



**THE VICTORIAN STRAWBERRY INDUSTRY NEWSLETTER**

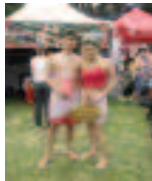
# Vic Strawberries

**SUMMER 2008 / 09**

**ISSUE 31**

## Spring Harvest Festival

Thousands of people flocked to The Age newspaper's Spring Harvest Festival at Werribee Park, Sunday 30th November. With the hot weather, strawberries were the flavour of the day and the 40 trays taken for sale were purchased by mid-afternoon.



Adam & Eve also attracted the crowd's attention as they distributed recipe cards and colouring pages. After receiving this merchandise, many patrons visited the strawberry stand to purchase fruit cups and note pads.

Customers commented on the strawberries' delicious flavour and texture, with many returning to make additional purchases.

The success of this event means that the Victorian strawberry industry will be represented at next year's festival as well.



Adam & Eve distributing recipe cards

The Victorian strawberry industry stall was located near the main entrance in a prime position to attract patrons' attention.



'Victor the Strawberry' proved very popular with the young and young at heart, as he walked through the crowds and greeted patrons.

Victorian Strawberry industry stall on left-hand side of red CFA marquee

Strawberry IDO Elizabeth Wharton and Victor the Victorian strawberry

### **Bushfire condolences...**

*On behalf of all members of the Victorian strawberry industry, our thoughts are with the survivors of the horrendous bushfires that have effected many regions throughout the Yarra valley, and also with the families of those who have lost friends or loved ones.*

*If we can be of assistance in any way please don't hesitate to contact:  
Elizabeth Wharton (0408 416 538) or Bill Thompson (03 5968 5555)*

### **Upcoming Events...**

- 30 May Victorian Strawberry Industry Ball
- 2 - 3 June AgVet Chemical users' course, Woori Yallock DPI
- 16 June Chemical Refresher Course, Woori Yallock DPI
- 16 July Berry Industry Expo
- 15 Nov Yarra Valley Strawberry Festival

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## VIC STRAWBERRIES

# Industry News

Elizabeth Wharton - VIC Strawberry I.D.O.

### Study Tour Postponed

The study tour of California's strawberry industry initially planned for June this year has been postponed until June 2010 due to insufficient sponsorship/funding.

If anyone has suggestions of sites they would like to visit, or specific topics of interest, please contact Elizabeth Wharton.

### Fragole Donne Women in Industry Dinner

This year's ladies' dinner was held at Chirnside Park Country Club Wednesday 18th March.

Ladies were inspired by guest speaker Angela Betheras, who now owns and operates Nickleby at Darnum alpaca farm after a career with Coles Myer as their International Supply Chain Manager and many other interests.

Tickets cost \$25pp, which includes wine & softdrink and a 3-course dinner. For more information about this annual event please contact Elizabeth Wharton 03 9707 1114.

### Berry Industry Expo

The biennial Berry Industry Expo is to be held Thursday 16th July this year at the 'York on Lilydale' function centre, Mt Evelyn.

Anyone interested in participating in the expo via a trade stand or presentation should contact Elizabeth Wharton to register.

### Victorian Strawberry Industry Ball

This year's Strawberry Ball will be held Saturday 30th May at Monte Carlo Receptions, 5 Mitchell Street Doncaster East. The ever-popular raffle will be staged again this year.

Tickets to the Ball will include wine & softdrink, a delicious meal, plus liveband.

If anyone would like to donate a prize or purchase tickets to attend the Ball please contact:

- \* Clarrisa Cincotta (0417 339 691)
- \* Serge DeIulio (0419 546 856).

### Strawberry Industry Chemical Management Plan

The VSIDC, VSGA and Victorian Strawberry Industry Chemical Residue Steering Committee have been working with the Department of Primary Industry's Chemical Standards Branch to develop an action plan to manage chemical usage and application within the Victorian strawberry industry.

This plan will be a public document and will form the basis of improvements the strawberry industry is to make over coming years towards their use and knowledge of chemicals and correct application procedures.

For more information regarding this plan please contact Elizabeth Wharton (0408 416 538), or Michael Laity from DPI Chemical Standards (Phone: 03 9785 0191 or email: michael.laity@dpi.vic.gov.au).

