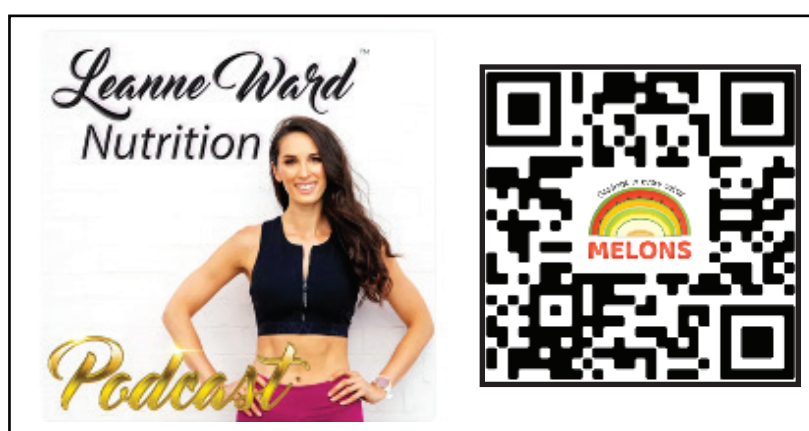
Check out the HCP targeted video here by scanning the QR code:





**Dietitian Connection Podcast:** In this podcast Dr Emma Beckett, discusses with Dietitian Connection, the key member educational organisation for Australian Dietitians, the evidence behind bioactive pigments to understand why quantity isn't the only thing to consider when recommending fruits and vegetables.

Using sweet and savoury culinary inspiration, Emma explores how and why nutritious melons are the perfect example of the pot of gold at the end of the fruit and vegetable rainbow. Scan the QR code above to listen to the podcast.



**Leanne Ward Podcast:** The Latest Research Behind "Eating the Rainbow" with Melons, featuring Accredited Practising Dietitian, from FOODiQ Global, Dr Flávia Fayet-Moore.

In this podcast Dr Flav discusses the nutritional benefits of different types of melons plus the best ways to incorporate melons into your diet, to "Eat the Rainbow".

Listen to it hear now by scanning the QR code above.



**PREV-AM<sup>®</sup>**  
**3-IN-1**  
**CONTROL OF**  
**WHITEFLY**  
**AND...**



Always read and follow label directions  
 APVMA Approval No: 89248/134129  
 PREV-AM is a registered trademark of Oro Agri, Inc.



**E.E. Muir & Sons**  
 AUSTRALIAN OWNED • SINCE 1927





# Melon Quality Improvement

## Project Delivers Industry Agreed Maturity Standards



Mark Loeffen  
Delytics

The Melon Quality Improvement Project has made strong progress towards helping the industry consistently supply consumers with good quality fruit.

Evidence gathered from the fruit maturity monitoring and consumer taste panels carried out by this project has led to new minimum maturity standards being set for rockmelons, seedless watermelons, and honeydew. Once adopted, the new standards are expected to improve the eating quality of Australian melons and increase consumer demand.

The initial draft standards were developed by stakeholders representing all facets of the Australian melon supply chain at a Quality Improvement workshop in Brisbane on 6 October. The workshop participants agreed on a consumer acceptability target of 80%, and the following maturity standards were set to achieve that:

- **Seedless Watermelon** - a minimum standard of 80% fruit above 10 brix, with the potential to consider a future standard of minimum 11° Brix
- **Rock Melon** - a minimum standard of 50% fruit above 11° Brix
- **Honeydew** - a minimum standard of 70% fruit above 11° Brix.

Following the workshop, a series of grower roadshows were held in October and November to socialise the new maturity standards. The roadshows were held in Barmera SA, Mildura VIC & Griffith NSW & Ayr QLD. The growers at all four were supportive of the 80% consumer acceptability target and the new maturity standards.



ATTENDEES AT THE BARMERA SA ROADSHOW ON 30 OCTOBER.

The evidence used to inform the development of these standards was outlined in a webinar on 11 September. The webinar was held to give growers an insight into the robust research that went into determining the standards and to provide an opportunity to give feedback. The webinar can be viewed on the Melons Australia website here:



The strategic levy investment project Quality Improvements in the Melon Supply Chain (VM21001) project commenced in July 2022 to overcome the challenges caused by poor quality fruit. In the Melon Consumer Insights report by Colmar Brunton (VM18000) in August 2019, it was reported that 26% of their participants had a negative eating experience with melons. The Nielsen Harvest to Home report for the year ending mid-June 2023 supported the need for change by reporting an 8% decrease in dollar sales for melons, and a 22% decline in the number of melons purchased – which was the highest decline in Australia's top ten fruit.



ONE OF THE QUEENSLAND DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES (QDAF) CONSUMER SENSORY TEAM POURING ROCK MELON JUICE INTO A BRIX METER. THE QDAF TEAM CARRIED OUT OVER 4,000 BRIX MEASUREMENTS DURING THE CONSUMER TASTE PANELS.

The wholesale and retail monitoring data collection, initially scheduled to be completed at the end of July 2023, has been extended to the end of January 2024. The additional monitoring will enable the project team to analyse how changing seasons and weather patterns affect melon maturity for the consumer.

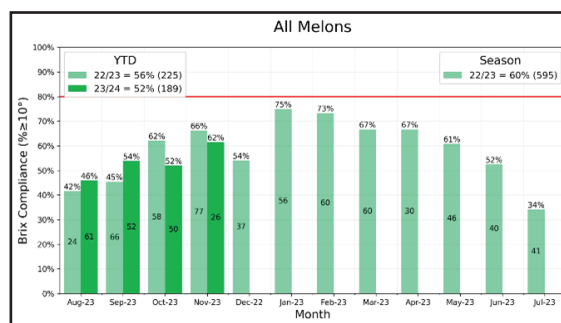
Project Manager, Mark Loeffen of Delytics Ltd says, "All the growers I talked to at the recent roadshows were very keen to improve quality and were overwhelmingly

supportive of the recommended standards. It is important to hear from the growers to understand their views on the new standards. It's also important to understand what they need to help them adopt and achieve the new standards."

Should you wish to know more about this project and the standards or wish to provide any feedback, please contact Johnathon Davey at [execofficer@melonsaustralia.org.au](mailto:execofficer@melonsaustralia.org.au) (0407 032 023), or the project lead Mark Loeffen at [mark.loeffen@delytics.com](mailto:mark.loeffen@delytics.com).



PROJECT LEAD MARK LOEFFEN PRESENTING AT THE QUALITY IMPROVEMENT WORKSHOP ON 6 OCTOBER WHERE STAKEHOLDERS REPRESENTING THE ENTIRE MELON SUPPLY CHAIN MET TO AGREE ON THE NEW MINIMUM MATURITY STANDARDS FOR SEEDLESS WATERMELON, ROCKMELONS AND HONEYDEW.



MELON BRIX COMPLIANCE GRAPH: THIS GRAPH SHOWS THE BRIX COMPLIANCE OF ALL THE ALMOST 800 MELONS INSPECTED SINCE AUGUST 2022 AS PART OF THIS PROJECT. THE GOAL IS TO ACHIEVE 80% BRIX COMPLIANCE EVERY MONTH THROUGHOUT THE YEAR.

## FLUTE FOLLOWED BY KUSABI FOR OPTIMAL POWDERY MILDEW CONTROL



**The Perfect Crossover**



**Flute** 50 EW  
FUNGICIDE

- Strong vapour and translaminar activity
- Unique mode of action to control resistant strains
- WHP: 1 day

**Kusabi** 300 SC  
FUNGICIDE

- Strong vapour and translaminar activity
- Good residual control
- WHP: Not required when used as directed

Innovation. Quality. Solutions.

[agnova.com.au](https://www.agnova.com.au)

\*Registered trademarks. 231030

**AgNOVA**  
TECHNOLOGIES

An American Vanguard Company



# GROWER SPOTLIGHT



Shaun Jackson  
Daintree Fresh



Shaun Jackson may be a latecomer to farming but he's making up for lost time. He exports specialty melons to Japan, is passionate about on-farm sustainability, and is one of the first melon growers to join a world-first initiative that lets consumers pre-buy fruit in return for a slice of the profit.

## 1. Describe your farm operation

We grow watermelons and honeydew on around 200 hectares of drip line plastic at Lakeland on the southern end of Cape York Peninsula. We have weekly plantings of 4-7 hectares per week. Our season runs May/June through to just before Christmas and at our peak time (Oct/Nov) we're sending out 15,000-20,000 boxes of melons a week to Japan and the domestic market.

## 2. What are the benefits and challenges of growing melons at Lakeland?

The climate here is amazing. We've got clear skies, warmer nights, higher soil temperatures and virtually no rainfall from the end of March to December. The dry growing season means rainfall doesn't interrupt growth patterns and we can control our plants much better with irrigation and fertiliser. It's considerably warmer overnight here than other melon growing regions like inland of Darwin. And because we're elevated at 270 metres, we're still in the vicinity of 30-35 degrees when the Territory is already hitting temperatures in the 40s.

## 3. You come from a corporate background in the seed business. What made you want to get more hands-on and start farming yourself?

Not being tied to corporate businesses and not having accountants telling me what to do! As a seed company manager working in product development I saw so many things on farms all over the world, and helped a lot of farmers. But I really wanted to put what I knew into practice. I wanted to develop an export program from Australia that I could take to other growers and develop a really substantial industry out of this country. We had to do a really good job of it to demonstrate it could be done, so that when people said "Yes but...", I could say

"We've done it." I think we could take Japan by storm if we changed our attitude.

## 4. So what's holding the industry back?

The low quality and low price activity in the Australian marketplace. Major supermarkets don't want large farmers doing big volumes. What they've done is create a situation where there's so much pressure for price that you have to shift volume to do it, and it's hard to shift volume and maintain quality in this country - especially with labour around \$37.50 an hour.

## 5. You recently partnered with Invest In Farming Cooperative (IIF) which invites everyday consumers to invest in what you grow at the start of the growing season in return for a share of the profit. What attracted you to that model? And what did it deliver?

I was attracted to IIF for two reasons: I wanted to share the reality of farming and develop relationships with the people who invested in my crops, so they could see the effort we put in to produce quality and flavour.

Secondly, in the last three years our inputs have increased by more than 30%. Based on current figures it will cost another 30% this coming year alone. That's another \$1.5m we have to find out of profit to pay for that increase. It costs us over a million dollars before we even start harvest. That's a huge risk to take. So to have IIF come along and help us cover those high early costs and share the risk, that's a big thing for me for the future.

## 6. What difference did that early access to capital make?

I could sleep. And my poor wife could sleep. Farming is a very difficult, stressful and expensive business. You go through six months not knowing if you're going to make money at the end of the year. The partnership with IIF takes some of the stress away. It's been a really rewarding relationship and we're going to offer even more of our production to IIF investors next season.

## 7. Caring for land and soil is a priority at Daintree Fresh. Why is that important to you, and what are you doing on-farm?

This land has to last generations - whether I have it or not. If you want to improve health - whether that's a person's health or a plant's health - you have to find the cause of the issue, work on that issue, and then you don't need the chemistry. We have a 'Bugs for Bugs' approach. I bring beneficial bugs in like Californicus which predate red spider mite, aphid and whitefly. So we sprinkle Californicus throughout the paddocks when the weather is conducive for other pests. The pests start to reproduce and the Californicus controls them. It's like a war going on in the paddock - you see the shells and dead bodies of the nasties all around you.

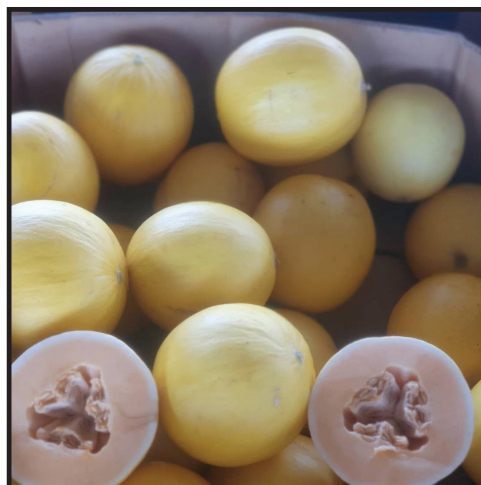
We use organic carbon and probiotics, and we only use the ground once and then replace everything we took out of the soil. By balancing plant nutrition we've got good plant health and good resistance to insects and diseases. We've reduced our chemical use to a quarter of what it was.



THE DAINTREE TEAM

## 8. What are you proud of?

This is only our seventh season. I'm surrounded by people who've been at it for two or three generations, and we're showing them there are improvements that can be made and it's commercially viable. People would assume from my corporate background that I wouldn't succeed, but we have succeeded as an industry player and as an international marketer and as a production system. But what I'm most proud of is that every time you cut and eat our fruit, it tastes great.



CANDY MELONS

 **PREV-AM®**  
**3-IN-1**  
**CONTROL OF**  
**MITES**  
**AND...**



Always read and follow label directions  
APVMA Approval No: 89248/134129  
PREV-AM is a registered trademark of Oro Agri, Inc.



**E.E. Muir & Sons**  
AUSTRALIAN OWNED • SINCE 1927



# A brighter future. MIRAVIS® Duo.

Whatever your vision of the future, MIRAVIS® Duo fungicide can help bring it to life. MIRAVIS® Duo combines two active ingredients to provide best-in-class protection of powdery mildew and leaf spot diseases in a wide range of horticultural crops.

With dual modes of action it offers robust residual protection while reducing the risk of fungicide resistance. MIRAVIS® Duo offers a powerful new tool for growers who want peace of mind, high yields and quality that really stands out.

Innovation, powered by MIRAVIS®. For further information talk to your local Syngenta representative or visit [syngenta.com.au/miravis-duo](https://syngenta.com.au/miravis-duo)

 **Miravis® Duo**

**syngenta®**



**IS YOUR  
CROP  
PROTECTED?  
SCAN HERE**





Clinton Muller  
RMCG

# On-Farm Biosecurity: What Are the Real Costs and Benefits for Growers



Timothy Clune  
La Trobe University

On-farm biosecurity is becoming an increasingly important topic of conversation. Whether you've heard about it or experienced it first-hand, a pest incursion has devastating impacts to businesses, growing regions and markets.

Australia's biosecurity system – and its implementation at all levels – is critical to protect our farms, environment, communities and economy from the world's most invasive pests, weeds and diseases. It's also key to supporting international market access.

On-farm biosecurity is a vital support pillar to the national biosecurity system. It involves activities to protect a property from the entry and spread of new and established pests, such as:

- Routine farm hygiene
- Pest monitoring and management
- Reporting for obtaining or retaining business continuity
- Trade and market access.

While there is a broad understanding that on-farm biosecurity benefits growers, there are costs and barriers to introducing effective practices. As little research has been done to quantify these benefits and costs, a new project is underway to close the current gap in knowledge.

## New Research to Uncover Answers

Led by RM Consulting Group (RMCG) and La Trobe University, a PhD student will conduct an economic analysis of a range of biosecurity practices available to melon and vegetable growers.

The PhD student will work closely with growers, industry organisations and researchers through to 2026. They will aim to quantify the everyday costs and benefits of on-farm biosecurity initiatives and examine the opportunities and challenges of implementing these activities on melon and vegetable farms.

The results will be shared with industry and provide tangible evidence to help growers make more informed decisions to increase the level of biosecurity practices on farms across Australia.

This will ultimately help to reduce the spread of new and established pests on vegetable and melon farms, minimise the need for pesticides, improve compliance with quality assurance programs and market access requirements, and support long-term profitability for growers.

If you would like to be involved in the project or for more information, contact La Trobe University Senior Lecturer Dr Tim Clune at [t.clune@latrobe.edu.au](mailto:t.clune@latrobe.edu.au) or 02 6024 9853.

