

Vic Strawberries

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The strawberry season is off and racing!



Chloe (IDO) and Neredith & Laura - Market Maker PR

The 2006/07 Victorian strawberry season is officially off and racing!

In conjunction with the Spring Racing Carnival Launch, the Victorian Strawberry season was launched in style at Federation Square on Monday 6th November.



The mums, dads and grandparents really enjoyed this temptation and the Angels chatted to them about their favourite strawberry recipes as they massaged.

The Victorian Racing Club kindly invited us to this event as a way of show casing the beginning of the Victorian season to the public and with the help of Market Maker Public Relations the day was a huge success!

Our display included a 3 tiered chocolate fountain, free strawberry samples, strawberry recipe cards and strawberry nutrition information.



The billboard characters of Adam and Eve were brought to life at the launch and they proved a huge hit with the crowd. Many people stopping to pose for photos and receive strawberry information fliers from them.

The crowd were also offered the chance to Be Tempted by a free 5 minute massage, provided by one of the three '3 Minute Angels' at our display.

Overall the official season launch was a huge success with over 1000 mini sample boxes of strawberries were given away, while 1500 recipe and information flyers were handed out and thousands of consumers were given the chance to learn more about Victorian strawberries.



Labelling confusion set straight...

- Strawberries are defined as a **PACKAGED PRODUCT**
- Packaged product is **currently under TRANSITION** from the old requirements to the new
- Therefore **CURRENTLY you have the choice** to carry just an Australian address as per current requirements or this plus a country of origin as per the new requirements.
- The **transition period ENDS ON the 8th of DEC 2007**
- **NEXT season YOU WILL NEED to have ALL labels with country of origin on them by the 8th Dec 2007**

Information by Lis Blandamer, VFF Horticulture Group Manager for more information VFF members can phone Lis on: 9207 5571

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Industry News

Chloe Thomson - VIC Strawberry I.D.O

ATTENTION!

Endosulfan use on strawberries

The autumn 2006 issue of the Victorian Strawberry Industry Newsletter contained information on a current APVMA Minor Use Permit for the use of endosulfan on strawberries in all states.

Advice from the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) has revealed that endosulfan is a restricted use chemical in Victoria and cannot be used off label without a permit from the Victorian DPI.

This means Victorian strawberry growers cannot use endosulfan without also obtaining a DPI permit.

Harvest Workers Ripe for the Picking!



Growers and contractors who require assistance to source seasonal labour are urged to register their labour requirements on the Harvest Trail Website.

The National Harvest Labour Information Service (NHLIS) was established in July 2003 to help growers and jobseekers find each other at harvest time. The Service receives an average of over 1000 calls per week from backpackers, itinerant workers, "grey nomads" and eligible Australian job seekers.

HOW TO LODGE JOBS ON THE HARVEST TRAIL WEBSITE.....

There are a number of ways that harvest positions can be added to the harvest trail website including:

- Growers can lodge positions electronically on the Harvest Trail Website but must be prepared to list their contact details and be available to receive enquiries from job

seekers at peak times. Go to.....

www.jobsearch.gov.au/harvesttrail click on 'Employers', then 'advertise a job', and follow the prompts.

- Alternatively, the NHLIS can lodge the vacancy(s) on the Harvest Trail Website on behalf of a grower. For info call NHLIS Freecall number, 1800 062 332

VSIDC Order Extended to 2010

A ballot of Victorian strawberry growers was conducted by the Victorian Electoral Commission in September this year. Growers voted for the continuation of "The Victorian Strawberry Industry Development Order" and the continuation of the compulsory levy of \$12.00 per 1,000 plants purchased from the Runner Growers. There has been NO change in the value of the levy imposed for many years and it looks unlikely to rise unless growers vote each year for any variation (up or down).

The Electoral Commission despatched 126 ballot papers to Victorian commercial strawberry growers (1 vote per grower), and 50 votes were returned. The results were as follows:

