



# Newsletter

**May/June 2006**

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## The Experts Take on the Biofuels Debate

Well known agribusiness identity, Dr John Keniry joins Farm Writers Corporate Members of the month Grain Growers Association and Shute Bell Badgery & Lumby at our June luncheon. Dr Keniry will overview recent developments in the biofuels industry.

Throughout his career, Dr Keniry has made many significant contributions to agriculture and has gained a profile as an authority in agribusiness and biofuels.

Dr Keniry holds a PhD in Chemical Engineering and is Chairman of Ridley Corporation Limited and is Director of a number of other corporations. He is currently a member of the Federal Government's Industrial Research and Development Board and of the NSW Environment Protection Authority. He is a past President of the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and was for six years a member of the Prime Minister's Science, Engineering and Innovation Council.

Dr Keniry has participated in and chaired a number of major

Government inquiries, including the Commonwealth Government's Regional Business Development inquiry in 2002 and the inquiry into the Livestock export trade in 2004. Most recently Australian Wool Innovation (AWI) has appointed him Chairman of the 2006 Wool Poll Panel.

Within the biofuels arena, he also has experience over many years.

For two years in the early 1980's, he led an Ethanol Taskforce within CSR, charged with the responsibility of assessing the potential for ethanol as a renewable fuel in Australia. Dr Keniry then went on to establish a joint venture with Shell, selling E-10, then known as Petranol, in Mackay and undertaking a major study on ethanol production in the Ord River region.

Last year, he was a member of a five man Biofuels Taskforce established by the Prime Minister to review the prospects for and impacts of biofuels use in Australia. Since October last year he has been Chairman of the ASX listed Australian Biodiesel Group Limited.



The June luncheon will be a chance for Dr Keniry to expound on the issues at the heart of the renewable fuels debate including the potential benefits and costs.

Join Farm Writers at the Menzies on Friday 30 June when Dr John Keniry provides an overview of the International and Australian Biofuels industry, with particular emphasis on ethanol and biodiesel, from both a regulatory and commercial perspective.

To book go to our website: [www.nswfarmwriters.org/BOOKINGS.htm](http://www.nswfarmwriters.org/BOOKINGS.htm)

### Corporate Members of the Month: Grain Growers Association & Shute Bell Badgery & Lumby

**Venue:** The MENZIES HOTEL, 14 Carrington Street, Sydney.

**When:** Friday 30 June at 12pm for 12:30pm

**Cost:** \$55 per head, or voucher, for members. \$65 per head for all non-members.

**Register:** BEFORE 5:00pm on Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> June, on-line at <http://www.nswfarmwriters.org> or by emailing [bookings@nswfarmwriters.org](mailto:bookings@nswfarmwriters.org), or by phone to Sarah Robson, (02) 8204 3730.

**Cancellations:** Phone Sarah Robson, (02) 8204 3730

**Members are reminded that if they do not cancel their booking by the deadline and do not attend the event the Association incurs a charge for which they will be invoiced.**

Website sponsored by Telstra Country Wide NSW

# Battle of the Horticulture Giants

Contributed by Alan Dick of *The Land*

**I**t's our fastest growing agricultural industry whose long term future is in the balance. That's the paradoxical situation the horticulture industry finds itself in, according the guest speaker at Farm Writers April luncheon, the managing director of Horticulture Australia Ltd, John Webster.

Mr Webster's speech provided Farm Writers members and guests with a fascinating insight into how Australian horticulture production pales to insignificance when compared with its massive international competitors.

He said that the international horticultural industry is characterised by highly concentrated retailer market power so that retailers can pluck produce from anywhere in the world. While this is occurring, the Australian horticultural industry continues to lose its counter-seasonality advantage as new fruit and vegetable varieties with extended growing seasons are grown in the northern hemisphere.

Last year horticulture in Australia came second only to beef in terms of its value of production, however, it is a minnow in international terms, with exports accounting for only about one per cent of world trade in fruit, vegetables, flowers and nuts. "Internationally the Australian horticultural industry faces fierce competition from low cost countries such as China, Chile and South Africa," he said.

Mr Webster said that China alone produced 180

times more vegetables, 37 times more fruit and 22 times more nuts and could land produce in third world countries at 30 per cent or less than the cost of Australian produce. And while labour accounted for about 50pc of the costs faced by Australian growers, it was a relatively insignificant proportion of costs for Chinese producers.

"The upshot of all this is that Australia's horticulture industry was at a crossroads and much would depend on how it dealt with the challenge," he said.

Mr Webster says HAL's efforts to ensure the industry continued to move forward included working hard to get access to foreign markets through negotiating quarantine protocols.

"We have to provide a reason for consumers to support our product," he said. This includes measures such as putting a package around it that is more important than price and emphasizing quality, packaging and Australia's "clean and green" status.

He also had a warning for apple growers concerned about New Zealand moves to seek access to Australia's market, suggesting China – which had signalled its strong interest in gaining access to Australia for its apples – could ultimately represent a much greater threat to the domestic market.