*This project is funded by Hort Innovation using the vegetable and melon research and development levies and contributions from the Australian Government.*

**Hort  
Innovation**

PROJECT CODE: MT22008

**RMCG**





# Identification & Management of a Fungal Disease Complex in Melons

Cherie Gambley  
Agreco



**PROJECT CODE: VM22001**

Project VM22001 'Identification and management of a fungal disease complex in melons' commenced in January 2023. The project aims to improve productivity for the Australian melon industry through improved knowledge and management of soilborne fungal diseases. This includes research into options for diseases such as gummy stem blight, charcoal rot, fusarium wilt and vine decline.

The key project activities include disease surveys in commercial crops, pathogen identification and investigation of the plant supply chain. Since starting, the team has visited several districts and collected disease samples (Figure 1). This included Chinchilla, Burdekin, Bowen, Gumlu and Bundaberg in QLD, Mildura in VIC and Griffith in NSW. The crops surveyed were a mix of the different melon types. Soilborne disease incidence and crop loss in these districts varied a lot, from <1% to almost 100%. Seedling health was identified as a contributing factor in some disease outbreaks.

From these surveys the pathogens identified included *Fusarium oxysporum* (causes wilt), *Stagonosporopsis* sp. (causes gummy stem blight), *Pythium* sp. and *Fusarium solani* (both can cause root damage and sometimes wilt), and *Macrophomina phaseolina* (causes charcoal rot). An early learning from these surveys is the higher frequency of charcoal rot detection than expected, as previously it was considered a minor disease in melon. In the on-line grower knowledge survey, conducted at the start of the project, charcoal rot rated lower than gummy stem blight in importance. *Macrophomina* induces very similar symptoms on melons as does gummy stem blight and both produce dark fruiting bodies which are indistinguishable by eye (Figure 2). These similarities are probably the reason charcoal rot is underestimated as a disease in melons.



FIGURE 1. PROJECT TEAM MEMBERS LEN TESORIERO AND RAMYA GUGULOTHU DOING FIELD SURVEYS IN NORTH QLD.

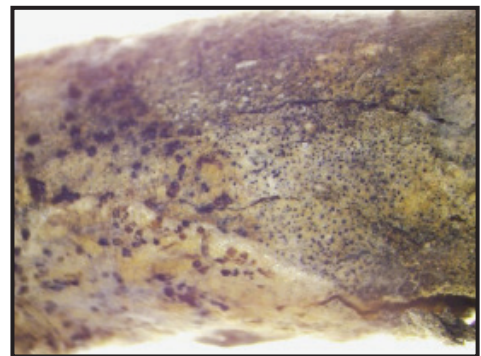


FIGURE 2. A ROCKMELON STEM SHOWING FUNGAL INFECTION. THE TINY DARK SPOTS INCLUDE BOTH GUMMY STEM BLIGHT AND CHARCOAL ROT. THESE ARE EASILY SEEN WITH A HAND LENS BUT THE SPOTS FROM THE TWO DISEASES LOOK VERY SIMILAR.

Additional to the crop surveys in Bundaberg, the team is monitoring a number crops / blocks each season. A plot of about 150 plants is rated for disease incidence and severity every two weeks until harvest (Figure 3). The data will be evaluated against local weather conditions, grower practices and crop stage to elucidate any key factors which improve or worsen disease outcomes.

Evaluation of disease pathways from seed to production is underway. In particular, this is to evaluate the risk of potential transfer of gummy stem blight from seed or within the nursery to seedlings and options to reduce this risk if needed. Review of published literature confirmed that pathogens causing gummy stem blight, fusarium wilt and charcoal rot can all be seedborne and all survive in crop debris. Additionally, fusarium and macrophomina also survive in the soil for very long period of time (>10 years) as highly stable spores.

Other ongoing research includes baseline testing of resistance to fungicides and race typing of fusarium oxysporum isolates. Field trials are planned to start in 2024 and include varietal trials and a longitudinal study to assess agronomic practices to reduce pathogen load in-field over time.

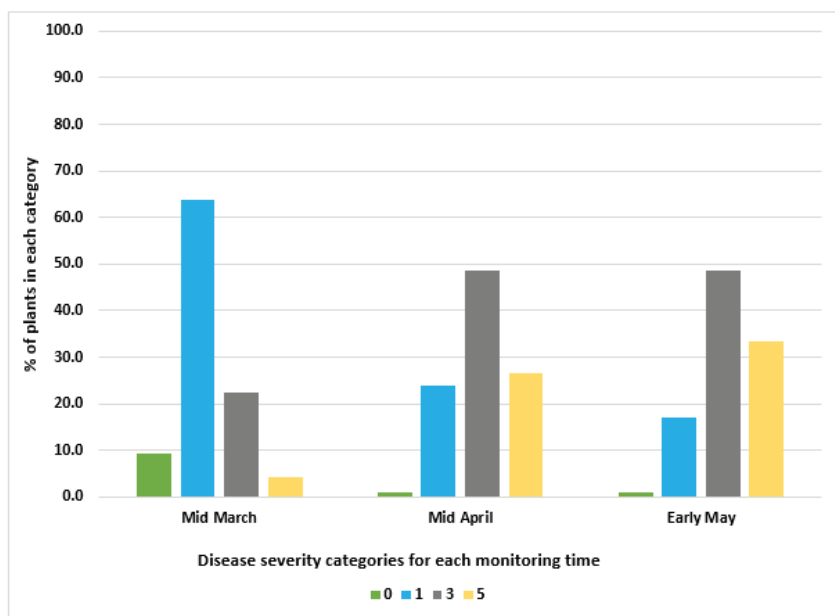


FIGURE 3. A WATERMELON CROP MONITORED FROM MID-APRIL TO MID-MAY, 2023 IN BUNDABERG. THE CROP HAD VERY HIGH DISEASE INCIDENCE THROUGHOUT THE MONITORING TIME (MID-MARCH TO EARLY MAY) AND ALTHOUGH THE DISEASE SEVERITY INCREASED OVER TIME FROM A RATING OF MOSTLY ONE (MILD DISEASE) TO THREE (MODERATE) AND FIVE (BADLY AFFECTED) THE OVERALL CROP LOSS WAS MINIMAL. THE PATHOGEN IDENTIFIED AT THIS SITE WAS GUMMY STEM BLIGHT.

### How can you help?

If you have disease outbreaks, please contact us to discuss having samples tested. Identifying which combination of pathogens are present in your crops will help you and will also assist in clarifying what is affecting melons in Australia.

### For further information or to send samples please contact

Dr Cherie Gambley +61 423 200 211, [Cherie.gambley@agrecoaustralia.com](mailto:Cherie.gambley@agrecoaustralia.com),  
Chris Themsen +61 408 197 180, [chris.themsen@agrecoaustralia.com](mailto:chris.themsen@agrecoaustralia.com), or  
Dr Len Tesoriero +61 447 623 487, [len.tesoriero@dpi.nsw.gov.au](mailto:len.tesoriero@dpi.nsw.gov.au)



MELONS  
AUSTRALIA

Interested in  
becoming a  
Melons Australia  
Strategic Partner?  
Scan the QR code  
to find out more.



# A Year of Success: Multi-Industry Export Program



**Johnathon Davey**  
Melons Australia

The first year of our multi-year Export Growth and Development partnership with AUSVEG under project MT21009 has been a resounding success and, Melons Australia is thrilled to share the progress we've made in advancing the export development and growth of our Australian melons. Over the past six months, we have engaged in various initiatives and collaborations that have propelled industry further into the global market.

One significant highlight was our participation in the Asia Fruit Logistica held in Hong Kong from 6-8 September 2023. This international platform provided us with a unique opportunity to showcase the excellence of Australian melons to a diverse audience. Growers and Melons Australia were actively present, networking, and fostering connections that contribute to the expanding footprint of Australian melons in the Asian market. Continuing our commitment to strategic market access, we maintained active engagement with counterparts in our key focus areas: India, South Korea, and Vietnam.

These markets hold immense potential for Australian melons, and our ongoing collaboration aims to strengthen ties, overcome trade barriers, and promote the quality of our produce.

In line with our dedication to continuous improvement, we maintained our partnership with AUSVEG in the dynamic 5-year multi-industry Export Growth and

Development project. This collaboration focuses on providing training and development opportunities, ensuring that our growers and stakeholders stay at the forefront of industry best practices. Together, we are shaping the future of Australian melon exports by investing in knowledge and skill development.

Looking ahead, we are close to finalising our implementation plan for the 2023-28 Export Strategy. This strategic roadmap will guide our efforts in navigating the international market landscape, ensuring sustained growth, and increased global visibility for Australian melons.

As we move forward, Melons Australia remains committed to actively participating in international forums, sharing insights, and contributing to the global dialogue on melon production and export. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our dedicated growers, partners, and stakeholders who have been instrumental in our success and look forward to continuing to collaborate with AUSVEG for the benefit of our industry in 2024.

Cheers to a year of achievement, and here's to many more years of flourishing Australian melon exports on the world stage!



ASIA FRUIT LOGISTICA SEPTEMBER 2023



ASIA FRUIT LOGISTICA SEPTEMBER 2023



# Melons Australia Roadshows: Cultivating Knowledge and Collaboration



In recent weeks, Melons Australia embarked on our latest series of roadshows across key melon-growing regions, fostering knowledge exchange and collaboration among industry stakeholders. The roadshows made stops in Ayr, Queensland; Mildura, Victoria; Griffith, New South Wales; and Barmera, South Australia, connecting with over 70 enthusiastic industry participants.

The heart of these gatherings was a series of presentations from project leads and research experts, delving into vital RD&E that promises to shape the future of melon production. One key focus was melon quality improvement, where Mark Loeffen of Delytics shared insights into quality assessments undertaken over the past 15 months and consumer taste panels. Mark then explored the proposed Melon Maturity Standards recommended through this research. The interactions explored with growers the innovative techniques and technologies required into the future enhancing the overall quality of melon crops. This knowledge is not only instrumental for the growers but also holds the potential to elevate the standard of melons in the market.

Soil health is a critical aspect of agriculture, and the roadshows dedicated attention to the latest developments in melon crop soil wealth. Understanding the intricacies of soil composition and fertility is essential for sustainable and productive farming, and these roadshows provided a platform for farmers to stay abreast of cutting-edge developments in this domain for the melon industry.

Biosecurity matters took centre stage as well, with our Biosecurity Officer shedding light on the latest measures to protect melon crops from potential threats. Given the global nature of agriculture, a proactive approach to biosecurity is crucial to safeguarding the industry and ensuring the consistent supply of high-quality produce.

Communication is key in any industry, and Melons Australia emphasized its commitment to effective communication through presenting the latest updates and developments within Melons Australia communications. This segment explored avenues for better information dissemination, collaboration, and networking within the melon-growing community.

Food safety is a paramount concern in the our industry, and participants had the opportunity to discuss best practices in ensuring the safety and quality of melon products for consumers. The exchange of ideas and insights in this area is pivotal for maintaining consumer confidence and meeting stringent industry standards, which will come into force in February 2025.

This first half of the roadshow series concluded with a flourish in Ayr, where it joined forces with the BASF/ Nunhems Field Day at the Ayr QDAF research station. This collaboration provided a dynamic environment for participants to witness real-world applications of the latest products, R&D and melon varieties on offer through BASF/Nunhems and was a great success.

As the first part of the current roadshow series finishes, Melons Australia is already setting its sights on the future. Plans are underway for a the second half of this series roadshows in early 2024, promising even more opportunities for learning, collaboration, and innovation. Stay tuned as Melons Australia continues to spearhead advancements in the melon industry, cultivating a thriving and sustainable future for growers and consumers alike.



# Healthy Honey Bees Support the Melon Industry



Karin Steenkamp  
Plant Health Australia

Healthy bees play a vital role in Australia's \$172.9M melon industry, with cross-pollination a valuable contributor to crop produce. Watermelons, rockmelons, and honeydew melons are commonly grown in Australia and insect pollination contributes to the production of large, evenly shaped fruits.

The melon industry continues to partner with the honeybee industry, through Hort Innovation, to build a strong biosecurity system through their investment in the National Bee Pest Surveillance Program (NBPSP).

Delivered by Plant Health Australia (PHA) with additional funding from state and territory governments, the Australian Government, the Australian Honey Levy and Grain Producers Australia (GPA), the NBPSP supports early detection for high priority exotic bee pests, including Varroa mite, Tropilaelaps mite and Tracheal mite.

The NBPSP is an early warning system that uses a range of surveillance methods at seaports and airports throughout Australia, since these are the most likely entry points for honey bee pests and pest bees. Surveillance at additional ports is also provided through in-kind contributions by state and territory governments.

"The program ensures Australia has an early warning system in place to protect our valuable honey bee health status," said Dr Lucy Tran-Nguyen, PHA's General Manager, Partnerships and Innovation.

"We will continue to focus on safeguarding honey bees from high impact pests to give us the best chance of maintaining the supply of healthy pollinators for plant industries," said Dr Tran-Nguyen.

Various surveillance tactics employed in the program include monitoring live (sentinel) hives for pests and diseases, catchboxes to capture swarms, rainbow bee-eater pellet analysis and aerial pheromone ballooning to pick up new species of bees and using nets to sweep flowering plants to capture any foraging bees near ports.

"These techniques are fit for purpose and consider learnings from past experiences to improve the efficiency and delivery of surveillance at each of the port locations," said Dr Jenny Shanks, PHA's Manager: Bee Biosecurity.

Since the commencement of the NBPSP in 2012, more than 30,500 surveillance activities have been performed, which include:

- 8084 sticky mat inspections for external bee mites
- 5658 additional surveillance activities such as sugar shake, alcohol wash or drone capping
- 4975 frame inspections for large African hive beetle, Braula fly and small hive beetle
- 1655 sample collections
- 2469 small hive beetle traps deployed in the Northern Territory, Western Australia and Tasmania
- 1155 samples of bees collected from hives and tested for exotic viruses
- 5380 catchbox inspections undertaken for the presence of European honey bees or Asian honey bees
- 86 swarm captures including those found in catchboxes
- 1036 floral sweep netting events targeting foraging bees
- 57 pellet diagnostics
- 14 aerial ballooning events.

While PHA has coordinated the delivery of the NBPSP for the past 10 years, bee pest surveillance in Australia has been underway for over two decades with the first sentinel hive inspections occurring in the late 90s. Today, PHA as the national coordinator for the plant biosecurity system, works with the melon industry to manage biosecurity risks and pollination needs.



CATCHBOXES ARE EMPTY BOXES PLACED AROUND PORTS PROVIDING A LOCATION FOR NEWLY ARRIVING HONEY BEE SWARMS



BEE SURVEILLANCE

The latest 3-year iteration of the NBPSP commenced in December 2021 and ends in December 2024. The program will continue to focus on a consistent national approach for the early detection of target bee pests and diseases. Melon growers are urged to report any unusual plant or bee pests and diseases through the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline (1800 084 881). Early reporting increases the chance of effective control and eradication.

“Reporting unusual symptoms or unexplained colony deaths, by working closely with beekeepers pollinating your crops will also assist in building knowledge and may provide vital clues needed to identify a new pest and stop it spreading to surrounding bee populations,” said Dr Shanks. Visit our website for more information on the NBPSP.

The NBPSP is funded by Hort Innovation using research and development levies of 14 horticultural industries, with significant co-investment from states and territories and contributions from the Australian Honey Bee Levy, Grain Producers Australia and the Australian Government. The NBPSP is coordinated by Plant Health Australia and delivered by states and Northern Territory government.

## National Bee Pest Surveillance PROGRAM

### Delivering 30,539 surveillance activities since 2012





**Elevate  
your soil.**

**Elevate your  
harvest.**



**Salibro®**

Rakdemel® active

**NEMATOCIDE**

**Start at the roots to protect  
the future of your farm.**

Salibro® Rakdemel® active helps grow your yield by working to protect your crop from root-knot nematodes.

