

Chairperson's Report 2016

Good morning Ladies and Gentlemen, and welcome to TAPG's Inaugural 'Industry Forum' and AGM. Those of you who are regulars will recognise that we have progressively extended the incorporation of guest presenters into our traditional AGM program over the past few years. The structure this year's program recognises that there is a great deal of work and commitment by all of us in gathering together for these few hours and that we should attempt to maximise the outcomes we can achieve in response to this effort.

Critical to the success of this approach is the willingness of high quality speakers to make themselves available in support of the Forum. It is clear from even a cursory glance at the Program that we have achieved this first step brilliantly and although each presenter will be introduced individually later I want to take this opportunity to welcome and thank Mark, John and Bridget for their presence and support today.

I also wish to acknowledge the Parliamentary Members who have chosen to join us today. I think it is important to remind you every year that TAPG seeks to influence government with respect to agricultural policy on behalf of our member companies and it is important to this function that elected representatives from all political persuasions come to know, understand and ultimately trust the integrity of our organisation. Participating in today's program is an important step in building this relationship. We won't always agree but you will always know what we think and that these policy recommendations will be presented to you as representing the current experience of the processing industry along with our understanding of best practice scientific research. Importantly, you can also be assured that our views will be delivered in a timely and professional manner that will not seek to ambush or embarrass. *We want to be hard on the problems that need to be solved and gentle on the people who have to deploy the solutions regardless of their role.*

Finally, welcome to our Award Recipients who will be more formally recognised later; other distinguished Guests and Members of TAPG.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it gives me great pleasure to present the Chairman's Report for 2016, a year that has been filled with positive initiatives, board renewal, and further strengthened relationships as we work towards our Agrivision 2050 target.

It is traditional in reports such as this to provide slavish analysis of the past year's activity. However, today I will simply note a few of these that must be acknowledged and then spend our time more profitably looking at the future challenges and opportunities we face.

My quick scan of "must note" achievements over the past year include:

- **The Controlled Traffic Farming and Sub Soil Manuring Project funded by our Commonwealth Government.** This was successfully completed in June 2016 with delivery of real 'on farm' projects, establishment of a network of innovators, and provision of innovative equipment available for future use by growers.
- **The Precision Agriculture Project funded by our State Government.** This ongoing project continues delivering milestones with the ongoing work amongst our collaborating farmers and the second successful Annual Precision Agriculture EXPO conducted in Deloraine during April. We are pleased to report that funding is secured from the State Government for a further two years of these EXPO's, with plans afoot for further extension in this critical space.
- **The new TAPG website.** This project aimed to bring currency to our messaging and provides a good foundation to install further developments in the Precision Agriculture 'Shopfront' that will be housed on it.
- **The TAPG Strategic Plan.** This was rebuilt from an outdated model with a fresh approach to take our group forward and is presented to you today for ratification.

- **Government and Department working groups.** These continue to be effective ways to integrate industry views amongst policy development and remain a cornerstone to our work.
- **The Education and Training Agenda.** I am delighted to report widely acknowledged progress with influencing some very exciting reforms in both UTAS and the Department of Education. Congratulations to Mick Davy and Andrew Harris from Hagley Farm School on the massive contribution they have made to the “Grow, Make, Protect” – Education Framework launched this month by the Minister. Your strong liaison with our Board over the past two years has been greatly appreciated and we are pleased that you have been able to join us today.
- **Relationships with Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture.** This ensures that our policy recommendations are informed by current scientific knowledge, and that the efficacy of our project design and delivery is guaranteed. The ongoing relationship with TIA at all levels of our operations is highly valued.
- **MATS Technology – Microwave Assisted Thermal Sterilisation.** TAPG have been networkers, facilitators, and supporters of MATS deployment in Tasmania. This initiative came from the Universities Centre for Food Innovation and is a great example of UTAS looking to the future. I note the presence of Rob Sale and Tom Lewis at our meeting today and publically commend their work in this area. Members and Guests present are encouraged to engage with Rob and Tom during the luncheon regarding their progress in implementing this fascinating opportunity for value adding to our produce here in Tasmania.
- **A Strengthen TAPG Membership.** I am pleased to report our membership base now incorporates broader representation in the Plantation Forestry sector with Resource Management Service now a member, and a special welcome to Chris Barnes from RMS, alongside Clive Woolridge of IFarm as the property manager for the RMS portfolio. In addition, we have new

members with The Yield, welcome Clare Rutherford, and Bejo, welcome Rob Salmon and Kelly Bushby.

Of course the key to all of this achievement is people, and that is where we are very fortunate. Alongside continuing Directors on our Board we have been delighted to welcome new Directors:

- **Nicola Morris – as CEO of Tas. Irrigation.** Nicola provides leadership at a pivotal point in the next stage of irrigation developments in Tasmania. Nicola brings a wealth of international and local experience and is focused on business development within our sectoral board.
- **Jo Tubb – as Agricultural Manager at Simplot Devonport.** Jo continues the fine tradition of excellent representation of the processed vegetable sector by one of TAPG's founding members. I also note the news last week that Simplot's operations have been significantly boosted through a new, long term contract with a national retail chain. Another great step forward for Tasmania.
- **Dean Hart – as Managing Director of Fresh Freight.** Dean occupies a new position on the Board with responsibility for the Transport & Logistics sector. This is obviously a critical area for our attention and Dean provides the Board with high order advice based on his incredible knowledge and experience of this aspect of our industry.

I also note here that TAPG has long acknowledged the merits of further gender balance in our Board of Directors. However, in recruiting Directors we have never biased any decision and relied on merit alone. I am delighted with the current composition of the board, balanced with perspective, experience, and gender, and collectively providing a new era in a 27-year-old collaboration that is TAPG - still envied by all other States and Territories in Australia!

