

Industry case study — VG15074 Export development of Australian Vegetables to Japan

Grower	Kees Versteeg (Sales and Business Development) Qualipac
Business location	Gatton, QLD
Ha's grown to vegetables	1000 ha
Vegetables grown	Onions, Broccoli and pumpkins
Contract packing	We contract pack on request and develop export programs for fresh produce with other state & interstate fresh produce growers
Sales channels	Grow pack and market on farm, currently exporting 20% of produce

What was the research about

Between December 2016 and October 2017, project VG15074 conducted activities to develop the Australian vegetable market in Japan. The project followed a successful project VG13048 that focused on broccoli exports to Japan. The projects were similar but in addition to broccoli, VG15074 included; garlic, cabbage, pumpkins/kabocha, onions, sweet corn, lettuce, carrots, leek, celery, kale and beetroot. The activities completed before the projects termination included a case study on sea freighted zucchinis to Japan, a product profile of Kabocha/pumpkins, a Japanese consumer profile, a general profile on Japan's fresh vegetable market and hosting an inbound trade mission.



Kees Versteeg believes in a collaborative industry approach for long-term sustainable and profitable growth in the Australian vegetable industry. This philosophy is what drives him to be an active industry participant sitting on a number of panels and committees in leadership roles.

Below he talks about his involvement in VG15074, why the project was important and how it changed his business.



What was your involvement in VG15074? How did it change your business?

"I was involved in the successful broccoli project which opened Japan as an export destination for our business. When this (VG15074) project started I was more than happy to sit on the reference committee.

The export market in general is very opportunistic for Australian vegetables (as we are generally) very non-competitive globally, hence opportunities tend to be there only due to counter seasonal production and supply situations e.g. production/supply issues from other (competitive) exporting countries."

Why was the project important?

"VG15074 resulted in commercial outcomes for our business, so the impact was successful for us. Since the project, we've found opportunities to export cabbage (for a short time due to supply shortages from the USA), beetroot, radishes and Kabocha squash into the Japanese market.

For us, the key benefits of being involved was the need to develop long-term sustainable and profitable export opportunities for Australian vegetables - a must with a nation that produces much more food than it consumes and/or can consume"

Is there a part of the project that could have been improved?

“Not that I can recall.”

Do you have any recommendations for farmers considering vegetable exports?

“In a country like Australia that produces more food than it can consume, (the market) is dictated by only 3 major fresh produce retailers and then a plethora of wholesale market agents, merchants and non-grower exporters that tend to add unnecessary cost to the fresh produce export supply chain and contribute to an inefficient and longer than required supply chain. It makes sense to collaborate as vegetable growers, taking control over and managing our own direct export channels in a collaborative model as one entity (1 export representative for various growers and/or various vegetable lines which major overseas buyers want) to develop, build and dive into exporting direct from farms. Not only will fresh produce be supplied in the most direct, lean, short and more efficient supply chain but will also result in improved reputation of fresh Australian vegetables being supplied direct from the source in the freshest and best condition.”



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Hort Innovation is the grower-owned, not-for-profit research and development corporation for Australian horticulture. For more information visit www.horticulture.com.au.

For more information on this grower case study, please contact Janine Powell, Principal Economist at Ag Econ, through Janine@agecon.com.au.

All photos of trade missions as part of VG15074 and Japanese market development (supplied Kees Versteeg)