Salibro stands out for its excellent environmental profile and compatibility with beneficial organisms, promoting healthy, productive soils over time.

Get the best of both worlds with Salibro.

# GROWER SPOTLIGHT

## OVERLAND CORNER ESTATE



### 1. What produce do you grow?

We grow both seedless watermelon and wine grapes.

### 2. How much do you produce, across what acreage?

We grow between 4000 and 4500 tonne of watermelon over 45 hectares

### 3. What do you enjoy most about farming and how long have you been growing melons?

We have been growing watermelons for twenty years, although our family has been in horticulture for four generations.

We get a lot of satisfaction from growing melons. We enjoy the challenge of perfecting the art of growing and the fact that no two growing seasons are alike.

We also love that our young family are able to get involved. The kids love to come out and explore the farm. In all honesty we love what we do and are really passionate about this industry.

### 4. What methods do you use to inspect your Melon crops to determine their harvesting time?

We spend a lot of time reviewing and monitoring all the patches. When the fruit starts to size up, we will go through the patch and cut the fruit to test brix levels across different melon sizes. Once we are satisfied with the brix levels, we will review the patch with the harvest crew to discuss harvest techniques.

### 5. How do you keep your crops healthy and free of pests and diseases?

It is vital to monitor your crops regularly. We inspect our crops daily and conduct fortnightly SAP tests. These tests provide detailed analysis on the health of the plant. Therefore, any deficiencies within the plant can be detected and rectified early.

We also have various biosecurity processes, such as limiting outside materials entering the property. This

ensures we limit any exposure of outside pests entering the property.

Finally, we work with agronomists, who assist us with new products and techniques.

### 6. How has your farm adopted new technologies to help drive efficiencies and quality?

We believe that you can never be too organised or complacent. There are always smarter and more efficient ways of running your business. We strive to have an evolving and dynamic business that improves every year. To achieve this, we invest in not only technology and machinery but in training and education. It is important to take a moment out of the day-to-day management to review and analyse all processes.

### 7. What have been your biggest learnings from 2023?

Each year we have learnt something new. Last year we learnt the importance of being adaptable and not fearing change. We had a flood threaten our pump sites and a change in key personnel. Although challenging, we have come through these events as a stronger business.

### 8. What do you see as the biggest opportunities for the Melon industry?

It is a very exciting time to be in the melon industry, with many opportunities available. We have joined forces with SMA Marketing which now has the ability to provide customers with quality watermelons consistently for 12 months of the year. The growers are like minded family businesses, and are open to sharing IP. Other exciting opportunities include expanding our export markets and selling melonball to Woolworths.

### 9. As a Melon Australia member – what drew you to being a member, and what would you see as the benefit you receive as being a member?

We initially signed up as a contact within the industry recommended Melon Australia. We have maintained our membership in order to support the industry and to stay in touch with latest developments.



# Varroa Mite Update

Joanna Embry  
Melons Australia

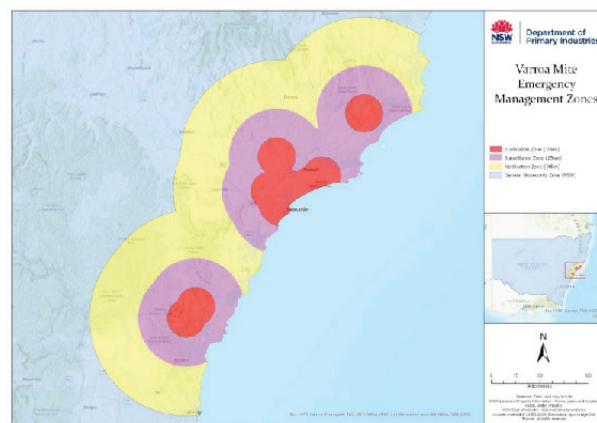


As we are all aware, Australia faced a significant biosecurity challenge in June 2022 when Varroa destructor, a notorious threat to honeybee colonies, was detected in sentinel hives at the Port of Newcastle.

Below is a timeline which summarises the progression of the Varroa destructor pest response. As the biggest response in terms of both financial commitment and boots on the ground in Australia it is timely to reflect on some key statistics from across the previous 18 months. There have been 31 Consultative Committee for Emergency Plant Pests (CCEPP) meetings and 12 National Management Group (NMG) meetings all attended by Melons Australia staff. In terms of actual response staff there have been 2,469 people used during the response including 773 from NSW DPI, 272 from Local Land Services, 19 Industry Liaison Officers, 675 Rural Fire service employees, 286 volunteer beekeepers and 421 others. Melons Australia staff alone have dedicated hundreds of hours towards ensuring the best possible outcome for our melon growers from a pollination and a financial perspective.

## JUNE 2022

- Varroa destructor detected in June 22 in sentinel hives at the Port of Newcastle, NSW.
- CCEPP and NMG formed.
- Decision made to eradicate Varroa destructor.
- Emergency orders implemented, including eradication and surveillance zones (red Eradication zone - 10km around Infected property (IP); purple Surveillance zone – 25km around IP; yellow Notification zone – 50km around IP and the blue General zone – the rest of NSW).
- Biosecurity Emergency Order for a state-wide standstill in NSW.
- 9 IPs by June 30.



## JULY 2022

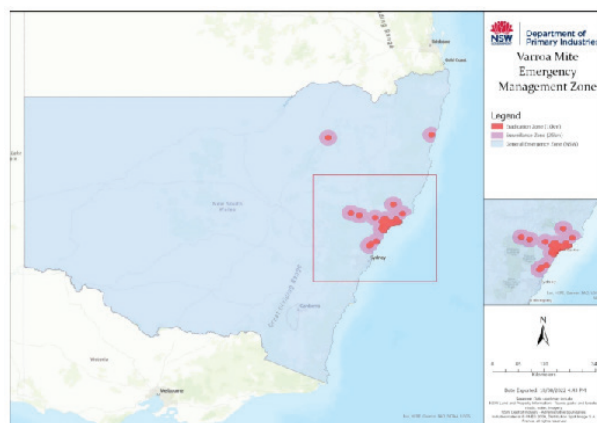
- Movement control orders in place in other Australian States and Territories.
- Detection in Narrabri (July 8) and Nana Glenn near Coffs Harbour (July 25).
- State coordination centre established at Orange Ag Institute.
- 54 IPs by July 29.

## AUGUST 2022

- Movement restrictions extended to several states.
- NMG endorses a phase I response plan with a budget of up to \$45 million.
- 99 IPs by August 23.

## SEPTEMBER 2022 - FEBRUARY 2023

- 100 IPs by September 30, small increase resulting from shift of focus from surveillance to euthanasia activities.
- New Emergency Eradication Zone (EEZ) designated west of Taree in February 2023.
- 122 IPs by the end of February.



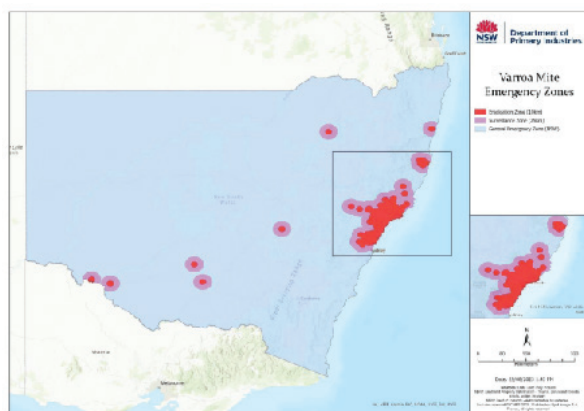
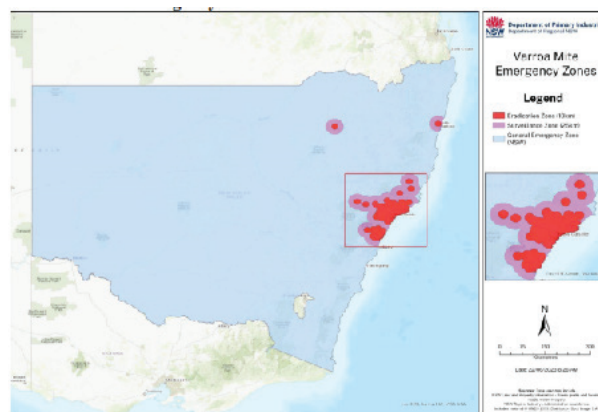
## APRIL 2023

- 153 IPs by April 26, with 26,066 hives euthanized.



## JUNE - JULY 2023

- On the 12th June there was an infected property found at Gumble.
- 167 IPs as of June 14.
- NMG endorses a revised response plan with an increased budget of \$133 million.

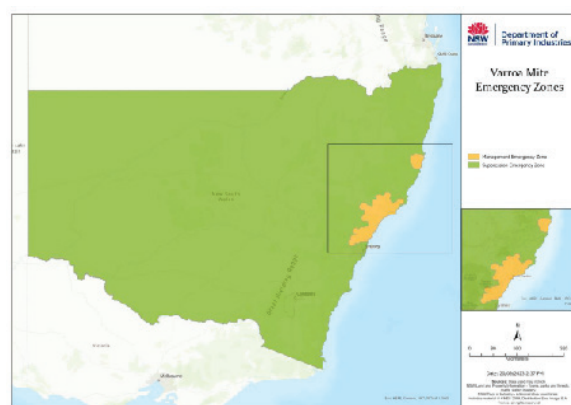


## AUGUST 2023

- First detection at Kempsey on August 15, leading to subsequent detections in Riverina and Sunraysia regions.
- 231 IPs by August 30, with 28,366 hives euthanized.

## SEPTEMBER 2023

- 277 IPs with Varroa mite as of September 14.
- NMG agrees that eradication is no longer technically feasible and endorses a transition to management on September 19.
- Implementation of an interim strategy for a 12-month transition to management phase.
- Changes in emergency zones and movement restrictions. Surveillance Emergency (Purple) Zones and EEZs in regional outliers were removed and became part of the Suppression zone (formerly known as the General Emergency or Blue zone). This is now the green zone.
- Eradication Emergency Zones in the Kempsey, Hunter and Central Coast regions became Management zones. These are now the yellow zones
- Beekeepers required to complete hive testing and report results to DPI every 16 weeks.



Melons Australia, represented by the dedicated duo of Johnathon and Joanna, has played a crucial role in the response. As the Varroa mite infestation evolves into the Transition to Management plan we are actively involved in shaping this. This plan aims to equip beekeeping industries with the necessary training for hive management and slowing the spread of the mite, and importantly addresses the needs of pollination-dependent industries, providing support and guidance on adapting to a landscape where Varroa mite is a pervasive challenge. Our aim is to ensure that Australia's melon production communities are prepared to navigate the complexities of living with Varroa mite.

Scan this QR code to take you to our dedicated Varroa page which provides links to the most up to date information on the Varroa response.



# Soil Wealth ICP Melon Project Nurturing Growth and Innovation



**The Soil Wealth ICP project has taken a significant step forward by welcoming the Australian melon industry during Phase 3. The first Project Reference Group (PRG) meeting in October served as a platform to introduce the project and gather input on priority areas.**

Reflecting on the melon industry's commitment to sustainability, the exploration of alternatives for plastic mulch – including the adoption of cover crops, moisture management, and herbicide practices – emerged as a primary area of interest.

To learn even more about grower priorities, Umberto Calvo from the Soil Wealth ICP team participated in the recent Melons Australia roadshows.

In addition to concerns about plastic mulch, growers expressed interest in disease management, optimising fertiliser use, efficient water management, nutrient use efficiency, and pollinator management.

Participation in the roadshows also provided an opportunity to engage growers with the Soil Wealth ICP project and its objectives.

## New Demonstration Sites

Central to delivering successful project outcomes is the establishment of four demonstration sites in key melon-growing regions across Australia. Demonstration sites play a vital role in the project's efforts to help growers embrace improved practices and celebrate champion growers.

Two sites have already been established, each with a specific focus and location:

1. **Dawson Melon Co** (rockmelons) in Mildura, Victoria, is set to concentrate on alternatives to plastic mulch. The first trial at this site will soon commence, with a particular emphasis on using straw as an alternative to traditional plastic mulch. This approach aims to shade the soil, suppress weeds, and enhance soil health by adding organic matter.
2. **Rombola Farms** (rock-, water- and honeydew melons) in Griffith, New South Wales, is focusing on cover crops to reduce plastic mulch use and manage fusarium effectively. Their innovative approach involves growing a wheat crop and then terminating it through strip-till practices. This approach not only prevents erosion but also suppresses weeds. Rombola Farms is also considering the potential for additional demonstration sites in Mataranka and Bundaberg.

The project team is currently engaging with melon growers in the Northern Territory (Katherine/Mataranka) and Queensland (Gumlu/Burdekin/Bundaberg) who may be interested in hosting demonstration sites, ensuring a wide range of growers can benefit from the trials.



WELL ESTABLISHED WATERMELON CROP. THE WINDBREAKS HAVE BEEN TERMINATED TO ALLOW THE PLANTS TO EXPAND ONTO THE INTERROW. PHOTO BY U. CALVO





CEREALS ARE COMMONLY GROWN IN THE INTERROWS TO PROTECT YOUNG PLANTS FROM LATERAL WINDS AND SAND DAMAGE. PHOTO BY U. CALVO



GROWER WILL SWINSTEAD (OVERLAND CORNER ESTATE) AND JOHNATHON DAVEY (EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF MELONS AUSTRALIA) LOOKING AT YOUNG WATERMELON PLANTS GROWN UNDER CLEAR PLASTIC FILM TO KEEP THEM WARM IN ANTICIPATION OF THE COMING SEASON (PLASTIC WILL BE REMOVED AS SOON AS GROWING CONDITIONS BECOME OPTIMAL). PHOTO BY U. CALVO

### Melon Resources Underway

Developing practical resources for melon growers is another important part of the project, with a summary of existing resources already available to download (<https://bitly.ws/328ZB>). Case studies of melon growers who have experimented with alternatives to plastic mulch, pest and diseases management, soil and nutrition management, and alternatives to metham sodium, will be developed over the course of the project.

A cucurbits pest and disease ute guide, encompassing a comprehensive list of pests, diseases, beneficials, and disorders relevant to melons, will also provide growers with a handy 'all in one' resource. Melon growers are encouraged to contribute to this resource by sharing insights and information useful for identifying and managing pests and diseases in their crops.

The Soil Wealth ICP project is committed to encouraging active participation through melon industry roadshows and collaboration with Melons Australia to benefit all melon growers across Australia.

### Find Out More

For more information, please contact project leader Dr Gordon Rogers on 02 8627 1040/ [gordon@ahr.com.au](mailto:gordon@ahr.com.au) or Umberto Calvo on 0448 189 847/ [umberto.calvo@ahr.com.au](mailto:umberto.calvo@ahr.com.au) from Applied Horticultural Research.

This project has been funded by Hort Innovation using the vegetable and melon research and development levies and contributions from the Australian Government.

Soil Wealth ICP focuses on addressing growers' specific interests and regional issues, fostering knowledge exchange, elevating sustainability, and improving soil and crop health across the industry.

**PREV-AM®**  
**3-IN-1**  
**CONTROL OF**  
**POWDERY**  
**MILDEW**



Always read and follow label directions  
APVMA Approval No: 89248/134129  
PREV-AM is a registered trademark of Oro Agri, Inc.



**E.E. Muir & Sons**  
AUSTRALIAN OWNED • SINCE 1927





PROJECT CODE: VM22003

# Training Opportunities for Melon Growers!



Joanna Embry  
Melons Australia

Melons Australia, in collaboration with the Hort Innovation Melon Fund, remains committed to supporting participants in the Melon Leadership and Development Program. With a total of 22 training and development opportunities, there are still excellent chances for members of the melon industry over the program's remaining two years.