*** 44 growers voted YES**

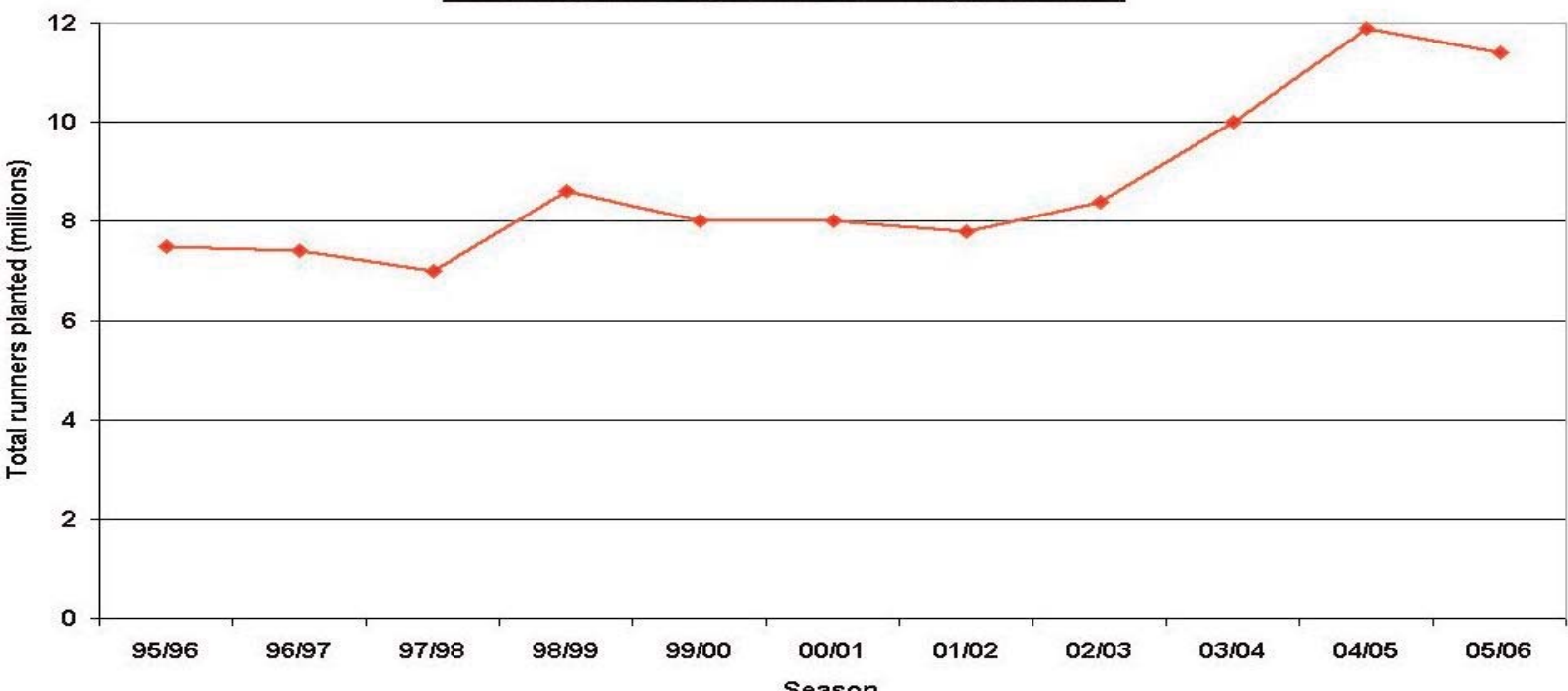
*** 5 voted NO and there was 1 informal vote**

As you can see from the graph below - runner plantings in Victoria have been climbing steadily each season for the past 10 years. This increase in runner sales is helped by the efforts of the VSIDC, the employment of the Industry Development Officer and the activities associated with trials and evaluation of new plants and varieties. The VSIDC committee also organises various public relations campaigns and assists with strawberry fairs and festivals around the State.

The VSGA would like to thank all growers who voted and would encourage those who did not vote to do so in future years.

The VSIDC would like to thank growers for the vote of confidence in the projects commissioned by the VSIDC in close collaboration with the VSGA.

Total Runners Planted in Victoria per Season



Strawberry Ladies Bus Tour 2006



A record breaking 18 strawberry industry ladies attended this year's annual ladies' bus tour on the 5th of September.

The topic of the day was value adding and we set off to the Mornington Peninsula to visit several horticultural properties who successfully use value adding techniques as part of their business.

Firstly we visited Sunny Ridge strawberry farm, where Matt and Ruth Gallace showed us around the cafe, wine bar and store. They discussed the products they sell and the ladies were able to sample a few! Anne Gallace then gave us a tour of their state-of-the-art packing shed.

After a rejuvenating cup of coffee and a tasting of strawberry wine the tour moved on to Mocks Orchard - Totally Pure Fruits.

This family owned, biodynamically run orchard has many fruit trees, however they specialise in apples. While they do sell their fresh apples at their road side shop, they also make delicious apple cider, apple juice and apple vinegar.

The ladies were also very interested to hear about biodynamic farming and soil improvement techniques from Neil Mock (see photo below).

The day was completed with a fantastic lunch at Heronswood Cafe and a visit to Ellisfield Farm to sample Morello cherry and quince products.