## VSGA New Variety Farmwalk

Despite abysmally wet conditions, many growers visited Sam Violi's farm at Coldstream to inspect the new strawberry variety trials for themselves Friday 12th December.

133 varieties are being trialled, which originate from the DPI Knoxfield and Queensland breeding programs. These varieties are a mixture of short-day and day-neutrals, with many showing great promise.

Growers who attended the day commented on the uniformity, colour and flavour of fruit on several of the trialled varieties.

The purpose of the breeding program and field trials is to determine lines of plants that are suited to Victoria's

climate and conditions, as well as tolerance to pests and diseases without the use of chemicals or fumigation.

Many varieties will be eliminated from the trials because of their poor performance, which is evident by susceptibility to pests/diseases, unfavourable growth characteristics, low fruit yield, or misshapen fruit.

A small number of plants of the new variety 'Juliette' were released to growers last year, with full production commencing this season. Growers are very pleased with the variety thus far because of its fruiting capacity, growth and resistance to common pests and diseases found in Victoria.

A variety yet to be named from this year's program will be commercialised, as it is also showing great potential.



New strawberry variety 'Juliette' bred by Bruce Morrison through the Victorian strawberry breeding program

For more information on the Victorian strawberry breeding program please contact Sam Violi (0409 439 122) or Bruce Morrison (03 9210 9222).





VIC STRAWBERRIES

# Yarra Valley Strawberry Festival

Strawberries were the flavour of the day at the Yarra Valley Strawberry Festival, which was held Sunday 23rd November at the Lilydale Showgrounds.

Despite the overcast conditions, people of all ages attended the event to purchase fresh strawberries, enjoy the rides, dance to the live band, pat animals in the animal pen, and browse through local art & craft stalls.

'Barney the Dinosaur' and 'Victor the Victorian Strawberry' strolled amongst

the crowd to the delight of children young and old, posing for many photographs with little fans by their sides.

Victorian growers graciously donated many trays of strawberries, which were sold to the public to raise funds for the local St Patrick's Primary School.

The largest strawberry competition was won by Santo Failla with a strawberry weighing in excess of 90 grams. Whilst best presented tray of strawberries went to Josie & Tom Palmucci.

Strawberry fruit, jam, smoothies and many other delicious strawberry delights were prepared by volunteers and enjoyed by patrons.

The strawberry eating competition also proved very popular with children, as well as a crowd favourite.

For more information about the Yarra Valley Strawberry Festival please contact John Calle (0417 538 535).



Volunteers prepare strawberry feasts for patrons



Volunteers at the strawberry sales stand kindly donated strawberries



Strawberry eating competition

## Innovative Irrigation farmwalk



Over ten growers from the strawberry, blueberry and rubus industries attended the 'Innovative Irrigation' farmwalk 4th December 2008. The farmwalk was part of the WaterWise Berries project and showcased the innovative and progressive approach to irrigation taken by Golden Vale Strawberries in Coldstream.

Sam Violi, owner of Golden Vale Strawberries, is trialling many different irrigation methods and soil moisture monitors. Double irrigation lines down each row compared to the industry standard of one line has created more even plant growth and soil moisture distribution throughout the width of the bed.

One of the soil moisture monitors, the 'G-Dot' has been found to be very easy to read and provides real-time data that growers can respond to whilst still out in the field. Already, Sam & Dom Violi have been able to decrease their irrigation time from 1 hour to 45 minutes per application because the G-Dot tells them when the soil profile is full. The G-Dot is produced by MEA and retails for just over \$300.

For more information on the G-Dot please call 08 8332 9044, or visit: <http://www.gdot.com.au/gdot/index>

For more information on this project please contact Elizabeth Wharton on 0408 416 538.