**Diverse Learning Options:** The program offers a variety of courses catering to individuals with varying levels of leadership experience and preferred learning styles

## Online Offerings:

### 1. AICD Foundations of Directorship Courses:

- Aimed at directors or committee members seeking a grasp of corporate governance.
- A comprehensive three-day program covering Governance, Finance, and Strategy and Risk for Directors.
- Multiple course offerings throughout the year.
- For more information scan the QR code.



### 2. Melbourne Business School Leadership Program:

- Tailored for industry members looking to network and gain insights across diverse sectors.
- A 4-week program focusing on leadership skills, behaviors, and mindsets.
- Features hands-on learning, self-paced modules, and peer coaching.
- Available at various times throughout the year.
- For more information scan the QR code.



### 3. Moshie Lean Leaders (Online):

- An online program with 10 fortnightly workshops focusing on continuous improvement in the workplace.
- Ideal for current and emerging business leaders.
- Covers topics such as efficiency, waste reduction, process control, and more.
- Next available places in early 2024.
- For more information scan the QR code.



## Online or Face to Face Offerings:

### 1. AICD Company Directors Course:

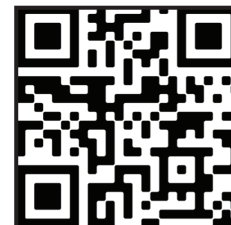
- Ideal for those with board experience or aspiring directors.
- Provides an in-depth exploration of director responsibilities and effective governance.
- Available online or as a residential program throughout the year.
- For more information scan the QR code.



## Face to Face Offerings:

### 1. Marcus Oldham Rural Leadership Program (Residential):

- A 5-day workshop in Geelong, Victoria, for developing leadership, communication, and planning skills.
- Offers networking opportunities with speakers from various rural and community organizations.
- Available once per year in the first half of the year.
- For more information scan the QR code.



### 2. Australian Rural Leadership Foundation – TRAIL Emerging Leaders (Residential):

- A 7-day challenge-based leadership program for emerging rural leaders.
- Combines outdoor experiences with workshops and panel sessions.
- Next intake for Melon industry participants in 2024.
- For more information scan the QR code.



*Funding Available: For registration or nomination information, contact Joanna Embry at Melons Australia (biosecurity@melonsaustralia.org.au). While opportunities are almost fully funded by the Hort Innovation Melon Fund, a nominal fee of \$400 is applicable to levy-paying participants. Non-levy paying applicants can discuss the co-contribution funding model.*

For detailed information on the courses and Expression of Interest (EOI) forms, please visit Melons Australia Training and Development or contact Joanna Embry at biosecurity@melonsaustralia.org.au.

We are seeking any ideas you may have for future training ideas and needs. Please provide your input by scanning the QR code and completing the very short questionnaire



# Enza Zaden

## "Sweet Sweet Seedless"

Rio Grande is a high yielding, oval, mottle striped, seedless watermelon.

The variety has a strong vine with a large leaf. Good fruit setting ability and excellent plant strength makes this hybrid very grower friendly.

Intense red coloured interior coupled with a high sugar content.

Average fruit weight 7-9kg.

**Seedless Watermelon - Rio Grande**

For enquiries contact: Duncan Lamont - 0499 633 531

[enzazaden.com/aus](http://enzazaden.com/aus)

ENZA ZADEN



# Biosecurity Resources and Tools



Joanna Embry  
Melons Australia

As part of the ongoing biosecurity initiative, Joanna Embry, the Biosecurity Officer for Melons Australia, actively participated in the second round of Melons Australia roadshows commencing in November, with events in Barmera (SA), Griffith (NSW), Mildura (Vic), and Ayr (Qld). This presented an excellent opportunity to update growers and industry members on the Varroa mite response, outline industry responsibilities under the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed in the event of an exotic pest incursion and gather valuable input on proposed tools to help growers minimize the risk of pest and disease incursions on their farms. Among the tools under consideration is the development of shed posters, including a biosecurity planner and posters for identifying high-priority pests. Your feedback on these posters and any additional ideas for tools to mitigate the risk of pest and disease incursions on farms are highly appreciated. Please note: the development and design of these posters is only in the early concept development stage at the moment.

Please use the provided QR code to share your thoughts and suggestions with us.

| Major Risks and Actions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | In place/completed |   |     | Comment |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|---|-----|---------|
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | ✓                  | ✗ | N/A |         |
| <b>Visitors</b><br>Designated area for parking with signs in place<br>Biosecurity sign with phone number<br>Footbath or similar with disinfectant for visitors<br>Visitors instructed on farm biosecurity measures<br>Visitor sign in register<br>Gates shut and lockable                                                            |                    |   |     |         |
| <b>Staff</b><br>Staff trained and record completed<br>No equipment moved on or off farm<br>Cloths/equipment cleaned regularly high pressure/disinfectant<br>Footbath/alternate footwear available                                                                                                                                    |                    |   |     |         |
| <b>Machinery &amp; Equipment</b><br>Concrete or gravel washdown area with runoff away from growing area<br>Machinery/equipment come clean go clean<br>Register for machinery coming onto farm<br>On farm vehicles only used for transport around growing areas<br>Dedicated equipment in production areas affected by pests/diseases |                    |   |     |         |
| <b>Waste and Weeds</b><br>Implement a weed management plan<br>Dispose of and store plant waste away from growing areas<br>Old crops sprayed out and removed<br>Monitor and survey weeds<br>Know host weeds for at risk pests and diseases and remove<br>Monitor for volunteer host plants                                            |                    |   |     |         |
| <b>Pests and Diseases</b><br>Know which pests spread diseases<br>Monitor crops regularly for disease symptoms                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                    |   |     |         |
| <b>Inputs</b><br>Seedlings from registered nursery<br>Seed and seedling register completed<br>Certified or own seed<br>Wash and disinfect field crates and bins regularly<br>Store packaging, bins and pallets on hard surfaces                                                                                                      |                    |   |     |         |
| <b>Deliveries and Pickup</b><br>All deliveries and produce pickups done at shed<br>Field crates and bins washed and disinfected regularly                                                                                                                                                                                            |                    |   |     |         |

## Melon High Priority Pests



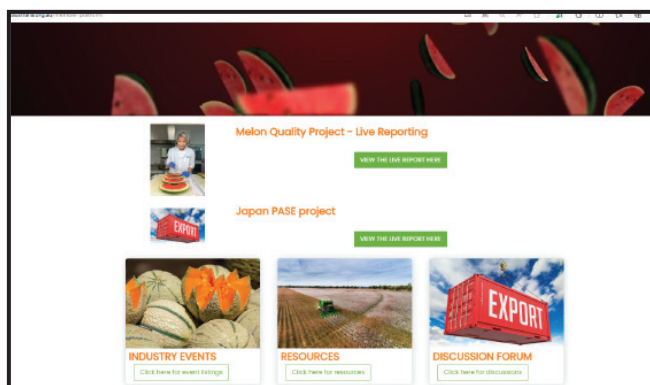


# Keeping Up To Date With The Latest Industry News



**PROJECT CODE: VM20006**

Since the launch of our new website and grower platform, we have been committed to improving the useability of the site, and have continued to make improvements based off your feedback. One of those improvements is now all grower only resources sit under a unique site, you can use the below QR code to see the grower only platform.



## GROWER ONLY PLATFORM

A great resource on the Grower Platform are our 'Discussion Forums', centred around major projects including, The Melon Quality Project, and the Japan PASE Project. These discussion forums offer growers and industry a platform to connect and discuss Hort Innovation projects.

**Courtney Archer**  
Melons Australia



We encourage all growers and members of industry who are interested in these projects to leave comments, questions and opinions on the forum. We value your feedback and input on the direction of our projects, and this is a way for you to easily share them.

Discussion forums can be used to connect, share ideas, and collaborate. It provides a platform to discuss local issues, share knowledge, and seek opportunities to strengthen regional voices, economies, and services.

Over the coming year we are looking to do more webinars, fine tuning this process to suit growers is important to us and we will be rolling out some new formats throughout 2024. All webinars we have completed can be found on the 'Podcast/Webinar' page of the website. By recording the webinars, it provides everyone with a chance to view the webinar and discussions had at their own pace and in their own free time.



If you have any questions or suggestions on communications from Melons Australia, feel free to email [comms@melonsaustralia.org.au](mailto:comms@melonsaustralia.org.au).



# BASF Burdekin Field Day

Sam Clayfield  
BASF



On the 14th of November BASF hosted our Burdekin Field Day field day at the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries' Ayr Research Centre. Melon growers and agronomists had a chance to review the latest advances from both BASF's crop protection division and our Nunhems seed business.

The day kicked off with BASF's Horticulture Technical Specialists showcasing the best in crop protection to all attendees.

There was aphid pressure throughout the trial site, so the efficacy of both Efficon® Insecticide's novel mode of action and Versys® was easy to appreciate, not just in the melons but across a variety of crops. Belanty® and Merivon® had been used very successfully to prevent outbreaks of powdery mildew and gummy stem blight in the various varieties of melon being grown.

Attendees involved in growing other crops were also able to assess the benefits of using Poncho Plus® in corn, Merivon in mangoes and Danisaraba® in fruiting vegetables.

Attention then turned to the BASF | Nunhems melon and watermelon trials as everyone present received a firsthand look at some of the new varieties making their way through our development pipeline. The group was guided through a selection of rockmelon, honeydew and specialty melons before moving on to watermelons – both large seedless and mini watermelons.



The BASF | Nunhems team explained that we are breeding varieties with a focus on meeting growers' needs by delivering on desirable traits and high-quality flavour – which all the attendees were able to taste for themselves straight off the vine!

That winning combination of quality seeds and traits backed by ground-breaking crop protection solutions reflects our objective to go on enabling the industry to perform at the top of its game. And bringing together leading industry minds at events like the Burdekin Field Day gives us the opportunity to explore ways we can contribute even more in the future.

Talk to your local representative to find out how BASF | Nunhems varieties and BASF Crop Solutions can help you have your best season yet. Scan the QR code on the next page to speak to your BASF representative.





# With you from seed to harvest



Talk to your local representative to find out how  
BASF | Nurture varieties and BASF crop protection  
solutions can help you have your best season yet!





# SIVANTO<sup>®</sup> prime

# CONTROL SUCKING PESTS *FAST*



## SIVANTO<sup>®</sup> prime is an insecticide for cucurbit crops

- ▶ Quick feeding cessation of pests including silverleaf whitefly, green peach aphid and greenhouse whitefly
- ▶ Bee safe and IPM compatible with parasitoids, predatory mites, lacewings, hoverflies and ladybird beetles\*
- ▶ One day withholding period



# Melon industry communications strategy

**Project leader:** Johnathon Davey

**Delivery partner:** Hort Innovation

**Project code:** VM20006

**Project:**

Melon industry communications strategy VM20006

**Disclaimer:**

Melons Australia makes no representations and expressly disclaims all warranties (to the extent permitted by law) about the accuracy, completeness, or currency of information in this Final Report.

Users of this Final Report should take independent action to confirm any information in this Final Report before relying on that information in any way.

Reliance on any information provided by Melons Australia is entirely at your own risk. Melons Australia is not responsible for, and will not be liable for, any loss, damage, claim, expense, cost (including legal costs) or other liability arising in any way (including from Melons Australia or any other person's negligence or otherwise) from your use or non-use of the Final Report or from reliance on information contained in the Final Report or that Melons Australia provides to you by any other means.

**Funding statement:**

This project is largely funded by Hort Innovation using Melons funding, the remaining contributions have come from Melon grower and supply chain members and our strategic partners. Using the Melon research and development levy and contributions from the Australian Government. Hort Innovation is the grower-owned, not-for-profit research and development corporation for Australian horticulture.

**Publishing details:**

Published and distributed by: Melons Australia

Contact: [execofficer@melonsaustralia.org.au](mailto:execofficer@melonsaustralia.org.au)



## Content

|                                                          |       |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| Introduction .....                                       | 5     |
| Industry context.....                                    | 6     |
| Current priorities context.....                          | 7     |
| Communication program functions.....                     | 8-9   |
| Tactical workplan.....                                   | 10-17 |
| Audience segments.....                                   | 18-21 |
| Program information sources .....                        | 22    |
| Considerations for executing a successful strategy ..... | 23-24 |
| Why monitor and evaluate? .....                          | 25-26 |
| Referred scientific publications .....                   | 27    |

## Summary

This Communications Strategy has been developed following the reviews undertaken as VM17001 and VM20001. The project will establish a reference group to guide Melons Australia through its implementation and will also review and refine the strategy as required over the coming 2 years.

An industry reference group was consulted during the review and provided input into refinement of the strategy.

The strategy has been developed based on cross-sectoral assessment of industry communication. It highlights areas where communication messaging may be applied nationally, and where messaging will need to be regionally nuanced. It also highlights scenarios where a targeted communications approach is preferred and identifies priority objectives (including important topic areas for communication) and, the need for significant reform to innovate and develop Melons Australia's communications to be stronger and more widely accepted by the industry. The strategy also identifies a pool of information sources required in order to improve the quality of a future communications.

## Introduction

The Melon Industry Communication project (VM20006) focuses on extension of research and development outcomes to all Australian melon levy payers. It also aims to enhance awareness of the R&D investment provided through Hort Innovation and creating a connection for industry with their investment. The melon industry has a role to play in working towards the goal of the agriculture, fisheries and forestry sector have a GVP of \$100 billion by 2030. Uptake of research and development outputs, an increasing appetite for innovation and a preparedness to collaborate for mutual benefit are fundamental. To this end, the project also has social outcomes, by connecting remote and isolated growers with the wider Australian melon industry, domestic and international researchers, industry stakeholders, value chain members, Hort Innovation, regulators, and departmental agency staff.

The benefits of focussed industry communications have been demonstrated by preceding melon communications projects. The recent review of the Melon industry communications program (VM17001) and the communication review and melon industry needs analysis (VM20001) highlighted the growing sophistication of communications and the high motivation amongst stakeholders to “learn about industry relevant research”.

These reviews highlight that the Australian melon industry are well positioned as strong adopters of research. To maximise this uptake, growers participating in the review highlighted the need for a consolidated and centralised source of information and a “key priority of the next program”. Similarly, for critical and time sensitive information, growers need a trusted source of information. Melons Australia has a strong track record as this trusted information source and through a variety of communications mechanisms and products, provides a well-regarded central contact point.

Underpinning strategies included utilisation of Melons Australia’s existing communications framework (website, YouTube, Facebook, Enews, magazine, database). Adding to this suite of tools will be the addition of a member portal hosting a Community of Practice, events and roadshow series, training resources, development, and promotion of virtual forums (including podcasts, webinars), and increased use and leverage of communications through influencers (trusted advisors from a wide range of backgrounds). This proposal consolidates and incorporates these strategies to achieve an effective, reliable, relevant, coordinated, and trusted information hub.

Through development of these networks and partnerships, the melon industry will access the information, knowledge, and support to facilitate the adoption of research, to innovate and to develop.

The tactical section of this strategy is developed according to a three-year communication program. This strategy is designed to support development of a new project in which the industry development aspect is largely uncoupled from industry communications activities. It would be expected, however, that industry development activities undertaken by aligned melon industry projects would feed strongly into a stand-alone communication program.

High-level outcomes of the project will include:

- improved awareness of levy funded investments, current and other relevant research and improved extension and adoption by Australia’s melon levy-payers
- stronger connections between Melons Australia and industry
- stronger connections between melon levy-payers from across Australia
- increased engagement across all communication platforms



## Industry context

Melon production is one of the larger fruit growing industries in Australia, with the Australian melon industry currently consisting of approximately 250 growers farming on approximately 8,500 hectares located across Australia in diverse growing regions. By bioregion these are:

- NT - Darwin coastal, Daly Basin, McDonald Ranges;
- QLD - Cape York Peninsula, Wet tropics, Central Mackay coast, Brigalow Belt South, South east;
- VIC, NSW, SA - Riverina, Murray Darling Depression (Sunraysia and Riverland), Sydney Basin; and
- WA - Northern Kimberly & Broome region, Carnarvon region, Geraldton region.

