



PHOTOS - Victoria Baker Photographer



pome update





contacts

Pomewest Committee and Officers

- Mark Scott, Chair e: markscott@bigpond.com
- Mario Casotti e: mario@casottigroup.com
- Wayne Ghilarducci e: strathspey@modnet.com.au
- Jason Jarvis e: twinpack@bigpond.com
- Harvey Giblett e: newtonbros@wn.com.au
- Sam Licciardello e: sam@orchard1sixty.com.au
- Susie Murphy White, Project Manager e: susan.murphy-white@dpird.wa.gov.au
- Nardia Stacy, Executive Manager e: nardia@fruitwest.org.au

APC—Pomewest FFS Income 2019—20

Project	\$
General Account Budget including FFS, Project Grant Funding APAL, HIA and DPIRD and Fruit West Co-operative	588,710
Biosecurity Account Budget (FFS)	60,000

APC—Pomewest expenditure general account 2019—20

Project	\$
New technology project (Susie Murphy White)	90,000
Maturity standards legislation & compliance	40,000
Medfly surveillance trapping network (Ashmere Consulting)	61,557
Systems approach to market access	40,000
Disinfestation & quality management of BRAVO apples in the cold chain for market access (DPIRD & Fruit West Co-operative are co-funders)	229,280
Other projects	15,000
Annual meetings and communications	15,000
Industry sponsorships & association memberships	4,800
Promotion & publicity local project (Fresh Finesse)	37,500
Administration including salary and office costs	165,567
APC charge @10% of FFS income	45,000
Total	743,704

APC—Pomewest expenditure biosecurity account 2019—20

Project	\$
Codling moth (DPIRD)	35,000
Biosecurity Liaison Officer	15,000
APC charge @10% of FFS income	6,000
Total	56,000

APC fee-for-service charge

POME FRUIT EFFECTIVE FROM 1 JANUARY 2015

Type of fruit	\$/kg
Fresh fruit — apples, pears, Nashi, other	0.015
Processing fruit	0.005
Biosecurity FFS for fresh fruit	0.002
Biosecurity FFS for processing fruit	0.001



From the Pomewest

Executive Manager

Season update



BY NARDIA STACY
EXECUTIVE MANAGER,
POMEWEST

As I review the report written for the *WA Grower* in February, it is incredible how the world has changed in just a few short months.

Resilient as usual, the WA pome industry has carried on regardless, taking the necessary precautions to keep businesses, families and staff safe. Pomewest staff too have had to make changes in work place including working from home, meetings via zoom, remote trial work etc., in order to continue to do business. Efficiencies sometimes have been slightly compromised, so we thank

our growers for their patience and understanding as we continue to manage through this situation.

It's sometimes hard to assess the best way to serve growers under these conditions. We hope that our shared information via communications through our newsletters has eased some confusion and provided some support. As I write my report today, the COVID-19 situation in Australia, and in particular WA looks positive. Although there is a still feeling of apprehension, which has meant a cautionary approach with the next steps of easing restrictions. At this moment it's a 'back to business' restart to the economy. The next months will position us all to understand the full impact.

Harvest season update

With the harvest period now over, WA growers will be relieved that all the fruit has been picked. By all reports, workers and work places have made it so far COVID-19 free. We can report sound volumes this year and we look forward to steady sales and prices throughout the marketing season. It will be interesting to see how the next phase of marketing pans out.

In preparation for 2021 season, we are asking APAL to apply further pressure on the federal government with the National Netting Scheme. Pomewest have recently written letters to two local federal ministers to strengthen the case. These communications highlighted the difficulties of this season with bird, hail and sunburn damage. We also invited our growers to individually write to add weight to our request of consideration. The other states are all behind a collective and united approach to progress the scheme under the efficacy lead of APAL. I fear that after the bushfires early this year and now with the pressure of the purse-strings with COVID-19 crisis it may be put on the back-burner again, however that will not stop our resolve to continue to push a decision on the initiative.

Promotions and marketing

Pomewest as an industry member of Buy West Eat Best has been involved in the local campaign 'Shining a light on WA Local Food Heroes'. We have used some of the promotional budget to engage local photographer Victoria Baker (who was responsible for some of the recent APAL images of Matt Fox for the *Australian Fruit Grower* magazine). We intend to also use the images for our social media, magazines and website in the coming months.

