

SUSTAINABLE SUCCESS STORIES



Improving
biosecurity planning
and business level
preparedness at
Zerella Fresh

Sustainable Success Stories showcase how the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges NRM is working with industry to improve production outcomes in the South Australian vegetable industry.



A growing threat

South Australian growers have been concerned with a number of potential incursions which threaten crop production and market access in the state. AUSVEG SA, as the South Australian vegetable industry association, has taken a leadership approach in biosecurity management, working with Biosecurity SA, Hort Innovation and the AMLR NRM Board to better prepare growers in the event of incursion.

A key concern for industry is the Tomato-Potato Psyllid which was found in Western Australia a number of years ago and is a potential carrier of the Zebra Chip disease (*Cadidatus Liberibacter*) which has caused significant yield damage and crops losses internationally in places such as New Zealand. While the Tomato-Potato Psyllid (the vector) has been found in Western Australia the disease is yet to be found.

Tomato-Potato Psyllid affects both tomato and potato crops and therefore represents a significant threat to South Australia's horticulture industry. South Australia produces 80 per cent of Australia's fresh market potatoes and significant processing production worth over \$200 million per annum at the farm gate and over \$200 million of tomatoes each year. As such, it is critical for industry to manage biosecurity threats at the farm level and protect their businesses against potential incursions.



Clean Your Farm

The 'Clean Your Farm' program was jointly developed between AUSVEG SA, The Adelaide Hills and Mount Lofty Ranges NRM Board and Biosecurity SA to be a proactive campaign to support growers to adopt better biosecurity practices on-farm.

The program supports growers of all sizes to implement better practices to protect their businesses against biosecurity incursions and ensure that their farms are prepared to be an important second line of defence against biosecurity incursions. The program has seen strong uptake with a number of resources such as checklists, property signs and workshops delivered for growers.

A recent focus of the program has been to work with larger horticultural businesses to improve farm level business preparedness. Zerella Fresh were one of the first companies to take up the opportunity to work with industry and government to better prepare their businesses in biosecurity management.



Background on Zerella Fresh

Zerella Fresh are a leading potato, carrot and onion producer with farms and packhouses in multiple regions including the Northern Adelaide Plains, Mallee and South East regions under management. As a large scale horticultural business it was important for the business to plan its biosecurity risk management across multiple properties and managers as a means of protecting the business against potential incursions and developing management protocols in the event of an incursion.



Key activities and practice change

Zerella Fresh wanted assistance to better prepare the business in the event of a potential incursion. At present the business is managing a number of potential threats including nematode issues, tomato-potato psyllid and onion smut which have raised concerns with local biosecurity authorities.

'As part of the 'Clean Your Farm' program the business was able to receive support from Biosecurity SA field staff and national industry-funded biosecurity advisors to review and improve current practices.

The business was supported to undertake a biosecurity preparedness audit and assessment of current business activities. The goal was to assist the business to develop policies and procedures which could be implemented as part of the business quality assurance activities and better protect the business moving forward.

Broader industry activities

In addition to on-farm activities the 'Clean Your Farm' project and Zerella also participated in some broader industry preparedness activities.

This included delivery of a specialised biosecurity surveillance workshop to better prepare supply chain agronomists to identify potential biosecurity risks on property. In addition, Zerella Fresh and the 'Clean Your Farm' project worked closely with national research teams to remain up to date on latest research into TPP at the national level and ensure the business stayed ahead of national policy responses.



Outcomes

As a result of its engagement with the 'Clean Your Farm' program, Zerella Fresh has been able to implement best practice internal policies and practices which will both protect the business against the introduction of pests and diseases and allow potential incursions to be contained and managed between properties.

The biosecurity plans were developed in a way which worked in partnership with existing Quality Assurance and risk management procedures so could be efficient for the business.

By getting on the front foot and working closely with Biosecurity authorities and experts Zerella Fresh is one of the best prepared businesses in the event of a biosecurity incursions.



Background on Sustainable Success Stories

AUSVEG SA and the AMLR NRM board wanted to highlight the significant trial work and innovation which has occurred in the Northern Adelaide Plains over the past few years as a means of highlighting the growers who have made significant advances in improving the sustainability and efficiency of their practices.

Background on our partnership

AUSVEG SA and the Adelaide and Mount Lofty NRM Board have partnered for a number of years to deliver extension activities and activities which highlight and support the adoption and promotion of sustainable practices in the intensive horticulture industry throughout the Northern Adelaide Plains region. The Northern Adelaide Plains is one of the most prominent horticulture regions in Australia and produces over \$500 million in horticulture per annum at the farm gate with key crops including greenhouse produce, potatoes, onions and other vegetable crops.

AUSVEG SA and AMLR NRM have had a strong working relationship in a number of areas and have conducted significant work together in areas such as Integrated Pest Management extension and trials, advanced compost use, biosecurity practice change and weed management over the past years.

Further information

This projects outlined in this case study were delivered by AUSVEG SA in partnership with the Adelaide and Mount Lofty NRM Board and Biosecurity SA. Any growers interested in participating in the 'Clean Your Farm' project and benchmarking and improving their biosecurity practices can contact Jordan Brooke-Barnett, AUSVEG SA CEO on 0404 772 308 or [Jordan.brooke-barnett@ausveg.com.au](mailto:jordan.brooke-barnett@ausveg.com.au) to discuss programs and opportunities.

Images have been provided by AUSVEG