The two major groups of melons grown in Australia are watermelons and muskmelons (rockmelons, honeydew, piel de sapo). Watermelons make up the majority of the Australian market (79%). Muskmelons make up the remaining 21% (with rockmelon making up 85% of this category).

The Australian Melon Industry consists of approximately 200 growers producing some 217,000 tonnes of melons annually across an area of around 8,500 hectares.

In the last decade there has been significant diversification in growing areas with NT becoming a much larger producer for Australia, and growing regions farther south also becoming more significant (particularly NSW).

According to Fresh Intelligence Consulting (2020) within Australia melons are the third largest fruit group produced by volume after banana and citrus. Globally, melons account for 15% of global fruit production, with Asia dominating the production market at 68.5% and Oceania accounting for 0.2% global production. Watermelon production dominates the global production market, at three times the production of musk melon. Annual production in Australia equates to 200,000 tonne per annum.

In 12 months to June 2021, Japan accounted for 36 per cent of all export volumes followed by Singapore with 33 per cent share, United Arab Emirates fell to 11 per cent and Qatar to 6 per cent.

At a global scale Australia produces significantly less melon per annum than other melon exporting countries, such as South America and China. However, the Australian melon industry has a distinct advantage based on the location of the majority of the world population (northern hemisphere) and demand during non-growing periods in the northern hemisphere. However, melons exported from Australia have a greater distance to travel than most other exporting countries (e.g. Australia to the Middle East). Therefore, maintaining freshness during export, and methods and technologies to achieve that, are extremely important.

According to a recent report by IndexBox, released in 2020, global melon consumption is expected to continue on an upward trend from 2020-2030, reaching a global market volume of 36 mega tonne by 2030.

**Table 1:** Harvest timing by state throughout the year (national production % based on 18/19 growing season).

|           | J | F | M | A | M | J | J | A | S | O | N | D |
|-----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| QLD (33%) |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| NSW (27%) |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| NT (25%)  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| WA (14%)  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| VIC (2%)  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| SA (1%)   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

## Current priorities context

Melons Australia will utilise their established, well utilised and structured website to ensure melon growers (and supply chain partners) have access to communications materials. The website will be further enhanced through the addition of a dedicated research, development and extension member only portal. The member portal will have secure information sections with the access control to ensure the data sharing is managed. The website will also host a “Community of Practice” providing information and facilitating regular discussion forums, including podcasts and other useful resources. These forums will showcase and connect researchers to melon growers and facilitate greater understanding of potential for implementation of research findings. The platform will also include an “Ask the Expert” feature, connecting growers with participating researchers. Links to the recently established Melons Australia YouTube channel will aid communications and extension of research outcomes.

Production of the biannual Melon News will be managed by Melons Australia, through the Executive Officer and Communications Officer, and may include further sub-contracting for printing, and design services.

Effective communications, extension and adoption underpins achievement of the Melon Strategic Investment Plan 2018-2021 (SIP), highlighting the pivotal role of this project. A national communications platform for the Australian melon industry, combined with improved access to researchers, will provide timely access to information to inform better decision making.

The outcomes of this project are in line with the SIP:

- Promote the use of existing R&D and proven management practices that improve on-farm efficiency and increase profitability
- Undertake R&D and extension to enhance product quality, consistent with evidence of consumer expectations (with a focus on harvest and post-harvest)
- Raise awareness of biosecurity and food safety risks across the value chain, through educational programs, on-site training and monitoring and evaluation

High-level outcomes include improved awareness of levy funded investments, current and other relevant research, improved extension and adoption and effective management of this project.

**Table 2.** Synergies between R&D Investment Plan (Hort Innovation) and industry investment plan (Melons Australia).

| SIP (Hort Innovation)                                                                                                                                        | SIP (Melons Australia)                                                                                      | Alignment                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Demand creation supports the Australian melon industry to develop existing and future domestic and international markets.                                    | Maintaining a high level of product quality and meeting and driving increased consumer demand               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality assurance</li> <li>• Consumer confidence</li> </ul>                                                                                            |
| Improve industry productivity (inputs/outputs) to maintain local and international competitiveness, while maintaining viability and sustainability of supply | Innovation to improve products, traceability and operating systems (including food safety and biosecurity). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Industry development</li> <li>• Pest management innovations</li> <li>• Best practice adoption</li> <li>• Risk identification &amp; planning</li> </ul> |
| Building capability and innovative culture.                                                                                                                  | Resourcing and implementing industry priorities.                                                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training and development</li> <li>• Resource updates</li> </ul>                                                                                        |
| Measure industry supply (production) and demand (consumer behaviour) data and insights to inform decision-making                                             | Building industry capacity and investing in our people                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                             |

## Communication program functions

### 1. Support industry connectiveness

This communications program works to support greater 'industry connectiveness', which has been noted in past strategies and situational reports to be a necessary factor in improving the performance of the industry as a whole. Focusing communications on a 'show and tell' approach between industry members has the potential to increase trust, curiosity, and communication between growers (and industry supply chain service providers).

When we refer to industry 'connectiveness' what we are really aiming for is the building of industry social capital. Social capital is characterised by the strength of informal networks, opportunities to improve skills and knowledge, and regularity of organisational collaborations by Klepeis and Gill (2016). Building social capital within a group or community (such as the melon industry) has been shown to build community resilience in the face of crises and to speed recovery.

*"A comms program could facilitate getting to know more growers – feel more a part of the industry"* -- Australian melon grower.

### 2. Keep a grass roots focus

All communication topics or activities undertaken throughout the program must be driven by the potential to deliver benefits to all growers or subsets of melon growers. Communication personnel involved in a future program should have a farmer first mindset and take steps to stay on top of industry needs, through regular consultation with industry stakeholders.

*"Get in the field"* -- Australian melon grower.

### 3. Promote best practices and best advice

Continuing to provide information about nationally relevant topics, such as biosecurity, food safety best practices, and labour law is an important expectation of a future program by industry stakeholders. Despite these topics being relevant to all growers and supply chain members, the communication program personnel should consider how information needs on these topic areas may differ between stakeholder groups.

*"There is still a need for basic information to raise the standards...it takes one person to stuff everything up"* -- Australian melon grower.

### 4. Be a bridge for views, information, and ideas on industry R&D

This program will facilitate two-way communication in relation to the R&D levy. This function will support a positive feedback loop, whereby R&D investments are made according to grower priorities, taking into account a wide range of views, R&D project outputs are applicable to a wide range of stakeholders, and communication about these investments receives high engagement. This will in turn promote the contribution of further ideas and views from the industry, to continue informing investments.

*"Communication doesn't just go one way – it's got to get taken back, and then passed through the chain on what the growers expect, what problems they're facing."* – Australian melon grower.

### 5. Provide a source of truth for the industry

The importance of having a communication program that is a central contact point for industry members seeking information was widely viewed as a key priority of the next program. In particular, facilitating timely industry updates during a biosecurity outbreak, or food safety crisis is viewed as an important function of an industry communication program – a trusted source of information.

*"The most important thing is that people know where to go if they do have a question."* -- Australian melon grower.

### 6. Align with best practice communication methods and adopt new methods as needed

Strategically adding variety to communication activities and aligning with communication best practices is required of future activities. This will ensure that quality of communications remains high, industry stakeholders engaged in the program know what information and level of detail to expect out of the program, and a variety of learning preferences are met. Activities to extend the reach of the communication program by ensuring that the right mix of knowledge brokers are included on stakeholder communication lists will be important in ensuring that program information penetrates groups of unengaged growers. Opportunities to continually professionally develop communication personnel involved in the program will support this function.



*"Just sending an email from melons is not enough" -- Australian melon grower.*

#### **7. Support a positive industry image**

A focus on improving consumer, purchaser and regulator perceptions of the industry is an important aspect of future communication work. This can be undertaken through communication of research and advice that builds industry capacity to improve product quality and maintain product integrity.

*"The priority should be putting melons in people's mouths." -- Australian melon grower.*

## Tactical workplan

### Changes to current communication activities

Current melon communication activities as executed in the Hort Innovation funded project VM20006 fall into the current categories:

- Monthly newsletter to over 1000 recipients;
- Bi-annual magazine to over 200 melon growers;
- Direct email notifications to industry stakeholders on an as needs basis;
- Consumer/industry website review
- Development of a member only platform;
- COP (virtual forums, webinars, podcasts etc.);
- Input into social media platforms (Twitter, Facebook, and Pinterest);

Based on review of current communication activities and industry needs, update to current activities are described in Table 3. A whole of program tactical plan is shown in Table 4.

**Table 3.** Update to current melon industry communication activities

| Activity                              | Current format                                                                                       | Update                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Monthly newsletter                    | Direct email via Mailchimp platform and upload to website archive.                                   | Continue.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Bi-annual magazine                    | Printed copy posted to stakeholders and upload to website in flipbook form.                          | Building on the current Melon News (produced by Melons Australia), 25% content creation relevant to Melons Australia, 75% content related to technical info, includes research reports from national and international sources                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Direct email notifications            | Delivered to segmented stakeholder lists based on sensitivity of information and audiences impacted. | Continue.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Maintenance of website                | Resources, newsletters and magazine uploaded as needed                                               | Information hub, up to date industry resources, promotion of new opportunities, industry events and initiatives, promotion of new products (industry related), requires review and reconfiguring to be relatable to all users                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Development of a member only platform | Does not exist                                                                                       | Review of digital member association platforms. Chosen platform to be developed and implemented. New platform to have the ability to sign-up new members online, take payment, process event registrations etc. Industry resources, training and development will be found here.<br>Streamline all member processes to this platform. The platform is open to all the Melon industry with differing levels of access for paid versus not paid. |
| Social media                          | Consumer facing posts as needed.                                                                     | Focus on industry related posts, sharing of relevant articles, research reports, webinars and events.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Virtual Forums                        | Currently not available.                                                                             | Improve accessibility for remote / isolated growers. Maximise audience for content. Identifying opportunities for podcasts to provide relevant information to industry.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Community of Practice                 | Currently not available.                                                                             | Promote discussion between growers and researchers, direct delivery of results, improve accessibility for remote / isolated growers, develop community (social as well as communications and extension benefits).                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Grower and stakeholder database       | Currently using Excel for database.                                                                  | Digital platform for managing the melon grower database effectively and efficiently. Continued maintenance of melon grower and associated stakeholder database, including contact details, basic grower profile and any specific interest areas.                                                                                                                                                                                               |

## Communication channels

### Website – Member Portal

Vision:

**Website** – An easy to navigate website that appeals to both growers and consumers. The website will provide a industry with news, events, biosecurity matters and other relevant industry resources.

This website offers value to consumers through the supply of innovative recipes for melons and informs consumers about melon growing using an engaging story-telling approach, featuring growers from across Australia.

**Member portal** - An easy to navigate grower-focused information resource that promotes business opportunities (such as training and grants), provides up to date industry resources or directs industry users to the best external resources, and highlights how growers can become involved in industry events and initiatives. This platform will be open to all the Melon industry with differing levels of access for paid versus not paid.

Key points:

- During the VM17001 project a reduction in website traffic was observed. This was most likely due to the deletion of popular pages or failure to redirect links to popular pages when the website was redeveloped and a lack of resources to regular update the website and keep industry engaged.
- Some industry stakeholders have difficulty finding appropriate resources.
- Consideration for how the consumer facing website pages can integrate personal stories from growers should be made.

Opportunities for improvement:

- Improved curation of industry resources for easier navigation and increased promotion of the resource portal.
- Increased training and information resources for the industry.
- Identification of additional resources of use to the industry.
- Removal of irrelevant and out of date content.
- Making the consumer and industry facing components of the website more dynamic, by featuring seasonal articles, seasonal recipes, grower profiles, and industry opportunities.
- Improved Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) of website content and use of communication best practices, such as integration of SEO principles into article development.
- Provide an online mechanism for submitting feedback on the program progress, as well as for collecting industry views, concerns, and ideas.

Foundational activities:

- Review of member association platforms available.
- Perform a thorough assessment of the industry website to determine from what pages traffic is entering by, how long they stay, and what parts of the website are stagnant. Re-instate popular pages if they have been deleted or perform URL re-direction as needed.

### Community of Practice

Vision: Establish a Community of Practice on the member portal accessed via the Melons Australia website, incorporating virtual forums, podcast, and other relevant research publications. The CoP will sit within the member only platform and have secure information sections with access control to enable management of data sharing.

Opportunities:

- Facilitate greater connection between growers, representatives, researchers, government, and other stakeholders.
- Discussion forums to connect growers, share information and facilitate positive discussion.
- Podcasts that provide relevant information and/or training for growers.
- Showcase events that connect researchers to melon growers.



- The platform will enable peer to peer learning opportunities as well as including capacity to “Ask the Expert” with links to relevant subject matter expertise.

#### Foundational activities:

- Perform a thorough assessment of the platforms available in the market.
- Provide a recommendation and project timeline of the proposed best platform to the board and PRG.

#### Outcomes:

- 70% of melon growers are aware of CoP within the first 12 months
- 50% of melon growers have participated in the CoP withing the first 18 months
- 90% of melon growers who have participated in the CoP rate event as valuable or better within 18 months
- 90% of researchers who have participated in the CoP rate the event as valuable or better accessed by more than 70% of melon growers over the course of the project within 18 months.
- “Ask an Expert” feature used on more than 100 times over the course of the project.
- 75% of melon growers using the “Ask an Expert” function rate the response as useful or better within 18 months.

## Resource Hub

Vision: Develop and maintain an online resource hub providing up to date industry resources and promoting new opportunities, including training and grants. Link to other relevant online resource hubs such as growAG as they become available. Hub to assist growers to become involved in industry events and related initiatives including training and development opportunities. A source of truth for all growers across Australia.

#### Opportunities for improvement:

- Structured sorting of all resources with search functionality to ensure ease of finding the desired document.
- Ensure resources are kept up to date.
- Provide relevant and up to date training for growers.
- Provide information on government grants, industry news, etc.
- All event resources to be uploaded.

#### Foundational activities:

- Review of current resources on the website.
- Review of resource publishers.
- Developed process of resource sourcing and uploading to website.
- User Experience Design assessment and update
- Clarifying links to popular pages
- Develop links to other relevant online resource hubs such as growAG as they become available
- Increase SEO of website (e.g. SEO template for articles)
- Feedback / suggestion box regarding programs and areas requiring information / research.

#### Outcomes:

- Improved curation and access to industry resources
- Website traffic increase by 50% at end of project.
- Greater than 60% of melon growers having accessed website during final year of project.

## Publications

Vision: The Melon Enews owned and funded by Melons Australia continues to be a recognised monthly communication from the program. It is the go-to source of wider industry news, information on industry opportunities and grower and supply chain resources. External collaborators regularly contribute material to the Melon Enews as a recognised high-reach engagement channel in the melon industry.

#### Key points:

- Melon Enews is widely recognised and highly appreciated by melon industry stakeholders.
- Technical notes and research reports are the most popular formats for information transfer.
- Industry news, biosecurity, export and market access, chemical use and permits, consumer insights

and market trends, food safety, melon diseases are priority information categories. Information on industrial relations, industry opportunities and training are also of value.

Opportunities for improvement:

- Strongly promote industry opportunities (e.g. training, professional development, business grants) through Enews.
- Integrate grower profiles from around Australia as a regular offering in Enews and feature research adoption and business improvement grower case studies that celebrate an innovation and best practice culture.
- Provide an easy use mechanism in Enews to capture feedback on the program progress, as well as collect industry views, concerns, and ideas.

