



# AUSTRALIA'S REPORT

## The Raspberry industry in Australia:

Phil Rowe, President

Australian Rubus Growers Association



- Please accept my apologies, and those of my colleague and out-going President, Karen Meeuwissen, on behalf of the Australian Rubus Growers Association in not being able to be present in Serbia for the 2006 Conference.



- It seems like only recently that many of you were in Melbourne
- I trust that the gathering will be productive for all participants, and that its success will be matched by good harvest conditions in the Northern summer.

Phil Rowe  
President, ARGA

The following presentation is similar to the report presented in Melbourne in November 2004.

- The major change in the industry is the increase in undercover and hydroponic production for the fresh berry market

- The primary focus of the majority of growers in Australia is the fresh fruit market.
- Approximately 60% of this fruit is sold through supermarkets and the remainder is sold through capital city markets to fruiterers and providores.





- Fresh Australian raspberries are available all year round with the majority of main season summer and autumn crops being grown in Victoria and Tasmania and out of season fruit being grown using long cane production in the warmer areas of northern New South Wales.

- There is now a move from some of the Victorian and Tasmanian growers to extend their season using plastic tunnels and new growing techniques.





- The high cost of production of growing fruit by these methods is compensated for by the increased prices received for fruit.
- An average price for a 150gm punnet during summer and autumn is around \$3.00 AUD where out of season fruit would average about \$6.00 AUD

- Although the cost of setting up tunnel production is quite expensive once the infrastructure is in place there are many benefits eg:-
  - guaranteed weather protection
  - the ability to target peak demand
  - relative freedom from pests and diseases

These are just a few of the many advantages





- There are a few Australian growers who grow raspberries for processing and these use machines to harvest most of the crop.



- This fruit is mostly block frozen or puree and is sold to Australian manufacturers. There is currently no export of processing fruit and the raspberry requirements are supplied by overseas growers.



- Raspberries are a popular fruit in Australia and are enjoyed by most of us.
- As fresh fruit they are still seen as a luxury as they are always more expensive than most other fruit available but they are often chosen by consumers for special occasions.



- We are especially fortunate that the peak of our season usually coincides with Christmas and raspberries at this time are part of many family traditions



- In Victoria, the main field grown crops usually start in early December and continue until mid January with the autumn cropping varieties starting in February and continuing until May. The length of the season is usually dependent on the weather.
- The Tasmanian season follows Victoria by about two weeks.





- The main varieties grown for the fresh market are Chilliwack and Tulameen in summer and Dinkum, Bogong and Heritage in autumn. Both Dinkum and Bogong came from our breeding program.
- Willamette is the main processing variety.



- Our raspberry industry has seen quite a lot of growth in recent years particularly as a secondary crop grown by strawberry growers. This means that there is not as much knowledge as to the quantities grown as previously as not all of these growers are members of the association.

- The 2005/6 harvest produced high quality fruit but yields were lower than average
- Prices for fresh fruit were good, off-setting the effect of lower yield on growers' incomes
- High demand for fresh fruit meant that growers had little or no fruit available for processing.



- In years where there is an over-supply in the market, balancing the supply to retain economic viability is not something we have any control over
- Growers really cannot afford to supply fresh fruit below the cost of production
- Many growers then choose alternate markets such as the processing industry
- Unfortunately this leaves the manufacturers with little confidence in the local supply as it is not consistent.





- This explains why our larger suppliers and manufacturers choose to import their raspberries so that the supply can be guaranteed.
- There is not much likelihood of this situation changing.

- I believe Australia will continue to build and supply our fresh fruit market and that we will continue to import our other requirements.
- We can continue to exchange information that is mutually beneficial and promote all the benefits of the raspberries so that we can increase consumption and expand our market opportunities.