We have also focused our messages on 'waapplesandpears' social media on understanding cosmetic imperfections on our fruit due to hail and sun damage this season and focusing on taste being the ultimate guide in choosing fruit. We also sent out press releases about this and scored some local radio interviews to promote new season fruit and the health benefits of eating natural foods at this time.

Looking to the future, I believe that the key message that has identified by this crisis is the importance of the consumption fresh produce to boost health and wellbeing. This is an opportunity to embrace this initiative. The benefits of consuming a diet high in fresh fruit and vegetables needs to continue to be highlighted. It is pleasing to see the start of some co-ordinated and collaborative programs between the industries in this space on the national stage. We should embrace all fresh produce and not compete between ourselves but focus on taking on food products that potentially compromise health.

Maturity Standards Update

Pomewest has managed to continue our quality project despite the current COVID-19 situation. The results, particularly at the end of harvest, have been extremely good at wholesale. Growers have had weekly reports during this process and we hope that the testing and reporting has encouraged commitment to the program and this means good news for our consumers! We are particularly proud of the impact that the project has been receiving and our work is being noticed nationally as positive approach to improving and building the pome industry.

The latest data findings have revealed some issues in retail, and in particular Royal Gala's holding shelf-life and impacting the taste experiences for our customers. We all know that Gala is the prelude to our season, so it is important to get this right for the sake of the whole varietal category and to safeguard sales. Pomewest will be exploring ways to extend and build the project for 2021 and beyond. There is real merit in tracking fruit to see how and where breakdowns occur and the impact of handling and varying temperatures along the supply chain. In the meantime, we have been in contact with several retailers who have been involved in the program, including sharing results. We have had good feedback, particularly from the major suppliers who are keen to be involved to build demand in the apple category.

Also resulting from this process, we have recently developed a 'tips to keep apples fresh in retail' document which we have converted into a poster to use as a resource (see page 56).

March Pomewest Committee Meeting

The second committee meeting for the year was held via Zoom on May 21 and the agenda and discussion was focused on the consideration of 2020–21 project proposals, a review of the production numbers, current fee for service income and budget forecasts for the next financial year — a statutory governance requirement by the APC. Minutes are available on request.

Strategic Plan 2021–25

Peter Cooke of Acknowledge has been appointed as the lead consultant to assist Pomewest with the next *Pome Strategic Industry Plan*. The preparation and delivery of the plan for 2021–25 is set to commence shortly and should take approximately four months to complete. Growers can expect to be involved in some form of engagement in the next few months as part of the initial consultative process and then the complete plan will be presented at future grower meetings later in the year. The outcomes and strategies derived from the plan will guide our projects and industry direction in the future. Pomewest invites and welcomes any growers who would like to volunteer to be involved in the consultative process.

I would like to again thank our WA growers for their dedication to deliver the essential service of providing food security during these unprecedented times. As always, in closing this report, I welcome you to contact myself, Susie or Committee members at any time to discuss any industry matters. 🍏

Thank you to our WA growers for their dedication to providing our food security.

MORE INFORMATION ►

Nardia Stacy on (08) 9368 3869, 0411 138 103 or nardia@pomewest.net.au.

Chair's chat



BY MARK SCOTT
CHAIR, POMEWEST

As we all tidy up our harvest for another season, I hope it treated you all well. Like most years it has presented it challenges and I think it's fair to say that volumes may have been a little lower than targeted.

After you have had a chance to catch up on a few of those jobs neglected during harvest I would encourage you all to take the time to look at your cost of production. This is not to try and squeeze a few more dollars of savings out — I believe most growers have optimised their business — but as a really good place to start a discussion with your marketers about what prices you need to be sustainable.

I think as an industry we have been poor at communicating what it really costs to produce our product.

When deciding what is a fair price how many of us include all the hours, we spend working our property in the price? And if we do, do we price ourselves at the same amount as a backpacker or the professional managers we are?

The recent round of inspections by Worksafe in our industry raise the issue of machinery maintenance and replacement.