Foundational activities:

- Develop a policy for Enews content inclusion, an SEO based template to guide the development of consistent article structure and determine basic newsletter structure.
- Promote Enews as a channel for communication with the melon industry to external stakeholders, such as government, and industry groups.

Outcomes:

- Increase readership of magazine from less than 50% (VM 20001) to over 70% of melon growers by the end of project.
- Expand distribution of R&D magazine to include other key audiences
- Enews:
  - 30% in year 1
  - 32% in year 2
  - 34% in year 3.

## **Social Media**

Vision: Facilitate contributions to the Facebook accounts (Melons Australia and Love Aussie Melons) in association with project communications outputs, and consider value of Instagram, while discontinuing other social media platforms.

Opportunities for improvement:

- Advertising Melon communications project to broader potential audience, including relevant research outputs
- Alerting and directing melon growers to activities such as virtual forums, CoP and other relevant information
- Providing updates to the broader community following the completion of research and adoption by industry, that supports consumer confidence in Australian melons and the industry.

Foundational activities:

- Facebook maintained and used to recruit interested people / businesses to other communications platforms. Posts to promote every
  - Enews letter
  - Edition of the magazine
  - Regional events
  - Virtual forums
  - CoP forum / general awareness
- Posts also promoting a range of
  - Research reports relevant to melon growers (6 posts a year)
  - Hort Innovation funding opportunities/ levy expenditure (6 posts a year)

## **Virtual forums**

Vision: Virtual forums (aligned through the CoP) to provide opportunity for geographically isolated growers, or those unable to attend events in person, to engage with industry research. Provide mechanism for growers to remain engaged at their own pace via web-based meeting platforms, recorded sessions placed on Melons Australia YouTube channel and/or streaming through a dedicated closed Facebook group. Recordings of relevant events to be available to aid information transfer and provide reference material.

Key points:

- Geographic isolation of melon farming enterprises contributes to a weak sense of industry connection.
- Covid-19 and improvements to regional internet services has increased skills and comfort with use of online training and engagement technologies.
- Industry members have an interest in learning about overseas technologies, farming systems and innovations.

Opportunities:

- Engage a higher number of growers, including previously disengaged growers, with the program by offering alternate methods for connecting with the domestic and global industry, and subject matter experts.
- Capture feedback in these virtual forums to assess program progress, as well as collect industry views, concerns, and ideas.
- Place an emphasis on grower driven agendas for webinar topics, and virtual forum discussion topics.
- Regularly feature grower speakers on webinars who can share their experiences and knowledge.

Foundational activities:

- Identify overseas subject matter experts and growers who may become involved with program activities.
- Develop a program of industry information and training webinar topics and execute, publicising the webinars across the program communication channels.
- Develop a design and content plan for the member portal.

**Additional activities**

- At the outset of the program ensure the stakeholder database is up to date with current grower business information (crops grown, area farmed etc.).
- Integrate methods of collecting information on information gaps and training needs into all communication activities and use this information to inform program activities.
- Promote and celebrate instances where melon growers have received scholarships, awards, and accessed professional development.
- Explore needs relating to producing program outputs in other languages. Where possible, collaborate with industry groups that actively produce and distribute materials for English as a Second Language growers in order to improve program efficiency.
- Post-covid-19, pending lifting of travel restrictions, explore and coordinate levy-funded Melon international study tours for industry members.
- Direct email notifications to industry members on an as needs basis, particularly if there is an industry crisis, informing the industry about the status of the crisis.
- Roadshow and conference strategy.

**Table 4.** Objectives and tactics to support achievement of objectives based on a three-year program

| Objective                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | High level tactics                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Year 1 activities                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Years 2 and 3 activities                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Priority activities:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undertake foundational project planning activities and set up project reference group.</li> <li>Undertaken annual industry survey and information needs/training needs assessment throughout program.</li> <li>Evaluation program progress at mid-point and program conclusion.</li> </ul> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Objective 1: Improve industry engagement with levy investments                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop processes for collecting industry feedback and ideas – report to Hort Innovation through the milestone reporting process and PRG representatives.</li> <li>Regularly report on melon SIAP activities to wider industry.</li> <li>Showcase R&amp;D levy funded project progress and outputs.</li> <li>Pro-actively develop methods to connect researchers with levy-payers.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Set up online and in-person methods for collection of industry views and ideas</li> <li>Confirm interaction the levy researchers will have with the communication program</li> <li>Track levy payer level of feeling informed about industry research in annual levy</li> <li>Integrate industry research into communication activities</li> <li>Confirm methods for regularly reporting to levy payers on SIAP activities and investment decisions</li> </ul>                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue webinar series</li> <li>Publish monthly ENews</li> <li>Convert webinars and roadshow speaker sessions into YouTube videos</li> <li>Manage Facebook melon community group page</li> <li>Release direct email notifications for the industry as needed</li> <li>Curate website resources, and update website as needed</li> </ul> |
| Objective 2: Strengthen industry resilience and connectedness                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organise communication platforms and forums that support engagement from growers across regions.</li> <li>Improve the accessibility of regional industry meetings.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update stakeholder database with current grower data and setup a digital CRM</li> <li>Develop member only platform including COP</li> <li>Develop social media plan for Facebook and YouTube</li> <li>Confirm roadshow locations and dates</li> <li>Develop regional roadshow grower planning groups to advise on local meeting agendas</li> <li>Launch webinar series</li> </ul>                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Objective 3: Support growth of a positive industry reputation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Take a storytelling approach, and strategically place grower profiles in front of consumers.</li> <li>Prioritise communication of best practices and new knowledge that will raise the standard of growing practices and improve the consumer experience by proxy (e.g. picking at appropriate brix, grading best practices).</li> </ul>                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify grower best-practice case studies for promotion across Enews and the website</li> <li>Identify research and training opportunities and resources for improvement of growing and post-harvest practices</li> <li>Update website with seasonal consumer information (e.g. new recipes)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Objective 4: Raise the overall standard of industry production, harvest, and post-harvest practices                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create opportunities to access training and professional development.</li> <li>Use current data on information needs to inform communications, and add to this dataset by performing training and information needs analyses throughout the program life.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and maintain a log of relevant domestic and international research</li> <li>Develop relationships with key subject matter experts and integrate their expertise into communication channels</li> <li>Develop Enews content and curate website research content in line with industry needs</li> <li>Update website based on User Experience assessment</li> <li>Identify best datasets for consumer and market trends information (e.g. Neilson Australia) and organise access</li> </ul> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |



## Audience segments

Providing value for growers, through achievement of the communication program objectives, is the focus of this strategy. However, that does not mean that growers will be the only audience that communications activities will benefit and be directed towards. Table 5 provides a breakdown of key audience types and the benefits that they would receive from engaging with a melons industry communication program.

**Table 5.** Audience segmentation and value proposition from the program to each segment

| Audience segment                                                                                                             | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Value offering from program                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Growers                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Growers – according to crop<br>(rockmelon growers, watermelon growers, mixed melon enterprises, mixed commodity enterprises. | <p>Rockmelon growing dominated by a small number of large enterprises.</p> <p>Watermelon growing comprised of small number of large enterprises, large number of medium and small-scale enterprises (Combinations of: Medium sized, primarily melons, mixed enterprise with vegetables, mixed with other systems, e.g. sugarcane or cattle, where melons may be an opportunity crop.</p> <p>Mixed melon enterprise where a combination of melons grown, including honeydew, and peil de sapo, are grown.</p> | <p>Notification of industry issues that may impact their crop (e.g. insecticide resistance, disease alerts).</p> <p>Information on new growing advances, technologies and research.</p> <p>Support in interacting with other growers (domestic or international) growing the same crop/s.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Growers – according to bioregion<br>(Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation for Australia, Version 7)                         | <p>NT - Darwin coastal, Daly Basin, McDonald Ranges</p> <p>QLD - Cape York Peninsula, Wet tropics, Central Mackay coast, Brigalow Belt South, South east</p> <p>VIC, NSW, SA – Riverina, Murray Darling Depression (Sunraysia and Riverland), Sydney Basin</p> <p>WA - Northern Kimberly &amp; Broome region, Carnarvon region, Geraldton region</p>                                                                                                                                                         | <p>Notification of industry issues that may impact their region (e.g. pest distribution changes).</p> <p>Information on research findings or plans for research locally relevant to them.</p> <p>How they can take part in relevant research and form a relationship with the relevant researcher.</p> <p>Professional opportunities (e.g. training in their region, or regional grants).</p> <p>Interaction with melon growers within their region and in other regions.</p> |
| Regulators & authorities                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| (Plant health personnel -                                                                                                    | Plant health personnel (operational) are usually state government. Often staff are located within driving distance of                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Make available industry communication channels for notifications from these groups when needed.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

Hort Innovation – Final Report: Melon industry communications evaluation, needs analysis and strategy development

|                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| operational staff, Plant health personnel (policy-makers), food safety authorities, accredited QA certification schemes (e.g. Freshcare), APVMA, Plant Health Australia) | <p>melon properties. Some contact with melon properties.</p> <p>Plant health personnel (policy) can be state or federal government. Little to no contact with melon properties.</p> <p>Personnel in statutory authorities</p> <p>Statutory authorities may have little to no contact with melon properties.</p> <p>These groups can make decisions that affect growing logistics.</p>                                        | <p>Information on current farm practices and melon growing challenges.</p> <p>Information on industry best practices initiatives.</p>                                                                                                       |
| Opportunity makers                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| (Nuffield program, Hort Innovation, AgriFutures, training providers)                                                                                                     | <p>The Nuffield Program offers a professional development scholarship designed for growers each year.</p> <p>Hort Innovation offers occasional bursaries and professional development opportunities.</p> <p>AgriFutures coordinates the AgriFutures Rural Woman of the Year award.</p> <p>Training providers, such as TOCAL College develops government endorsed training modules for farm staff. Some modules are free.</p> | <p>Make available industry communication channels for notifications from these groups when needed.</p> <p>Promote industry profiles to and through these networks.</p> <p>Information on industry and grower successes and initiatives.</p> |
| Management                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Project reference group                                                                                                                                                  | <p>Independent group that can offer feedback, advice and direction to the communication resource on a regular basis.</p> <p>Can act as champions of the program.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <p>Provide opportunity to input into activity direction and provide guidance for achieving program objectives via quarterly update meetings.</p>                                                                                            |
| Hort Innovation portfolio manager                                                                                                                                        | <p>Assesses project progress at defined intervals. Can offer direction where required.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <p>Provide opportunity to input into activity direction via 6 monthly reporting and ex officio status on the independent reference group.</p>                                                                                               |
| Internal project manager                                                                                                                                                 | <p>Provides strategic and operational direction. Assesses project progress regularly, and aids in determining project improvements where needed.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <p>Provide opportunity to input into activity direction via regular (daily or weekly) updates on project progress, challenges and needs.</p>                                                                                                |

| Consumers                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (current and potential consumers, retailers, importers)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <p>These may be current and regular melon consumers, irregular melon consumers, or potential melon consumers.</p> <p>These may also be potential local retailers or domestic / international importers.</p>                                                                               | <p>Ideas on new ways to serve melon.</p> <p>Confidence that each melon bought will provide a consistently delicious experience.</p> <p>Assurance that melon growing in Australia aligns to high food safety and environmental standards.</p>                                                              |
| Supply chain affiliates                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| (Independent agronomists, agronomy companies, seed suppliers, chemical companies, market agents, exporters)                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Crucial elements in growing, storing and moving quality products.                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <p>Notifications about pest / biosecurity outbreaks.</p> <p>New advances in melon growing.</p> <p>Guidance on ways to support the melon industry. E.g. Relevant industry communications that may be extended through their network.</p> <p>Industry events for networking and learning opportunities.</p> |
| Industry groups / potential collaborators                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| (Melons Australia, Ausveg, Far North QLD Growers Assoc, Bowen-Gumlu Growers Assoc, Bundaberg Fruit & Vegetable Growers, Lockyer Valley Growers Inc., OrdCo, NT Farmers Assoc, Vegetables WA, Ausveg SA, NSW Farmers Assoc, Growcom, Australian Horticultural Exporters & importers Assoc, Australian Honey Bee Industry Council) | Grower and supply chain industry representative groups that may include melon growers in their membership, or produce communication outputs that reach melon growers, or reach segments of the supply chain (e.g. pollinators) that are important to the viability of the melon industry. | <p>Invitations to collaborate on events, or other communication outputs.</p> <p>Collaborative approach to extending priority information (notifications, new resources, events) in order to extend reach to disengaged industry members.</p>                                                              |



## Program information sources

To understand the potential domestic R&D levy-based information pool from which current and future melons industry communication activities may source communication material current and past projects were compiled (Table 6).

It is important to recognise that industry R&D had been funded through voluntary industry contributions since the early 2000s, and R&D is also undertaken on-farm and through affiliated industry service providers (seed companies, chemical companies etc.). Therefore, apart from R&D information derived from current and recently concluded industry investments, there is a pool of information that may be accessed from earlier research.

Activities to support sourcing of relevant industry information and to understand current information (and training) needs include:

- Maintaining a log of melons industry research, that is being conducted both domestically and internationally;
- Assessing past industry research for currency and potential for integration into future communications;
- Regularly consulting with industry experts and innovators, including growers and agronomists;
- Undertaking an annual information needs and training analysis with the melons industry.

The Communications Officer will liaise with other R&D providers, both nationally and internationally, supporting the melon industry, coordinate the project activities and leverage benefits from other related projects.

## Linkages

Priority linkage projects for melon communications are:

- Conferences and Roadshows
- Biosecurity project (Plant Health Levy funded);
- Export market data project (Fresh Intelligence Consulting).

## Considerations for executing a successful strategy

### Project planning & supporting structures

The pillars of success for the communication project will be:

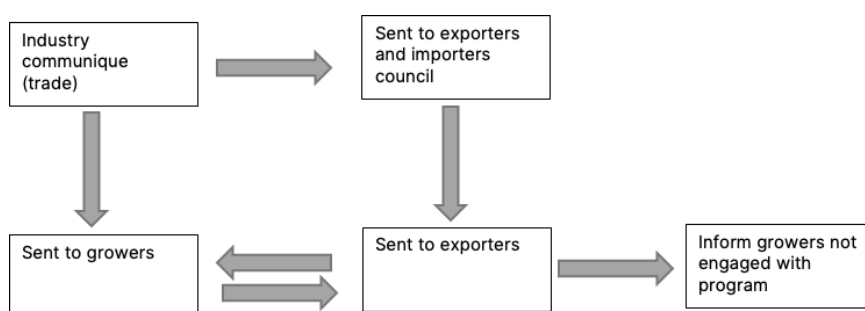
- Maintenance of regular workplans to underpin this strategy;
- Development of an independent industry-based project reference group;
- A project manager to oversee performance and direction;
- Collection of performance metrics and regular evaluation of program progress and feedback; and
- Clearly defined deliverables in accordance with this communication strategy.
- Regular reviews of the strategy and how it is tracking.

Scope creep of the program must be avoided. Feedback during recent industry consultation has strongly highlighted the benefit that stakeholders (growers and supply chain service providers) have gained out of having an industry development manager as central contact point to aid in troubleshooting of issues

### Maximising program reach and efficiency

There are opportunities to strengthen communication program reach by integrating communications with organisations that have demonstrably strong reach among supply chain stakeholders. E.g. the Australian Horticultural Council for Exporters and Importers council can send relevant notifications to exporters, who are in turn are an important knowledge pool for growers (Fig 1).

This creates opportunities for information to be distributed more broadly, creating trusted information pools that represent alternate communication types/channels. These opportunities for creating further reach should be maximised wherever possible through careful assessment of stakeholder and collaborators.