G-Dot soil moisture monitor



**VIC STRAWBERRIES**

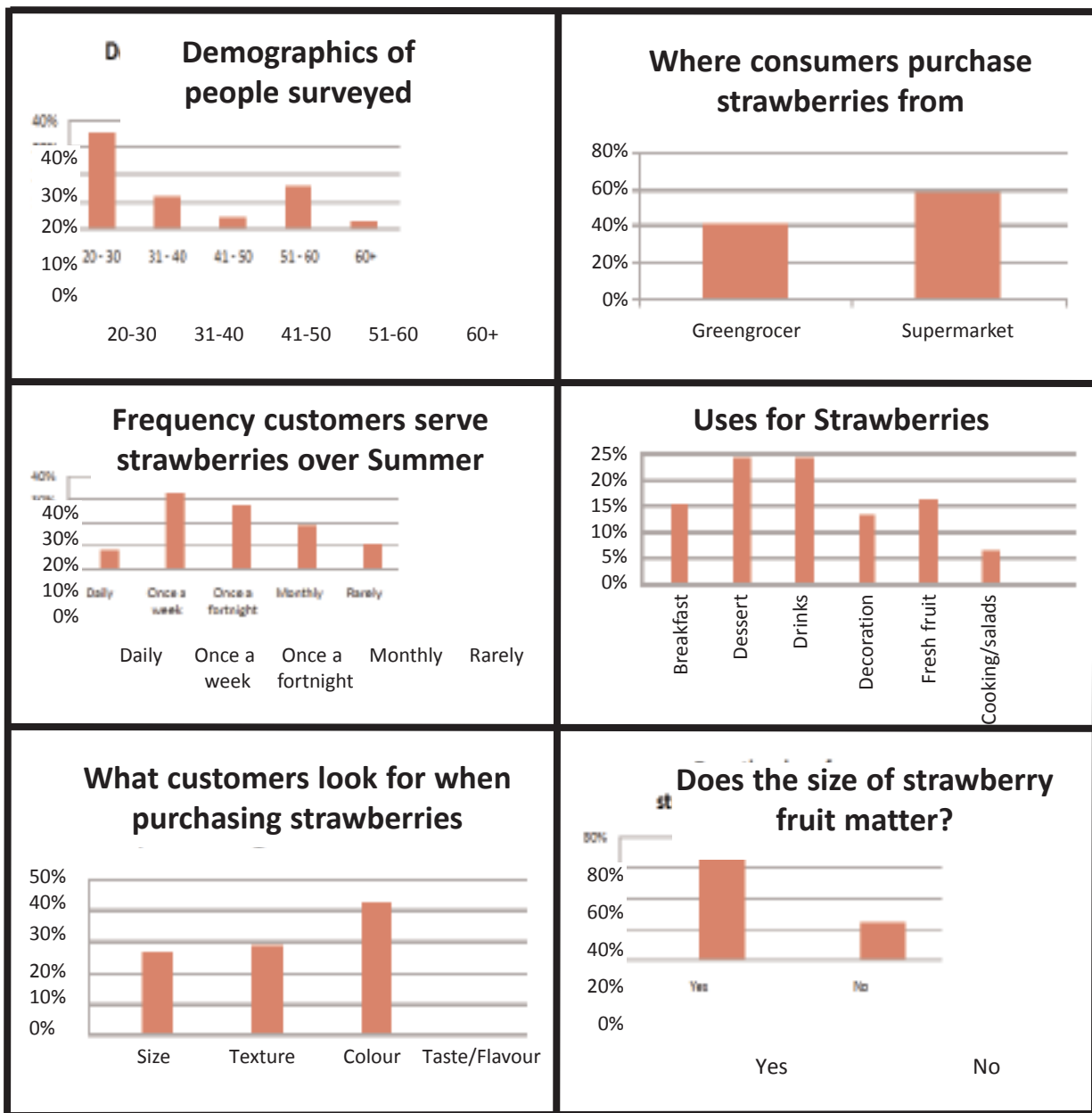
# Victorian Consumer Survey Results

Throughout December 2008 and January 2009 the VSIDC and MarketMaker PR promoted Victorian strawberries in many Melbourne shopping centres as part of the industry's marketing campaign. The promotion included product tastings, cooking demonstrations, distribution of colouring pages & recipe cards, and interaction using 'Victor the Victorian strawberry'.

These promotions proved very successful. Information was gathered relating to consumer preferences when consuming

or purchasing strawberries, as seen in the below graphs.

97% of consumers said that they liked the taste of Victorian strawberries. Comments from the public included that they think Victorian strawberries are delicious, have a nice taste, and that large berries have better flavour. Most people preferred to purchase strawberries over Summer when they are in season. Moreover, 94% of people said that they would purchase Victorian strawberries again.



**The Victorian Strawberry Industry Newsletter**

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*Working for the benefit of the Victorian Strawberry Industry*

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