

THIS ISSUE

- The mail man
- Imported dried vegetables
- Chinese broccoli
- NESB growers

OUR MAN BEHIND THE SCENES

Your newsletter appears every month thanks in part to the activities of Slobodan Vujovic. Slobodan is based at the Department of Primary Industries, Knoxfield and keeps the newsletter mailing list up to date and is responsible for the mail-out.

However, Slobodan was also an important partner in the Victorian government's *Access-to-Asia* project wherein he was involved in research that evaluated the performance of Chinese broccoli cultivars.



Slobodan Vujovic examines some wasabe plants

IMPORTED DRIED VEGETABLES

A vast range of dried horticultural products is imported into Australia and sold in specialty supermarkets and food shops. These products are

usually air-dried and packaged into plastic and barrier bags so that they are protected from the outside environment during transportation and storage.

Imported vegetable products originate from the Middle East, South America, India, China and South-East Asia. Many of these countries have unsophisticated processing methods which may permit survival of bacteria, viruses and fungi. There is potential for these products to be sources of exotic pests and diseases once imported into Australia. Also, in these countries, the laws governing the use of farm chemicals may not be as strict as in Australia so there may be potential for their vegetable products to be contaminated with restricted chemicals.

The accidental introduction of diseases and pests through dried horticultural products is a possibility, and in the absence of scientific data to the contrary, these dried products remain a threat to our biosecurity safeguard. The absence of data on chemical contaminants also remains a food safety issue for consumers of these products.

There is a project being conducted at the Institute for Horticultural Development, Knoxfield that is funded by Horticulture Australia Ltd.. This project's overall aim is to assess the risk of pests and diseases entering Australia via dried products and to determine to what degree chemical contamination may be occurring. The project will conduct a preliminary study of imported dried horticultural products for microbiological and chemical contamination.

Many Asian vegetables, especially those imported from Asia, are being investigated as part of this project. These include – bamboo shoots, daikon, mustard greens, ginger, bitter gourd, snake beans, bok choy and many types of herbs.

Exotic pests and diseases of these products have the potential to adversely affect the Asian vegetable industry in Australia if they enter this country. By investigating the potential for exotic pests and diseases to enter via dried horticultural produce, steps may be taken to reduce the risks and consequently protect the Australian horticultural industry. The project also has the potential to pinpoint opportunities for growers to investigate import replacement as part of their business plan.

Contact

Janine Jaeger, Brendan Rodoni or Robert Premier at DPI, Knoxfield for further details – Tel. 03 9210 9222