Do you allow for professionals to come and carry out your repairs and maintenance, do you allow to replace your tractors, sprayers and cherry pickers every five to ten years so that they stay current with the latest safety standards? These are all things that other industries take for granted — so why are we asking to keep machines that are 25 or thirty years old?

As an industry we need to build all of these things into our costs otherwise we risk losing our social licence. This social licence extends to not just safety but also food safety, employees' rights and the way we treat the environment — the cost of netting as bird control for example.

If as an industry we include the true costs associated with all of the activities that we as growers are now expected to deliver — I personally don't believe the current price we receive is sustainable — in fact the rise of low price retailers has seen fruit selling in these shops at below the growers cost of production.

If we want to remain sustainable as growers, we must have some hard conversations.

First with ourselves

Whilst growers have made huge changes to their orchards in recent years — we can only cut costs so far — do we have blocks that will never provide

enough gross revenue to cover all these things? Ask ourselves does sending fruit to market that will end up selling (and sometimes retailing) below our cost of production really send the right message to the consumer of what it costs to produce apples and pears that is safe for employees, ourselves and to consume?

The rest of the supply chain

Communicate the real cost of your production? Don't skimp. The company's we deal with have a responsibility to make money for their shareholders and owners — they will always push back — but they need us to provide product for them to sell — if we aren't sustainable in the long run it will hurt them to.

With regulators

Policy makers are always reluctant to make laws that will increase food prices. That said it is unfair for regulators to impose safety, employment and environmental, requirements on growers that will damage them financially to the point where eventually produce will be imported from overseas jurisdictions that have less regulations to have to comply with.

I am not asking for us not to have to comply with our community expectations rather that we have a system that recognises the costs and allows them to flow through the system.

Thinking outside the box might provide the answer — for example the safety regulations already contain chain of responsibility conditions. Maybe simply asking regulators to look up the chain — is it right for a wholesaler to knowingly offer a price for our product where it is impossible for the grower to meet our safety obligations — is this any different from asking a worker to carry out a dangerous task.

On a different note, I would like to thank the rest of the committee and staff for their help and support over the past season.

I would welcome your feedback and hope you all find time for a break during dormancy and look forward to catching up with growers as conditions allow. 🍏

MORE INFORMATION ►

Mark Scott at markpscott@bigpond.com.

► DO you allow to replace your tractors, sprayers and cherry pickers every five to ten years so that they stay current with the latest safety standards?

Policy makers are always reluctant to make laws that will increase food price.

► STEVE Westcott and the team at Bluemoon Packing, located in Kirup.

Challenges of harvest 2020



BY SUSIE MURPHY
WHITE
PROJECT MANAGER,
POMEWEST

There were some pretty happy faces at Pink Lady harvest time this year it may have just been a sign of relief after getting through one of the most trying times in history with the conditions that COVID-19 placed on everyone.

The season started with below average winter rainfall followed by hail storms in late October that damaged a good portion of the crop and then some very extreme heat starting in mid-November and continued through until February. This year there were 13 days above 34.1°C between November and March in Manjimup. Above this temperature sunburn can occur in the open orchard.

The Gala harvest time was early this year starting in January for most only 120 days from full bloom to first pick a record that hadn't been broken in a long time. Yields were down due to hail damage and sunburn as the estimates had been very optimistic. Most Gala apples were small compared to previous seasons and this same trend occurred across Australia.

Then the COVID-19 conditions came into play with social distancing and a flood of backpackers looking for work that couldn't get home or no longer had work in the hospitality sector.

Most growers had their picking teams in place and were set for the season

and prepared to finish harvest with their trusted workers in place knowing that they were no longer able to travel the state while working. The implementation of good health and safety precautions in the orchard and pack houses was underway by everyone to stop the spread and ensure the pome fruit harvest was able to be completed. Continuing the supply of quality produce to consumers. Nielsen 'Harvest to Home' data reported the increase in grocery sales better than a pre-Christmas period. The consumption of fruit and vegetables driven by health conscious people now staying at home. The home snacking occasions had increased but the sales of fruit did not increase in the March quarter. The fruit that did perform best were bananas, apples and stone fruit. The gaps left by food services were now being met by home delivery services by smaller operators. The new normal for consumers buying fresh produce will include consumers looking for trust, safety and provenance.

