



Tasmanian Agricultural Productivity Group

May 2013 Newsletter

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GMO Review

Members would be aware that the Tasmanian Government is due to hold a review into the state's GM Moratorium by November this year. The current Moratorium will expire in November next year. The Deputy Premier and Primary Industries Minister, Bryan Green, pledged to give parliament a say on the Moratorium, although it is Labour and Green's policy to extend the ban on GM crops. The Minister said he recognised Tasmania's GM-free status was a

very important subject for the state's brand but that other industries could benefit from lifting the ban.

On ABC Radio this week the TFGA have come out strongly in favour of GM crops.

Against this background of opinion the Board of TAPG have begun its own review of the subject. While the current ban has been the topic of discussion at recent meetings a formal review of the matter will begin at next week's Board Meeting where Croplife's Policy Manager for Crop Bio-technology, Osman Mewett, will attend and present its position paper for the information of the Directors. The Board will also be considering the Macquarie Franklin Report, released last year, on the relative merits of the current ban on Tasmania's agricultural sector.

Clearly, this will be a contentious issue within our agricultural community over the next year and the Board will be looking for the widest possible range of opinions as it works to review our current policy on GM. Check our Website under "About TAPG" - "Policies" for the current and somewhat "dated" position: www.tapg.net

Members are actively encouraged to forward their views on this topic through contact with the Executive Officer or any member of the Board.

Mid-Winter Industry Forum

All members would have received a "date claimer" by e-mail detailing the following main points:

- Date: Friday 23 August
- Venue: Devonport Entertainment and Convention Centre
- Theme: Boosting Tasmanian Agriculture: "Prospering in a Global Market Place"

We are delighted to be working in partnership with The Tasmanian Division of the Ag Institute and will be forwarding program details in the near future as we complete the process of securing our speaker list.

A further highlight of the day will be the Inaugural Presentation of the “TAPG Award for Agricultural Excellence”. Nominations for this prestigious award have been called and further details are available from the Executive Officer.

Waste Water Forum

In response to queries from several members TAPG has been pleased to convene a Forum where questions regarding the Waste Water Reforms can be answered authoritatively. Some of our member companies are trade waste customers of the regional water authorities and their wastewater discharges may be affected by the broader 10 year wastewater management plans initiated by the various water authorities some time ago. This type of reform may become mandated in the new financial year with the advent of the newly formed Tasmanian Water and Sewerage Corporation that commences operation from midnight on 30 June.

The Chairman of the new Corporation, Mr Miles Hampton has agreed to meet with TAPG members at ETC Bakery Café on Wednesday 5 June commencing at 10.30am. The meeting will be conducted and chaired by TAPG. Interested members are requested to advise the Executive Officer if they are attending.

Senate Inquiry into Bio-security Bill 2012

The Senate Standing Committee conducted a hearing into this Bill on 8 May in Hobart. TAPG was represented at the hearing through the Executive Officer who led the Primary Industry Biosecurity Action Alliance (PIBAA) delegation.

The main points brought to the attention of the Senators were:

1. The need for formal recognition of Regional Differentiation as an underpinning principle.
2. Formation of an effective Consultative Framework that had at its core, open and transparent discussion with stakeholders at the formative stage of policy or regulatory development. (It was also stressed that we believe Biosecurity experts are out in the field and their expertise is both available and relatively free if the aforementioned consultative process is established.)
3. There is a critical role for the Eminent Scientists Group where both the independence of its members and transparency of their processes are self-evident.

4. There is a clear conflict of interest around the Director of Biosecurity role as it is presently described.

In concluding, the point was made that the Tasmanian Alliance (PIBAA) was a useful template to show how various industry sectors could come together at the national level and provide high order advice and with the authority that can only come from field based practitioners. Combined with input from the scientific community it could provide an ethical and transparent process that would be accepted both within Australia and amongst our trading partners. With the National Parliament about to be parogued the future of the Bill in its present form appears very uncertain.

Standing sub-committee update

A brief report to advise that the Potatoes Tasmania group are active in approaching various politicians from all parties with a view to conducting meetings where the following agenda can be discussed:

- What is happening with the HAL Levies Advisory Committee
- Growers representation nationally
- A National Potato Group
- The state of the Potato Industry and, in particular, the processing sector
- The Potato Cyst Nematode Plan
- Potato Psyllid & related Biosecurity issues

Initial contact with either Potatoes Tasmania or the Fresh Vegetable Marketing “standing committees” can be made through the Executive Officer, TAPG.

Membership Fee Structure Review

The Board have been discussing the financial capacity of the Group to carry out its representational role of your businesses. Key discussion points have included:

- The current Fee Structure was devised over twenty years ago and there have been no significant increases throughout that time although the value of the income generated has steadily decreased with inflation and rising operational costs.

- The downturn in the Forestry industry combined with general difficulties across all sectors has caused loss of membership revenue for the group as a whole.
- The nature of Government consultation has markedly changed in more recent times. While the increased role for peak bodies in representing their membership's issues to government is welcome, the subsequent costs in terms of time and travel have become a major impost on the budget.
- Providing additional services to the Membership in terms of Industry Forums, Seminars and a variety of Newsletter Updates have all been acknowledged as worthwhile and appreciated by all involved in the Industry whether members or not.
- The Board went to considerable lengths last year to check its directions with the broader membership through the use of an "on-line" survey and received very clear endorsement for both its policies, priorities and implementation actions.
- The Directors on the Board have a legal responsibility to maintain close oversight of the Group's capacity to meet its financial obligations and it is clear that the current predicted income for the next financial year will not be sufficient to satisfy this obligation.

As a consequence of these discussions a letter has been delivered detailing this background together with a revised Fee Structure that will enable the group to continue trading.

At next week's Board Meeting (Thursday 6 June) the "In principle" support for the new fees as expressed in the Member Endorsement Returns will be tabulated and a decision will be taken by the Board regarding continuation of the group.

Should the necessary support be evident in the returns Members can expect to be invoiced at the new rate in early July.

Terry Brient
Executive Officer
31 May, 2013

“Futures for Growth” The following advertisement is included in our Newsletter as a service to the community:

Would a new staff member working from 8, 15 or 30 hours or more help your business?

- Do you need reliable workers to do repetitive tasks?
- Are you looking to reduce training costs through improved staff retention?
- Are you looking for an extra worker for a few hours a week to help out?

We aim to connect Employers with Job Seekers with a disability in the Agriculture, Horticulture and Aquaculture Industries, matching to your specific needs and requirements. Financial and other assistance may be available to support job seekers to meet your workforce needs.

We are currently looking for employers particularly in Launceston, Scottsdale and the North West region.



Please contact **Lesley Freak** on **0417 735 507** Lesley.Freak@TL3.com.au to discuss your workforce needs and to consider how “Futures for Growth” can make a positive contribution to your business.



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