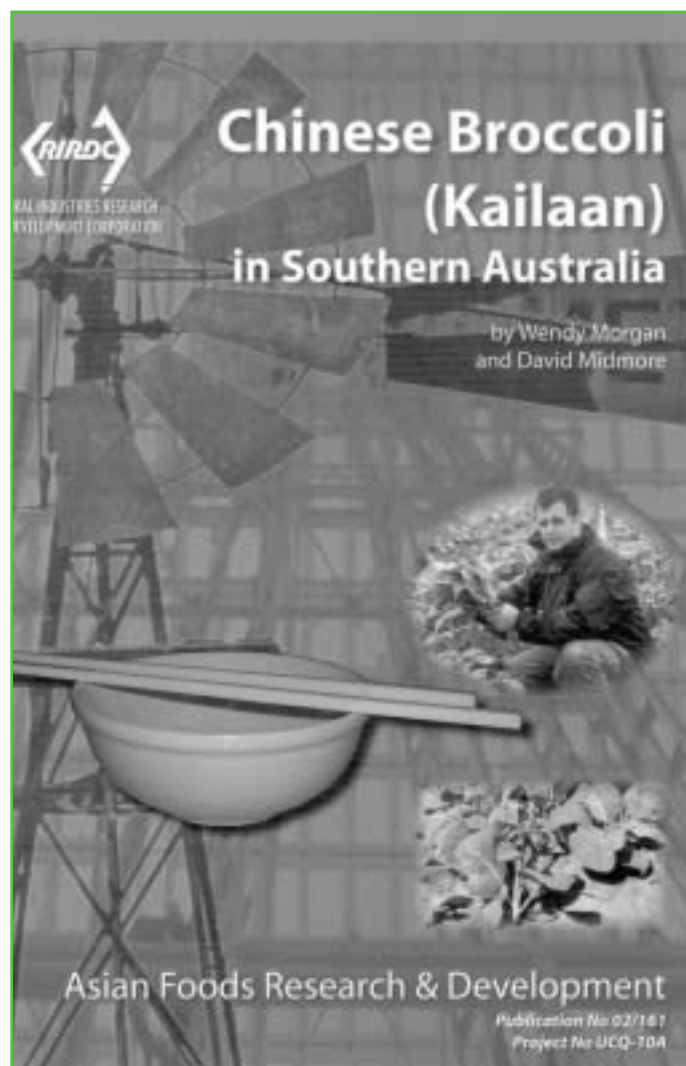


REPORT ON CHINESE BROCCOLI

RIRDC have published a new report (38 pages) on *Chinese broccoli (kailaan) in Southern Australia*. This document contains the results of production trials undertaken in Tasmania and Victoria but also has additional background information.

The report (RIRDC Publication Number 02/161, UCQ-10a) is available in hardcopy for \$15 from RIRDC (Tel. 02 6272 4819) or can be downloaded for free from RIRDC's website: www.rirdc.gov.au/reports/Index.htm.

The information is also summarised in RIRDC's *Asian Foods Short Report No. 117* on Chinese Broccoli (4 pages).



COMMUNICATION WITH NESB ASIAN VEGETABLE GROWERS

Wendy Morgan (Tel. 03 9210 9222)

There are currently about 1,400 Asian non-English speaking background (NESB) vegetable growers in Australia and the issues they face, in addition to language, cultural and social barriers, are the same as all vegetable growers. This project was aimed specifically at testing if two way communication with these growers improves information flow. One easy communication strategy which can be tested is whether speaking the same language as the grower group improves communication and increases use of best practices. This is

easier to achieve than addressing issues of social or cultural barriers to communication.

Project objectives

- Facilitate information flow to NESB vegetable growers to ensure best practice and profitability.
- Increase understanding and use of best agronomic and postharvest handling practices in vegetable production by NESB growers to maximise quality and storage life and reduce risks of contamination by human pathogens.
- Correct use of chemicals including chemical application, use of approved chemicals only and minimised risk of infringing maximum residue limits.
- Introduction of principals of HACPP analysis and quality assurance systems (QA) to NESB growers.
- Evaluation of the strategies used in and the impact of the project to identify general approaches for communicating with NESB growers on adoption of best practices.

Research

A simple model proposed employing a person who spoke the same language as the growers as well as English, to improve two-way communication and extension activities and lead to adoption of best practice.

Outcomes

Two-way communication was improved with both growers and information providers reporting that the language barriers and the mistrust between both groups had greatly improved. Grower skills have increased and their market out-turns, chemical use practices and understanding of HACCP analysis has improved.

Implications

This project has shown that communicating with Asian NESB vegetable growers in their own language can lead to identification of grower needs and issues (which also met government priorities), and increased adoption of practices that improve their business.

Publications

Morgan, W. & Bui, K. (2002) Communication with Asian NESB vegetable growers for adoption of best practice. In *Proceedings of Bi\$Link National Workshop, Sydney, August 15-16, 2002*

Editors: Graeme Thomson and Wendy Morgan
 ☎ 03 9210 9222 Fax: 03 9800 3521
 Department of Primary Industries, Knoxfield
 Private Bag 15
 Ferntree Gully Delivery Centre VIC 3156
 Email: graeme.thomson@nre.vic.gov.au
 Website: www.nre.vic.gov.au/trade/asiaveg
 ISSN 1329-9174

DISCLAIMER: This publication may be of assistance to you but the State of Victoria and its employees do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information in this publication.