Fuji apples were a mixed bag this season, some reporting heavy crops and others lighter crops. Size was good for most with the Western Australian average fruit above the national average for Fuji. This variety was harvested 8-10 days early than average. Granny Smith apples were next to be picked with most growers having a sound yield and size was average similar to the national average. Again the harvest was still earlier than had been experience, approximately 170 days from full bloom to first pick.

While Pink Lady harvest was set to be early too, the picking season started to slow down, as the warm autumn conditions meant that colour

development was slow. The mean minimum temperature for Autumn in Manjimup was at least five degrees higher than the long term average. The bonus of slowing down the track to harvest timing is the increase in late season fruit growth of the Pink Lady apples, this can be seen in the fruit size data across all growing regions.

The warmer conditions have increased the pest and disease pressure this year. So it is important to ensure that good orchard hygiene post-harvest is given extra care. The most practical method is to sweep then mulch fruit in orchard rows using a slasher or flail mower.

You will need to check that the fruit is being well mulched and whole fruit are not being left behind to ensure no pest and disease issues are carried over into the next season.

Now is a good time to be thinking about post-harvest nutrition regimes, pruning requirements (invigorate, devigorate or restructure), disease management, redevelopment plans and labour requirements.

It is years like 2020 when you are able to sit back and reflect on the season, think about what is good about growing apples and pears and that what you do is producing quality food for consumers. We recently captured this in some photos of growers during the Pink Lady Harvest for the Buy West Eat Best "Shinning a light on WA Food Heroes". 🍏

MORE INFORMATION ►

Contact Susie Murphy White on: 0429 413 420 or email susan.murphy-white@pird.wa.gov.au.

Tips to keep apples fresh in retail

Pomewest, serving West Australian growers, would like to see a better rate of passes in our retail quality tests.

As a retailer, keeping produce fresh and in optimal eating condition can sometimes be a challenge. Research tells us that care in handling and presenting apples will result in great eating experiences and results in return sales. The following are some practical tips for best practice which will assist you to keep your apple lines in tip-top shape for freshness and customer eating satisfaction.

1



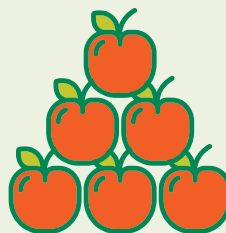
Implement an effective stock rotation system

All **fresh produce should be rotated using the first in first out method**, to ensure older produce doesn't get lost in the back of displays. People buy with their eyes and people gravitate to the best-looking produce.

2

Improve stacking procedures

Over stacking (more than two rows high), can also bruise and crush produce, reducing the quality of the fruit. Whilst apples are hard to touch, they can still bruise, so place them carefully to avoid damage.



3

Deal with damaged products

Ensure your employees are **regularly checking for product spoilage** as they carry out their daily store duties.

fresh tips



4

Be aware of ethylene sensitivity

Apples produce high levels of ethylene and are best displayed away from produce that also produce high levels.

Avocados, bananas, peaches and tomatoes are examples to name a few.



5

Check your deliveries

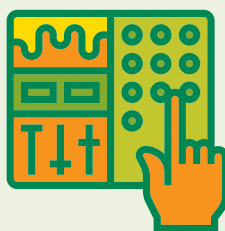
Before your stock even makes its way to the shelves, **produce should be checked to ensure it has arrived under the correct conditions** and has the capacity to store for long periods.

Try to avoid buying large volumes of cheap fruit to store for extended periods in your cool-stores. If it's cheap it may be that it has a specific use-by date. A fully trained member of staff should always check the temperature and visible quality of the produce.

6

Have the correct cold storage solution

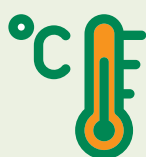
Once in storage, apples should be kept in the correct type of refrigerated container or cold store. **Apples are best stored at temperatures from 1–2 degrees to maintain pristine freshness**, however that is not always a practical temperature when sharing space with other fresh produce in your cool room. Even at 4 degrees, some form of refrigeration is better than room temperature, for shelf life.