**Figure 1.** Example of creating further reach by identifying collaborators with aligned networks.

### Resourcing

The project will be delivered by the Melons Australia's Communications Officer, with oversight, management and guidance provided by the Executive Officer (0.7 FTE). The Communications Officer role will be 0.7 FTE position with responsibility to ensure the effective delivery of the following communications activities, including:

- Undertake baseline assessment of current industry knowledge and awareness of melon research (as identified in VM20001).
- Revision and update of the website (based on observed reduction of website traffic VM20001). Updates to include consolidation of website as resource hub, member only portal and hosting of the Community of Practice (virtual forum/information/interaction with other melon growers and researchers).
- Ensure tailored and relevant communications through development of communications strategy and associated plans, budgets, etc.
- Ensure coverage of contemporary issues of importance to melon growers (export, food safety, consumer insights, chemical use) including sourcing appropriate information from researchers milestone reports throughout their investigations (i.e. not waiting or relying solely on final reports) and information

from a broad range of external sources, including quality international research and technology providers.

- Strengthen linkages to alternate communications and extensions routes e.g. strengthen relationships with commercial service providers (agronomists), state departmental extension staff.
- Strengthen linkages and access to researchers for melon growers, including international researchers. This may include an international study tour pending lifting of travel restrictions. (Any such event will be funded separately to this project).
- Maintain and continue to adapt electronic newsletters and magazine production. Ensure clarity of the role of these communications mechanisms to minimise duplication and dilution of message.
- Additional impromptu communications to industry members on emerging and critical issues.
- Develop clear means of reporting R&D levy expenditure to avoid this information being lost in broader communications.
- Review, maintenance and growth of existing Melons Australia CRM system – and potential implementation of a new system to ensure relevant access and connection with melon growers and associated stakeholders, to include contact details, basic grower profile and any specific interest areas.
- Ongoing website maintenance and general administration associated with the communications work of Melons Australia.

## Why monitor and evaluate?

Claiming that a program has provided a positive return on investment requires evidence that it has led to the improvement of knowledge, confidence, quality of life, profitability or other measurables that are in line with the investment objective.

Constantly learning from what our monitoring data tells us and modifying program tactics to better achieve that which has been defined as 'success' will ensure that the program is constantly moving towards its predetermined vision.

Thus, ensuring investor confidence and improving stakeholder benefits are key reasons why monitoring and evaluation activities are an important tool within a large program. However, a monitoring and evaluation framework is only effective if it is used as a matter of routine, rather than only at the conclusion of the program!

### Collecting performance data and forming an assessment

Collection of performance data should be undertaken throughout the program life. Confirming the key mechanisms for collecting data and development of appropriate templates should be done at the program outset. Methods of collecting data are included in Table 7.

Performance data should be assessed against the key evaluation questions at least mid- way through the project and at project conclusion. Key evaluation questions:

1. Achievement of outcomes: To what extent has the communication program improved knowledge and awareness of melon research?
2. Relevance: To what extent has the communication program met the needs of industry levy payers?
3. Engagement: To what extent were the target engagement levels of industry levy payers facilitated by program activities?
4. Appropriateness: How did the communication program vary its activities to suit the preferred learning style of industry levy payers?  
How much alignment was there between industry needs and communication activities?
5. Efficiency: What efforts did the communication program make to improve efficiency of communication activities?
6. Impact: To what extent have communications supported on-farm decision-making



**Table 7.** Monitoring and evaluation guidelines

| <b>Communication channel</b>        | <b>Data collection methods</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <b>Performance metric</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Website                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Website traffic data</li> <li>Annual melons industry stakeholder survey</li> </ul>                                                                                                      | Improved traffic to consumer and industry pages over time.<br>Improved website usage by industry stakeholders.<br>Positive feedback from industry and examples of resources and information from the website being used on farm and in the supply chain. |
| Grower meetings                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feedback forms – hardcopy and online</li> <li>Attendance data</li> <li>Annual melons industry stakeholder survey</li> </ul>                                                             | Positive feedback from levy payers.<br>Increasing attendance over time.                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Publications                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annual / bi-annual information and training needs assessment with levy payers</li> <li>Increased newsletter subscriptions</li> <li>Annual melons industry stakeholder survey</li> </ul> | Information needs collected over time align with key topics shared in communication activities.<br>Positive feedback from levy payers.<br>Uptake of opportunities promoted through the newsletter.                                                       |
| R&D levy liaison                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tracking input from levy payers</li> <li>Feedback from Hort Innovation</li> </ul>                                                                                                       | Increased input into R&D levy investment ideas over time.<br>Levy payers increasingly feel more informed about industry research.                                                                                                                        |
| Webinars                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In-webinar polling</li> <li>Annual melons industry stakeholder survey</li> </ul>                                                                                                        | Knowledge change from webinar or webinar series.                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Social media – Facebook and YouTube | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>View counts</li> <li>Comment feeds</li> <li>Account membership</li> <li>Annual melons industry stakeholder survey</li> </ul>                                                            | Anecdotal reports of research adoption.<br>Increased account membership.<br>Positive feedback from levy-payers.<br>Anecdotal reports of the program facilitating new relationships.                                                                      |

## Refereed scientific publications

Brehm, J. & Rahn, W. (1997) Individual-Level Evidence for the Causes and Consequences of Social Capital. *American Journal of Political Science*, 41: 999-1023.

Department of Environment and Energy (2018) Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation for Australia, Version 7, Australian Government

Freshlogic (2020) Australian Horticultural Statistics Handbook – fruit, Hort Innovation

Klepeis, P., & Gill, N. (2016) The paradox of engagement: Land stewardship and invasive weeds in amenity landscapes. *A Comparative Political Ecology of Exurbia: Planning, Environmental Management, and Landscape Change*, Springer. 221–243.

Hamunen, K., Appelstrand, M., Hujala, T et al. (2015). Defining peer-to-peer learning – from an Old 'Art of Practice' to a New Mode of Forest Owner Extension? *The Journal of Agricultural Education and Extension*, 21(4): 293–307.

Fresh Intelligence Consulting (2020) Global Melon Production & Export Trends, Talking Melons conference speaker video

Oreszczyn, S., Lane, A., & Carr, S. (2010) The role of networks of practice and webs of influencers on farmers' engagement with and learning about agricultural innovations. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 26(4): 404–41

# Project M&E planning template

Version 3 – November 2021



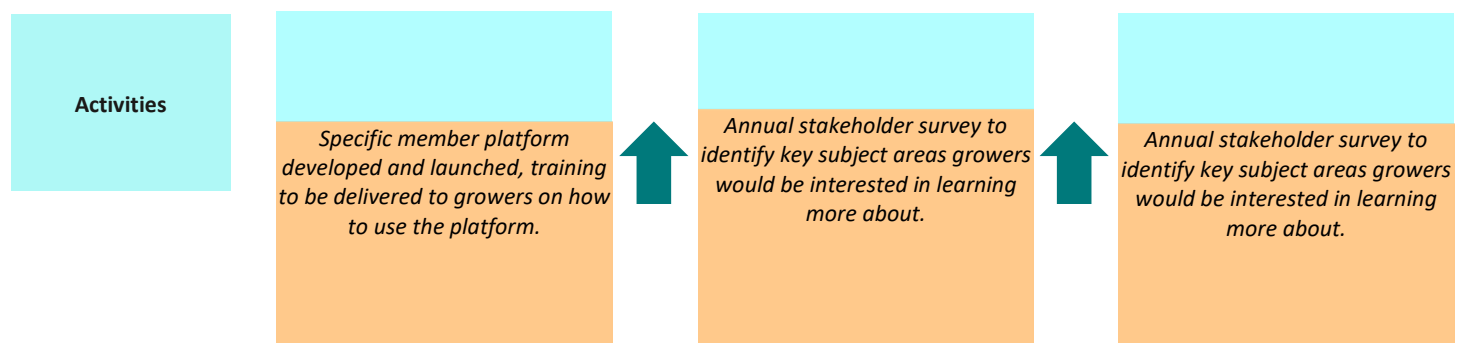
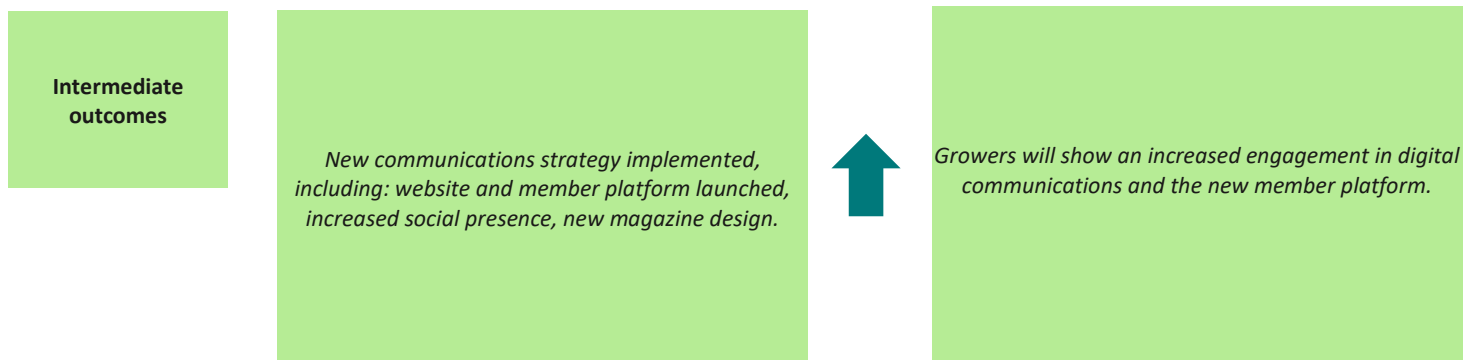
## Project and delivery partner details

|                                    |                                            |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| Project title                      | <i>Communications Strategy</i>             |
| Project code                       | <i>VM20006</i>                             |
| Delivery partner<br>(Organisation) | <i>Melons Australia</i>                    |
| Lead researcher                    | <i>Johnathon Davey and Courtney Archer</i> |
| Date completed/updated             | <i>May 2024</i>                            |



|                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Relevant SIP outcome(s) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote the use of existing R&amp;D and proven management practices that improve on-farm efficiency and increase profitability.</li> <li>Undertake R&amp;D and extension to enhance product quality, consistent with evidence of consumer expectations (with a focus on harvest and post-harvest)</li> <li>Raise awareness of biosecurity and food safety risks across the value chain, through educational programs, on-site training and monitoring and evaluation</li> </ul> |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

|                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| End-of-project outcomes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>improved awareness of levy funded investments, current and other relevant research and improved extension and adoption by Australia's melon levy-payers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>stronger connections between Melons Australia and industry</li> <li>stronger connections between melon levy-payers from across Australia</li> <li>increased engagement across all communication platforms</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|



|                      |     |  |  |  |  |
|----------------------|-----|--|--|--|--|
| Foundational outputs | new |  |  |  |  |
|----------------------|-----|--|--|--|--|

|                         |                        |                          |                           |                  |         |
|-------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|------------------|---------|
| Foundational activities | Project administration | Baseline data collection | Establishing partnerships | Project planning | Funding |
|-------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|------------------|---------|

## 2. Project M&E scope

### Key evaluation questions

**Table 1: Project key evaluation questions**

| Key evaluation questions                                                                                                                                                                          | Project-specific questions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Effectiveness</b>                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 1. To what extent has the project achieved its expected outcomes?<br><br><i>Note that while several examples have been provided there is usually only one overarching effectiveness question.</i> | To what extent have participants engaged in digital communications?<br><br><i>Engagement has significantly increased in line with the project KPI's since the communications strategy started.</i>                                                                        |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Has the project developed new technology that is now available for industry uptake?<br><br><i>A new member platform has been developed with new benefits and featured the industry, including new technology and a CoP platform.</i>                                      |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Relevance</b>                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 2. How relevant was the project to the needs of intended beneficiaries?                                                                                                                           | To what extent has the project met the needs of industry levy payers?<br><br><i>The project has been delivering all outcomes in line with the communications strategy, providing levy payers with more frequent communications and updates that are relevant to them.</i> |
| <b>Process appropriateness</b>                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 3. How well have intended beneficiaries been engaged in the project?                                                                                                                              | To what extent were the target engagement levels of industry levy payers achieved?<br><br><i>Engagement levels have been exceeded in some instances through the implementation of results from our annual stakeholder survey and an increased social presence.</i>        |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

|                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>4. To what extent were engagement processes appropriate to the target audience/s of the project?</p> | <p>Did the project engage with industry levy payers through their preferred learning style?</p> <p><i>Results from our stakeholder survey showed a mix reaction in how levy payers like to receive communications. Following this survey, we implemented a new LinkedIn page and increased communications across all platforms.</i></p>                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <p><b>Efficiency</b></p>                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <p>5. What efforts did the project make to improve efficiency?</p>                                      | <p>What efforts did the project make to improve efficiency?</p> <p><i>With the development of our new website and member platform, we have streamlined the following into one system, prior to this we were using 4 x different systems to track information and send communications.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Website public facing</li> <li>- Member only platform</li> <li>- eDM platform</li> <li>- Discussion forums</li> <li>- CRM</li> <li>- Events management</li> <li>- Webinars</li> </ul> |

### 3. Performance expectations, data collection and analysis

The project monitoring plan will be used as the basis to ‘check in’ on project performance throughout the project lifecycle.

**Table 2: Project monitoring plan**

| Logic level             | What to monitor                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Performance expectation (KPIs) and/or monitoring questions                                                                 | Data collection – method (e.g. survey) and source (e.g. growers)     | Timing of, and responsibility for, data collection                                       |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Foundational activities | <i>Example: Provision of data or development of a new management protocol in a related project; Formation of project team</i>                                                                                                                                                               | <i>Example: Monthly provision of data</i>                                                                                  | <i>Example: Record keeping (Delivery Partner of related project)</i> | <i>Example: Monthly (Project leader)</i>                                                 |
| Activities and outputs  | <i>Example: Field trials; Technology development; International engagement; Workshops; Publications; Training packages; Number of growers accessed training/attendance at extension events; Industry development services; Minor use permits; New varieties; New standards or protocols</i> | <i>Example: Extension participation (number of growers and other stakeholders)</i>                                         | <i>Example: Record keeping (Industry Development Officer)</i>        | <i>Example: Ongoing (Industry Development Officer)</i>                                   |
| Intermediate outcomes   | <i>Example: Changes in knowledge, attitudes and skills of growers on a specific best practice; Access to new information for business decision making</i>                                                                                                                                   | <i>Example: Number of growers indicating an increase in knowledge of how and why a best practice should be implemented</i> | <i>Example: Event questionnaire (Growers)</i>                        | <i>Example: Intermittent and as required for Milestone Reports (Project team member)</i> |
| End-of-project outcomes | <i>Example: Uptake and adoption of a specific best practice by growers; Implementation of a new protocol; A change in value/volume/quality</i>                                                                                                                                              | <i>Example: Practice change by a target percentage of production base (and result of that practice change)</i>             | <i>Example: Surveys and case studies (Growers)</i>                   | <i>Example: Annually and at end of project for Final Report (Project leader)</i>         |



## 4. Reporting, learning and continuous improvement

- *We will report Milestones as per project plan, on:*
  - *1 October 2021*
  - *1 May 2022*
  - *1 November 2022*
  - *1 May 2023*
  - *1 November 2023*
  - *31 May 2024*
- *During this process, we are continuing to learn and engage with industry and Hort Innovation to ensure we evolve our Communications and delivery as appropriate throughout the life of this project.*

