

# **Tasmanian Agricultural Productivity Group**

## **Chairman's Report 2010**

Minister Green, Invited Guests, Fellow Directors and Members, I have much pleasure in presenting the Chairman's Report for 2010.

In reflecting on the achievements of our Group over the past year I was struck by the continuation of a trend, commenced last year, towards our involvement in activities that could best be described as "whole of industry" in their nature.

I will return and expand on the significance of this point later in my report.

Following last year's AGM all agricultural representative groups in Australia were invited to attend information sessions arranged by the Product Security and Integrity Commission (PSIC) aimed at raising awareness of the Draft Discussion Paper: A National Scheme for Assessment, Registration and Control of Use of Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals. Within the paper possible changes to the operation and structure of APVMA are also discussed. This work had been commissioned by the Council of Australian Governments. (COAG)

In response to this briefing TAPG formed a working party to examine the proposals from our Tasmanian context and develop a submission in response.

This submission was approved at the Board's January meeting and duly submitted. As a consequence of this TAPG were invited to be represented at a National Workshop in Canberra on AGVET Chemicals where we were able to expand on our submission in front of the people responsible for the draft proposals. It is of some concern to report that no other Tasmanian Agricultural body or Government agency was directly represented in the discussion on this topic that is so potentially important to our future operational framework.

In considering our delegate's report from the workshop the Board noted that a Regulatory Impact Statement was scheduled for release later in the year and would require further response. To this end the Board commissioned a Rapid Response Group to act as a subset of the Board with power to act on behalf of the Board when the RIS was published. Although this stage was announced for publication in September nothing has been received as yet.

## 2.

Following the success of our Industry Forum last year we have developed a Controlled Traffic Farming Interest Group that has an eclectic membership of farmers, contractors, processors, equipment retailers, researchers, departmental representatives and TAPG. Its purpose is to maintain awareness of developments in this area and to act as a forum for sharing information on trial outcomes and related matters. Two Newsletters have been circulated during this year to date.

We have continued to promote awareness of agriculture through our on-going support of Devonport's "Taste the Harvest" held in March each year. It is particularly pleasing to report our sponsorship of "Boutique" producers at this event as well as our promotion of young people learning to utilise fresh Tasmanian produce in the cooking competitions featured in our Marquee.

In co-operation with Dairy Tasmania and TFGA we conducted an Industry Initiated Workshop in Smithton aimed at reducing traces of MCPA in the Duck River. Underlying the involvement of all three groups was the recognition that responsible, proactive management was preferable to Government legislation. There was strong local support for the day and the program featured input from a wide range of experts, many of whom had travelled from the mainland to assist the process. The Minister has been advised of this event and of the formation of a local representative committee under the leadership of TFGA who now have carriage of the practical recommendations that emerged from the workshop.

It is pleasing that we continue to be invited to provide representation on many committees and consultative groups. These include both the Macquarie and Ringarooma Water Management Groups and, most recently, the Steering Committee for the Innovative Farming Practices Project. This project is responsible for developing improved infrastructure to support agricultural production in Tasmania through the establishment of a Continuously Operating Reference System (CORS) Network throughout Tasmania, and increased awareness and knowledge in the agricultural sector of how innovative and precision farming techniques utilizing satellite positioning technology can lead to improvements in on-farm productivity.

### 3.

Of course it is people that make these achievements possible and I want to publically record my appreciation of the support provided to me by the Members of the Board who together provide a uniquely qualified and vastly experienced reference point when determining directions for TAPG. Over recent years we have utilised the provisions of our “Articles of Association” to tailor the expertise available on the Board to better respond to our view of the emerging issues facing agriculture. The “Discretionary” position has been filled by Peter Wilkinson with a brief around regulatory Affairs particularly as they relate to Chemical Usage. The Board determined “Other” Category has been allocated to Rural Banking because of the obvious critical role that financing will play in the Tasmanian Agricultural Landscape. Greg Bott’s personal experience combined with the resources of the largest rural lender in the world is a valuable resource and we will gain further insight into this claim later in our program when Greg shares current research with us. The wisdom of both these appointments is self-evident with respect to the current agenda. In a similar manner we welcome Keith Rice to one of the two seats reserved for representation of primary industry on our Board. Poppy Growing is an enormously important part of Tasmania’s Agricultural Productivity and Keith brings vast experience of this part of our industry combined with an intimate knowledge of the industrial landscape within which we must all work when we seek to employ others. Keith has already worked closely with the Board on a number of occasions and we look forward to his further contributions.

Sadly, it is an inevitable part of any dynamic team such as our Board that members do move on for a variety of reasons and I now need to acknowledge two such changes. Ian Blanden has represented Plantation Forestry since joining in 2002. He also served with distinction as the Chairman of TAPG in the two year term immediately prior me. A keen intellect and attention to detail have always been the hallmark of Ian’s leadership. Recognition of his expertise by Gunns has seen Ian further promoted and moved into a different role. As a consequence of this he felt that it was time to resign from the Board and this was regrettably accepted earlier in the year. Our appreciation of Ian’s contribution is immense and I would ask that members and guests join me now in expressing their thanks. (Applause)

4.

It is also timely to welcome Ian's replacement, Jim Wilson, who has already shown a keen interest and strong desire to contribute to the success of our agenda.

The second loss to the Board is the retirement of Graham McKenna. Graham is one of the founding members of the TAPG Board.

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Graham, on behalf of TAPG I ask that you come forward and accept this token of our appreciation.

To conclude then, may I take you back to my initial observation regarding the apparent changing nature of TAPG's role and offer the following thoughts:

There is wide spread acceptance that agricultural practice at all levels has changed, is changing and will need to continue to change in response to a wide range of technological, environmental and market forces.

Perhaps there is a parallel need for us to "re-imagine" the nature of Industry Representation? Our recent experience suggests that when Industry speaks with "One" voice more notice is taken. When Industry works together more productive outcomes are achieved.

5.

If Characteristics of the past can be described as:

Farmers working as individuals, Industry working as competitors, Secrecy, Individual Influence, Competitive Representation/Lobbying, Negative Media Response

Then Characteristics of the future might be:

Co-operative land use, Growth of the Ag Industry, Self- Regulation with respect to Standards, Productivity and the Environment, Facilitation of Learning/Research, Recruitment of the Media

When President Kennedy announced that America would land a man on the Moon by the end of the sixties the technology, resources and knowledge did not exist to carry out his promise. They literally had to “invent” their way to the target, but they made it.

If the Food Bowl vision is be our “Moonshot” in Tasmania then we all have a responsibility to start inventing our way to the target. Along with all major Industry Representative Organisations in the state we must have the conversation about the efficiency of our representation and networking as there has never been a more critical time for the voice of agriculture to be heard as decision makers, at all levels, battle with the infrastructure and policy settings that will make the State the success we all believe it can be.

I have pleasure in moving my Chairman’s Report for adoption.