7

Check temperatures

Retailers should have to an easily visible thermometer or electronic temperature measuring device in all cold store units and cabinets. To ensure that produce is at a safe and correct temperature, these should be **checked regularly be a designated member of staff.**



8

Clean storage areas

Much like on the shop floor, an unsanitary cold store unit can cause product spoilage. Off or damaged produce can cause unpleasant smells and leakage, both of which can contaminate 'good' stock. To keep food as fresh as possible in the summer heat, **regularly check and clean your cold store units.**



9

Educate employees

One of the easiest ways you can keep retail produce fresh is to **educate your employees on the issues your store faces when temperatures rise.**

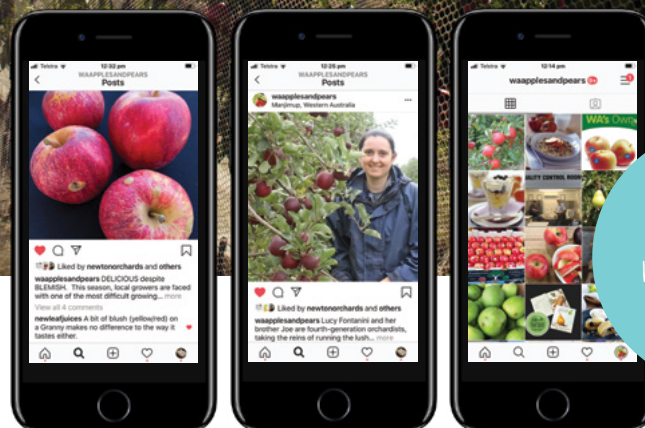
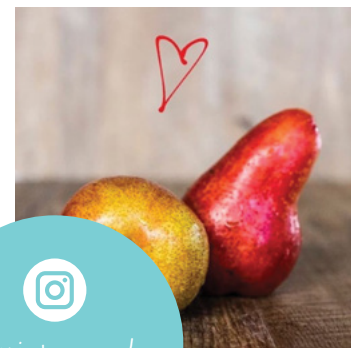
Teach your staff how to recognise and effectively deal with damaged produce, and ensure everyone understands the importance of stocking produce lines correctly.

Social media strategy driving apples and pears during COVID-19



BY NOELENE SWAIN
POMEWEST
PROMOTIONS
CO-ORDINATOR

PHOTO: Victoria Baker Photographer



The local apple and pear season is now well underway marking a season of particular historic note.

Along with some of the most extremely growing conditions across the country impacting on the volume and appearance of the current crop, producers have also had to cope with the current unusual and uncertain times resulting from the impact of COVID-19 pandemic. We are seeing a change in consumer purchase behaviours amongst the COVID-19 pandemic which has placed a focus on maintaining health by eating well yet also requires us to react and adopt new ways to accommodate for shifting consumer demands and purchase patterns.

A range of promotional activities scheduled to promote apples and pears have been cancelled in the wake of the community restrictions required to maintain social distancing. A range of activities planned in schools, community events and festivals were all pulled in the interest of community safety.

► **SOCIAL** media activities were stepped up to a more intense level in mid March.

People staying home and reaching out to others via social media created a focussed opportunity to increase the level of interaction via social media. Social media activities were stepped up to a more intense level in mid March, with a strategy to drive:

- Increased interest in health
- Emphasis in quality and food safety
- Greater assurance that fruit is free of risk and of the highest quality when it comes to safety standards
- Understanding of seasonal conditions impacting on visual presentation
- Better personal connection to the individuals and families producing local fruit
- Wider understanding of the range of varieties available
- Increased motivation to snack of apples and pears
- Inspiration to cook with apples and pears.

Social media communications have been tailored to ensure communications are appropriate in the current climate, while continuing to inspire West Australians to choose local natural, healthy fruit as snacks and providing delicious recipe inspiration they can create at home.

Media content has been based around additional photography undertaken in local orchards for original posts, sharing of relevant posts from others and crafting promoted competitions.

As a result of this intensity, all metrics for measuring engagements have rocketed over the previous month, with followers steadily increasing and levels of reach, impressions, likes and comments typically seeing a five-fold increase. Impact has been further amplified by reposting by some locally influential food accounts which extends the message reach. 🍏