*Thankyou to Corporate Members of the Month: Du Pont Australia and Telstra Country Wide.*

## Budget Breakfast Review

Tax cuts weren't the only draw-card at Farm Writers annual Federal Budget Breakfast as The Federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Hon Peter McGauran, MP, announced a range of budget initiatives to deliver benefits into regional Australia.

This year's Federal Budget has identified and provided for key issues in regional Australia such as restoring the health of the Murray Darling Basin, providing much needed assistance for rural financial counselling, and protecting Australian agriculture from pest and disease threats including the avian influenza.

\$500 million will flow from the budget into the Murray Darling package signalling the continued commitment to restoring the health of the Murray Darling Basin, bringing total spending on the Murray Darling project since 1996 to \$2 billion.

Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS) programs are to receive a boost of \$9.72 million (in addition to the \$23.3 million in 2004/05) to help ease financial pressures on rural communities as a result of Australia's worst drought in a century and natural disasters such as Cyclone Larry.

The budget will also provide \$16 million over four years to continue to prepare Australia for a major national animal disease emergency, aiming to maintain Australia's agricultural health and clean green image.

Additional benefits are also designed to flow to producers and agricultural businesses through rural infrastructure funding. This year's budget marks a mile-stone by prioritising primary producers services and communities and accelerates the massive effort to protect Australia against exotic pests and diseases.

*Thanks to Corporate Members of the Month: Pulse Australia and ANZ Rural Banking.*

# Young Rural Journo Travel Scholarship Applications Closing Soon

**Y**oung rural journalists across Australia are encouraged to apply for an exciting new travel scholarship that will enable them to travel overseas and attend an international gathering of their peers from around the world.

The travel scholarship is being offered by the International Federation of Agricultural Journalists, (IFAJ) through the Australian Council of Agricultural Journalists and the Farm Writers' Association of NSW Inc, and is sponsored by Alltech Biotechnology Pty Ltd. The recipient will attend the International Federation of Agricultural Journalists 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary congress in Norway from August 12 to 16, 2006. The scholarship will cover airfares and registration costs for the congress, to an approximate value of \$4,000.

Entrants must be a member of Farm Writers (or another rural media association affiliated to the ACAJ), be 30 years of age or under as at May 31 2006, and actively working in the media in Australia, covering rural or agricultural issues. To be an entrant, you must be committed to building a career in rural journalism. Those who have already attended an IFAJ event do not qualify. The winner should be prepared to speak informally at a dinner during the Congress about rural media in Australia, the ACAJ and their local rural media association, and to contribute a story about the congress experiences to the IFAJ News, website and Farm Writers Association.

As a scholarship competition entrant you will need to provide a 500 word essay on why you deserve the opportunity, your CV, two written references and samples of your work (clippings or recordings of three stories).

Further information about the scholarship visit the website, [www.nswfarmwriters.org/IFAJ.htm](http://www.nswfarmwriters.org/IFAJ.htm), and to enter simply send your entry to [opportunity@nswfarmwriters.org](mailto:opportunity@nswfarmwriters.org) before 5pm Friday June 16.

The new travel scholarship winner is to be announced by early July.

## Could Your Pen Launch A Thousand Tractors?

Sydney based agribusiness agency and member of Farm Writers', Renard ([www.renardmkt.com.au](http://www.renardmkt.com.au)), has the opportunity for a creative yet down-to-earth freelance/full-time copywriter to work on machinery, finance, crop protection and veterinary brands.

Experience or a passion to write for this industry is a must. Email your CV and salary/hourly rate expectations to: [toby@renardmkt.com.au](mailto:toby@renardmkt.com.au).

## NSW Star Prize Winner Announced

Tamworth journalist, Neil Lyon, has won the first award presented by the NSW Farm Writers' Association for Rural Writing in New South Wales for more than ten years. Neil's prize includes \$4,000 in financial assistance to help him attend the IFAJ Congress contest in Norway.

Experienced NSW editor and journalist, Don Jones, judged entries for their style content and objectivity. Mr. Jones chose Neil's story of how two generations are successfully farming together near Narrabri in North-West NSW. Titled 'Family team a powerful force', the article was published in *The Land* on 17 November 2005 as part of a special feature profiling 10 of NSW's top farming enterprises.

Mr. Jones said, "We received some great entries but Neil's articles stood out. It concisely explained how an already outstanding farming family has improved farm efficiency by introducing new technology and doubling the size of their holding."

"Originally from a beef cattle background in the Hunter Valley, Neil joined *The Land* in 1998 as a reporter. He has since been Rural Press's group machinery writer and editor of the Australian Farm Journal. For the past three years, Neil has had a state-wide role as special writer with *The Land* based in Tamworth, where he lives with his wife, Sandy."

Neil's article will be entered as the NSW finalist in the national competition to find Australia's representative in the Star Prize writing contest.

Farm Writers' members can still enter the IFAJ Photo Contest. For more information go to our website <http://www.nswfarmwriters.org/IFAJ.htm> or contact Bev Jordan on 0408 699 656.