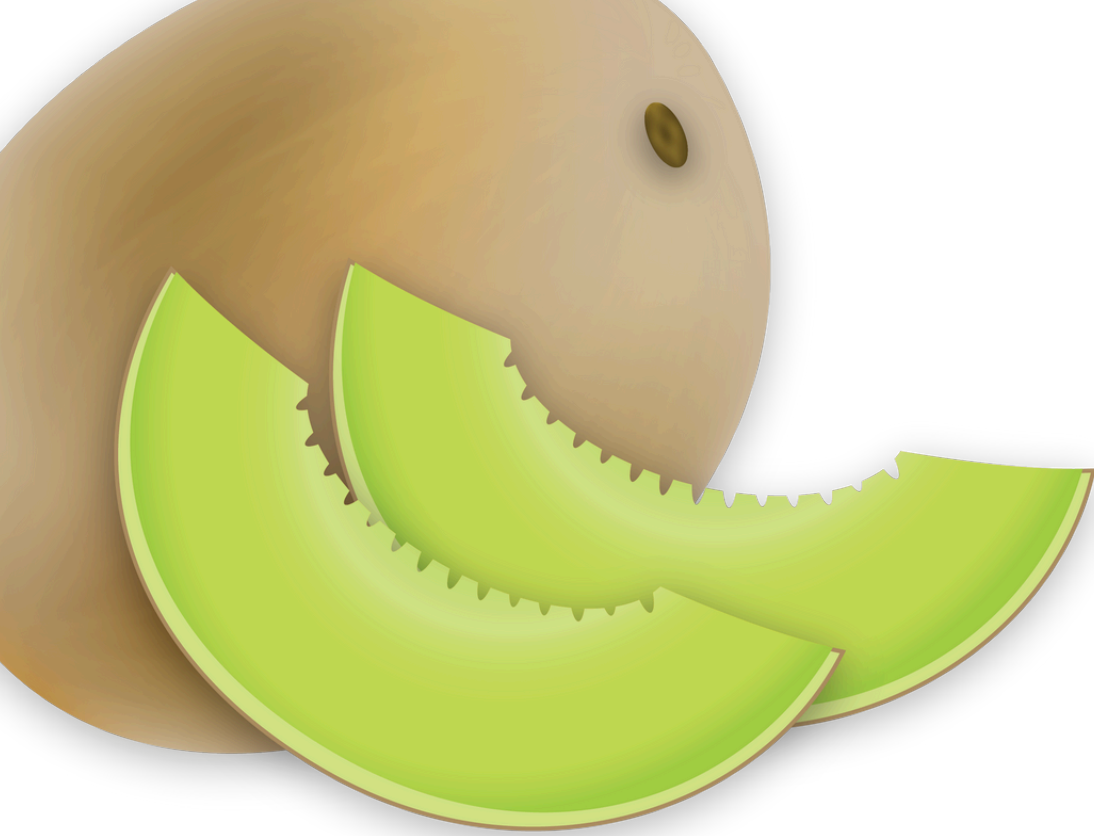
### Share your thoughts

We strive to provide the best experience possible for our delivery partners. Please share your feedback on how we can improve this document for you and other delivery partners in the future by emailing us at [communications@horticulture.com.au](mailto:communications@horticulture.com.au)

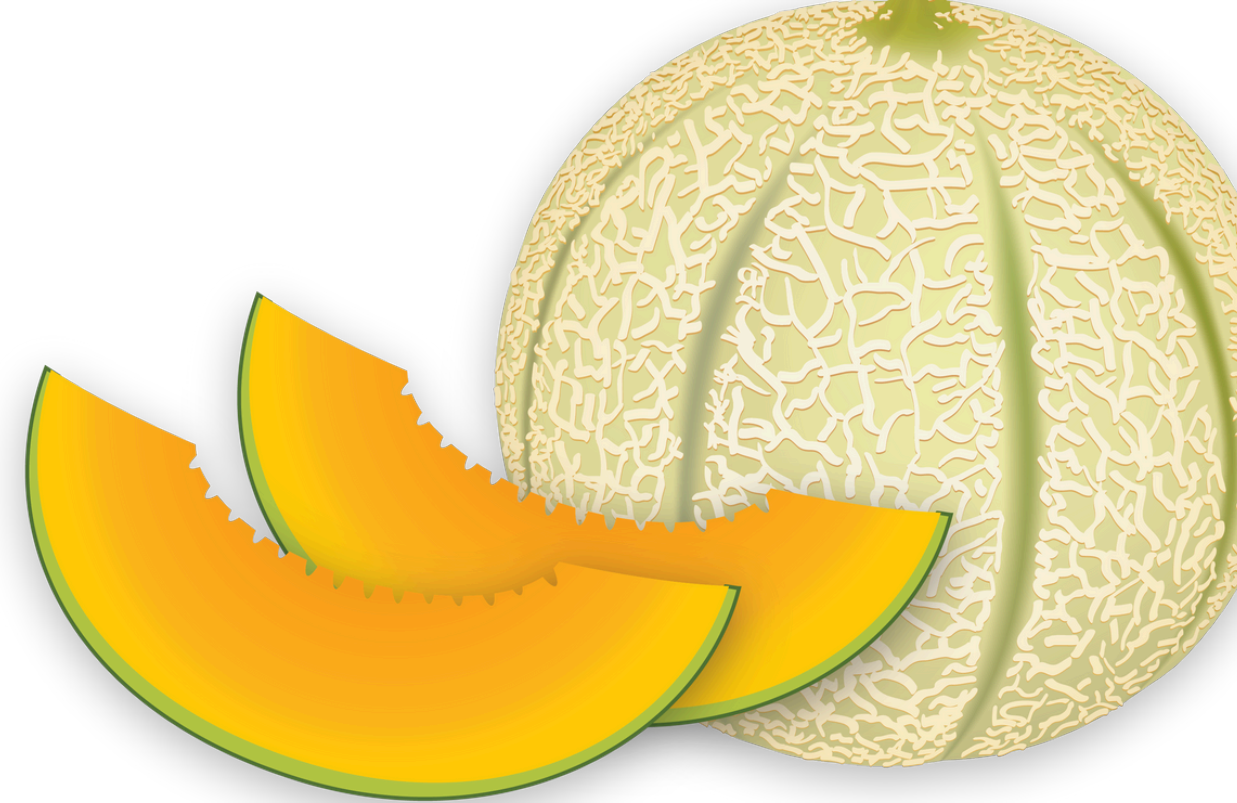
# Project Risk Register template

Project Risk Register: Delivery Partner Portal – [Project code] – [Project name]

| <b>The risk</b><br>What could happen?                 | <b>Potential risk causes/sources</b><br>What could happen?<br>What would cause it?               | <b>Potential risk impacts</b><br>How would the risk impact on delivery of the project?                                 | <b>Risk controls</b><br>What controls are in place, or will be in place, to manage the risk?                                        | <b>Risk likelihood with controls in place</b><br><i>Refer to Table 2. Risk likelihood scale</i> | <b>Risk consequence with controls in place</b><br><i>Refer to Table 3. Risk consequence scale</i> | <b>Treated risk assessment</b><br><i>Refer to Table 4. Risk assessment matrix</i> | <b>Risk evaluation</b><br>Could you defend this level of risk is acceptable?<br><i>Yes/No</i> | <b>Person responsible</b><br>Who is the person/s responsible for monitoring and managing the risk? |
|-------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Low uptake of the new Member Platform</i>          | <i>Growers are disengaged or simply don't have the time to follow the login process</i>          | <i>The KPI's set for the new website and member platform will not be met.<br/>Our grower audience are not engaged.</i> | <i>Regular communication with the database.<br/>Surveys to the database to find out what they do/don't like.</i>                    | <i>Possible</i>                                                                                 | <i>Major</i>                                                                                      | <i>High</i>                                                                       | <i>Yes</i>                                                                                    | <i>Courtney/Johnathon</i>                                                                          |
| <i>Industry don't take up the CoP platform at all</i> | <i>This platform is not what the industry are after, lack of engagement/take-up due to this.</i> | <i>Lost resources and funding.</i>                                                                                     | <i>Surveys to industry to find out their thoughts on this platform.<br/>Feedback taken on board and implemented where possible.</i> | <i>Possible</i>                                                                                 | <i>Moderate</i>                                                                                   | <i>Medium</i>                                                                     | <i>Yes</i>                                                                                    | <i>Courtney/Johnathon</i>                                                                          |
| <i>Member Portal crash</i>                            | <i>Issues with the member portal, members unable to access information.</i>                      | <i>Degrade/decrease image of the organisation by the member.</i>                                                       | <i>Keep in close contact with portal host.</i>                                                                                      | <i>Possible</i>                                                                                 | <i>Moderate</i>                                                                                   | <i>Medium</i>                                                                     | <i>Yes</i>                                                                                    | <i>Courtney/Johnathon</i>                                                                          |
| <i>CRM Crash</i>                                      | <i>Loss of data</i>                                                                              | <i>Degrade/decrease image of the organisation by the member.</i>                                                       | <i>Keep in close contact with the portal host.</i>                                                                                  | <i>Possible</i>                                                                                 | <i>Major</i>                                                                                      | <i>High</i>                                                                       | <i>Yes</i>                                                                                    | <i>Courtney/Johnathon</i>                                                                          |



**MELONS**  
A U S T R A L I A



# Communications Project Report and Statistics





# 2023 Highlights

## New MA Website Launched

Website features:

- Webinars and Podcasts
- Member Platform
- Resource Hub and Community of Practice



## 2 x Melon News Printed Publication

Some of our biggest editions yet! Including some new features:  
Grower Spotlight, Day in the life of.

- **June** – 36 pages, 19 articles
- **December** – 36 pages, 18 articles

## eNews Readership Exceeds Expectations

- KPI: 34% readership by year 3 of the program
- Actual: 51.7% readership - September 2023



## Roadshows

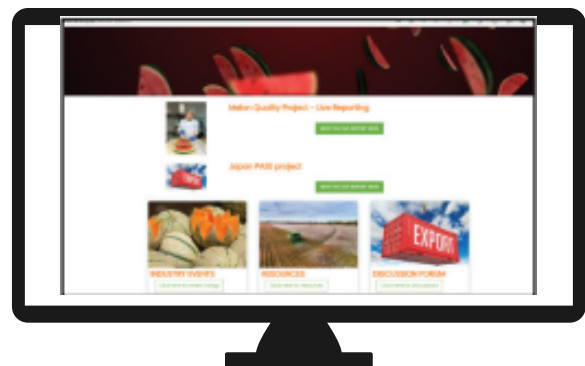
- 2023 Roadshows spreading the communications project updates with over 140 participants.



**MELONS**  
AUSTRALIA



# Digital Statistics



## Website

- Total member's of the website: 50
- Total newsletter subscribers: 1,367
- Total website visits: 11,000

| COUNTRY       | USERS |
|---------------|-------|
| Australia     | 7.3K  |
| United States | 945   |
| Germany       | 182   |
| India         | 166   |
| Netherlands   | 164   |
| Kuwait        | 155   |
| Finland       | 134   |

|                      |          |
|----------------------|----------|
| Sessions▼ by         |          |
| Session manual so... |          |
| SESSION MANUAL ...   | SESSIONS |
| google               | 6.6K     |
| bing                 | 679      |
| l.facebook.com       | 246      |
| linkedin.com         | 117      |
| duckduckgo           | 78       |
| m.facebook.com       | 71       |
| au.search.yahoo.com  | 48       |

| PAGE TITLE AND SCREEN ... | VIEWS |
|---------------------------|-------|
| Home                      | 2.6K  |
| Email Templates           | 1.4K  |
| Communication History     | 617   |
| Melon Varieties           | 563   |
| Events                    | 390   |
| Members                   | 323   |
| Resources                 | 310   |

# Digital Statistics



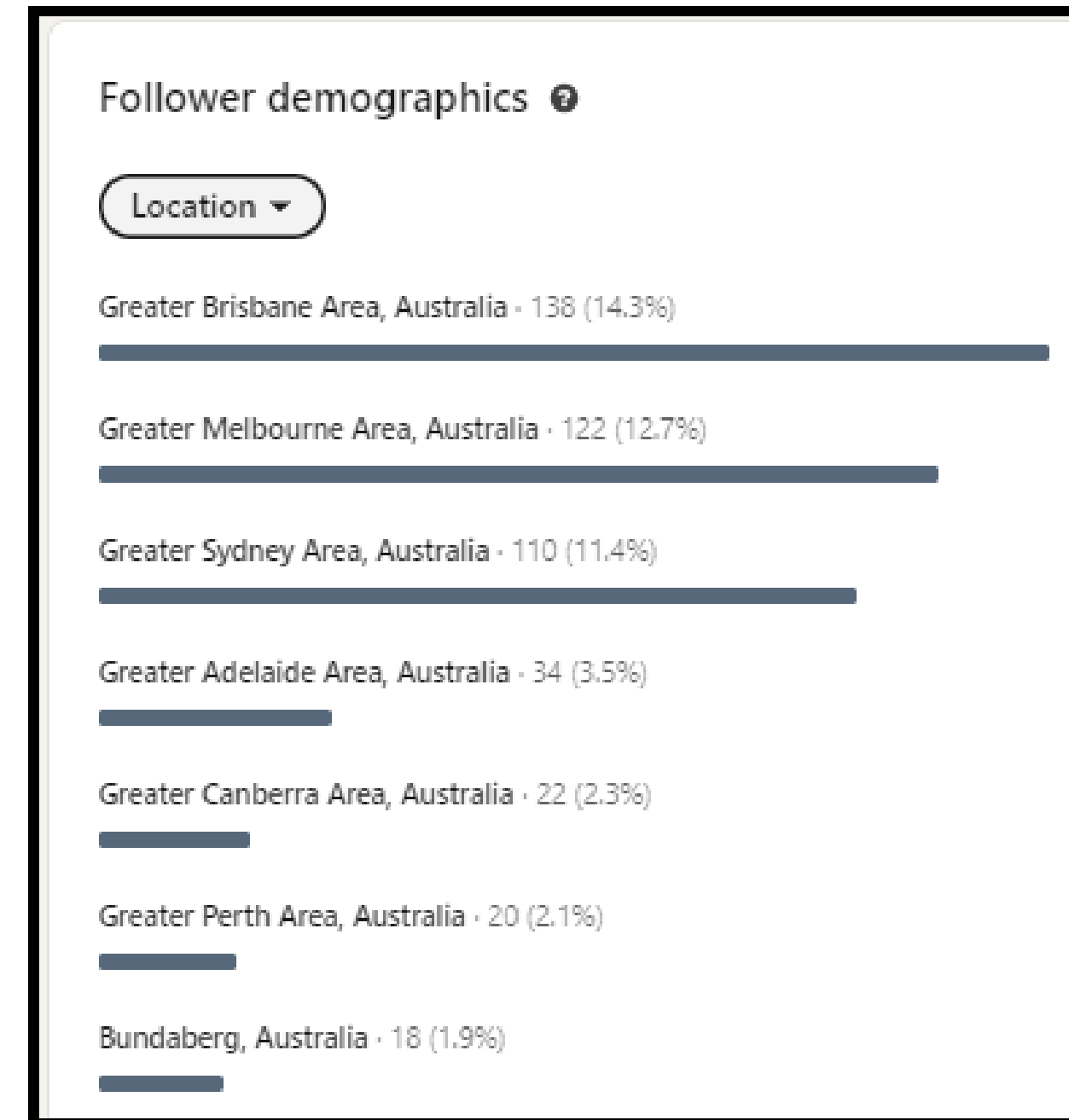
## LinkedIn

- Our posts have been seen - 60,863 times
- Our posts have been shared - 38 times
- Post likes – 1,964
- Comments – 42
- New followers – **504 increase of 52%**
- Total followers - 964



## Facebook

- Post likes, comments - 706
- Post clicks - 159
- Facebook page visits - 1,200
- New followers - **80 increase of 21%**
- Total followers - 373



# What's Next For Melons Australia

## Communications

The next Communications Project will build on the current project and develop some new ways for growers to communication with Melons and other industry. Below is a highlight of what we have planned.

- Web based mobile app
- Virtual forums
- Increased publicity
- Increased membership to the website
- Featuring more Grower Spotlights, and A Day in the life of in our publications
- Increased readership and engagement across all digital platforms, and printed publications



**MELONS**  
A U S T R A L I A