Throughout the tour the strawberry ladies were eager to learn of other people's experiences with value adding and small business management.



The development of a small idea into a fully operational and profitable business was very inspirational. Thankyou to all the ladies who attended and I look forward to seeing you all next year and we welcome and encourage more strawberry ladies to attend this fun day out in 2007.

The day would not have been possible without the kind donation from VisionPak. Thank your for your support.

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WATCH OUT for those chemical residues!!

As many strawberry growers would know, last season there was a major problem with Rutherglen Bug.

What you may not be aware of, was chemicals used to control the insects resulted in **unacceptable residues** being **detected from a small number of strawberry growers**. These unacceptable residues tarnish a very good record of residue management by Victorian strawberry growers.

The Department of Primary Industries (DPI) has been monitoring chemical residues at the Melbourne Market for many years though the Victorian Produce Monitoring Program. This program found **trichlorfon** residues above the Maximum Residue Level (MRL) in strawberries grown by several Victorian producers in December 2005 and January 2006.

DPI officers visited the growers to determine the source of the unacceptable residues. It was found that growers made repeated off-label applications of trichlorfon products (Dipterex 500 SL Insecticide or Nufarm Lepidex 500 Insecticide) to control Rutherglen Bug.

These trichlorfon products were registered on strawberries in NSW, QLD and NT but were NOT registered for strawberries in Victoria, meaning that the growers were using the chemical off-label.

Whilst in Victoria, off-label use of non-restricted use chemicals is permitted within certain limits, it is the responsibility of growers to manage chemical residues. Strawberry growers who use chemicals off-label have a higher risk of residue problems because it is unknown how a chemical will interact with the strawberry plant or how long it will take for the residue to decrease to an acceptable level. In some cases no MRL is established for a chemical and in these cases any detection is unacceptable.

DPI recommends that growers using chemicals off-label have their produce tested by a National Association for Testing Authorities (NATA) accredited laboratory to ensure that the required standards are met.

For more information phone the DPI Customer Service Centre on 136 186.

Progressive Growers Bus Tour 2006



Twenty Victorian strawberry growers attended this year's Progressive Growers bus tour on the 30th of August, visiting the AMCOR Box Factory in Box Hill and Peter Schruers & Sons Vegetable Farm in Devon Meadows.

In a behind-the-scenes tour of the AMCOR Factory growers were shown the design, printing and cutting process involved in developing boxes to meet customers' orders.

Everyone was very interested to learn about the many steps including design, sample creation, stamp making, cardboard making, printing and cutting that goes into making many of the strawberry trays used by the industry everyday.

After a delicious lunch, proudly sponsored by AMCOR, the tour visited Peter Schruers & Sons huge vegetable farm at Devon Meadows.

Arriving just in time to see the mechanical leek harvester at work, Peter explained about the continuous cycle of production utilised on the farm and the types of crops grown. Peter then took us on a tour of his state of the art packing sheds which were in full operation. His son, Darren also explained about their very successful Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program and environmental policies.

Chloe Thomson the IDO, would like to thank **AMCOR and Bropak for kindly supplying the drinks for the bus trip, and AMCOR for sponsoring lunch.**



Thanks are also extended to the Adrian Keane from AMCOR, Dom Ciccirelli from Bropak and Peter Schruers & Sons for giving up their time to welcome the strawberry growers into their workplaces.

Yarra Valley Strawberry Festival 2006

On a perfect spring day an estimated 8,000 people attended the Yarra Valley Strawberry Festival at the Lilydale Showgrounds, hosted for the first time by St Patrick's Primary School, Lilydale.

By 10am the sausage sizzle stall was flat out and the Devonshire tea stand was full of people eager for a morning coffee and scones, with strawberry jam and cream. In fact the scones and jam proved so popular that more than 700 scones were sold by 3pm!

Many Yarra Valley strawberry growers donated 2 or 3 trays of fruit each, making the total strawberries donated equal to approximately 100 trays. St Patrick's Primary School and the festival organising committee would like to sincerely thank the Yarra Valley growers for their donations and support.

The committee would also like to thank the many sponsors

and donors who helped make the festival a huge success. Approximately \$14,000 was raised for the school. The money raised will be used to help setup a new play area under shade sails and to revitalise the school gardens.

Also running on the day were 2 competitions for growers to enter. The Biggest Strawberry Competition and the Best Presented Tray Competition.

Winner of the Biggest Strawberry was Sam Violi.

Winner of the 'Best Presented Tray' was Dominic Cellante.

Congratulations to both of these winners.



The Victorian Strawberry Industry Newsletter

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