In a few minutes' time this meeting will have the opportunity to ratify the incoming Board for the next twelve months. However, it is both appropriate and well justified that I acknowledge retiring Directors **Peter Hardman** and **Greg Bott**.

Peter retires from TAPG alongside his retirement from Simplot. He leaves big shoes to fill with enormous contributions to the Vegetable Processing sector and his driving influence in the Precision Agriculture space more generally. Thank you Peter.

Greg leaves TAPG as our sectoral representative in rural banking to pursue a new career with Roberts Limited. Greg provided TAPG with enormous networks and a frank, no fuss delivery of ideas to build our sector. Thank you Greg.

We wish both these past directors well in their pursuit of other interests.

To conclude my notes of appreciation I wish to also acknowledge the outstanding work of Terry Brient, our Executive Officer and Key Man whom puts our rubber on the road and indeed brings many valuable thoughts to the direction of our group. Terry, TAPG remains indebted to your work which goes far beyond all expectations.

So, this is the scorecard for TAPG in 2016 past. But it would be remiss not to offer an outlook for the next frontier of opportunities whilst policy and industry needs are relatively well aligned. Indeed, our real challenge is to promote growth and keep raising the bar on performance to stay in front of regulatory and social expectations. Let's explore some in point form;

- **Waste water management and regulation:** A topic uncovered 2 years ago amongst a meeting convened by TAPG, Tas. Water, and several of our company members. There is resolution required here on cost and regulation and we appreciate the ongoing support of RM Consulting Group, and in particular Doris Blaesing, for support with this looming issue. Doris is with us this morning and would welcome an opportunity for a chat over lunch if this issue is important for your company.
- **Agrivision Alliance:** This is a critical collaboration vehicle established by industry leaders to create a pathway for Agrivision 2050. Remember John Lord's advice to our group that Government's role is to create the framework for growth, and it is the private sector that must deliver it! I congratulate the TFGA, Fruit Growers Tasmania, and the Seafood Industries for their initiative and support in this area.

- **International Farming Congress:** This significant 5 day event will be held in Launceston over five days in March, 2019. A Ministerial announcement to this effect is expected imminently. A major theme for one of the days will be Growing Agriculture in line with Government Policy. The “Agrivision Alliance” I mentioned earlier will have particular relevance as hopefully by then it can be presented as a “successful” case study of how to achieve such a goal.
- **Direct International Marketing:** Through a co-contribution of funding from industry and government a “Fruit and Vegetable Reference Group” have employed Ian Locke to facilitate contacts on behalf of interested companies. This mentoring through the often tangled and somewhat daunting red tape of successful exporting should prove to be of great assistance. Ian is in the audience today and would welcome your questions and comments over lunch. Ian’s employment for the purposes of the project is facilitated through Tas. Irrigation and Nicola Morris, the CEO, acts as his line manager. Phil Pyke from Fruit Growers Tasmania is the Chairman of the Reference Group and, as one of the contributing entities, TAPG is represented on this panel. Yet another terrific example of groups working together for the benefit of the Tasmanian economy.
- **Vertical Farming initiatives:** This is predominantly a European approach to controlling the impact of weather and maximising market opportunities, essentially by converting specialist field production into vertical gardens. In a vertical garden, plants, usually fruit, vegetables and herbs, are grown on stacked shelves and grown hydroponically. Tim Reid’s Cherry Orchard at Jericho with its opening roof, and Stephen Hills operations at Hills Transplants could be argued as Tasmanian hybrids of this concept. Producing high value commodities outside traditional harvest times and exporting into premium market opportunities using a relatively small portion of the total farm resource has self-evident advantages.

Any finally;

- **Demonstration Farms:** We have a diverse range of government owned farms in Tasmania delivering mixed levels of industry benefit. Perhaps there is a role for industry to lead a review and refocus of the opportunities here? We could deliver real demonstration farms operating under normal commercial realities with ‘open books’ for growers to share wisdom and explore innovation in a safe commercial environment supported by the best technical resources Tasmania can offer. Better still, these could be ‘new farms’, established within whole farm plans that are supported by all the stakeholders in the agricultural sector.

In closing, I would like to share two final points;

It’s worth reminding ourselves how much industry capital we have, and just how quickly it can be taken from us. Let’s reflect briefly on the past challenges with the Indonesian live export ban, food contamination scares, and personal harm caused by misuse of pharmaceutical crops. We need to avoid these disasters, and we have a responsibility to maintain and review a ‘risk register’ for our industries and seek out every opportunity to stay ahead of the regulatory and social yardstick.

And, on a more positive final note, we mark 27 years of TAPG collaboration.

This is remarkable. Imagine an island of competitors working together on aligned issues, and in some cases individual issues for 27 years strong. So finally, let’s examine the two words, competitors and collaborators – which one are we?

Imagine yourself on the moon looking back at Earth. That’s right, consider Tasmania’s place in the earth’s global economy from an external perspective and ask yourself what advice you would give those industry people operating in Tasmania on the backdoor step of the rest of the world, what advice would you give them on the role of collaboration versus competition? I contend to you that with this perspective we should reconsider what are competitive boundaries and focus further on collaboration. Yes, we all represent separate commercial interests at the most basic level, but for Team Tasmania to prosper our competition is not within our island, perhaps not even within our continent, but rather between our geographic region and the rest of the global market. Collaborative innovation remains cornerstones to our prosperity as an industry.

As always the TAPG Board and Executive remain at your service. We are the front end of your network of collaboration and we seek to protect and grow what is Tasmanian Agriculture.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is my good fortune to work with you all as collaborators, our Board of Directors as decision makers, and our Executive Officer in delivery. It is my great pleasure to present this report for 2016.

Thank you for your attention.

Jim Wilson

Chairperson