



From left: Susie Murphy White, Mark Scott, Nardia Stacy, Sam Licciardello and Jason Jarvis.

POMEWEST Report

SUMMER Success

From conferences to regional events, a new scholarship and new staff and national wins, the industry is focusing on the positives and setting itself up for success...

Words Nardia Stacy, executive manager



AS we wrap up 2023, this issue of *WA Grower* reflects on the past year and its challenges. The next harvest season looks to be shaping up well, with reports from most regions that conditions have been near perfect for establishing fruit set for the next harvest period.

New Hort Scholarship Announced

The Minister for Agriculture, the Hon. Jackie Jarvis, announced at WAHU a new postgraduate scholarship for horticulture researchers in honour of the work of the late John Cripps. Cripps was the breeder who created the Cripps Pink variety, marketed under the Pink Lady brand. It's a fitting tribute to his life's work and the apple's global success. The John Cripps Horticulture Scholarship will provide a successful candidate with a postgraduate scholarship of \$50,000 per year for a PhD (\$150,000 over three years) or a Master of Research (\$100,000 over two years) based at a West Australian university. The initiative has been endorsed by the Cripps family, including John's daughters, Alwyne Parker and Dr Helen Cripps, and indicates the government's commitment to the advancement of our diverse industry.

Industry Connection

The pandemic has caused numerous industry presentations and conferences this year, which may have been overwhelming for growers to attend. Our commitment to keeping our growers informed and up-to-date with the latest innovations and technologies in real time is reflected in our efforts to communicate the outcomes of these events. We believe this approach can assist in our endeavour to raise the industry's profitability and sustainability.

Leading up to Christmas 2023, Pomewest has actively engaged with DPIRD and other horticulture bodies to collaborate on various events. These include WAHU (WA Horticulture Update) at Ascot Racecourse, the Donnybrook Long Table Lunch and APAL's Spring Future Orchard Walk. The latest walk, held in Nannup, focused on managing tree vigour and crop load. The event looked at soil and sap samples to determine optimal nutrition for fruit quality. A full report of the event will be covered in the next issue of *WA Grower*.



Dining at Donnybrook

Pomewest was thrilled to be the gold sponsor of the Donnybrook Long Table Lunch for the third year. The event (in early November) celebrated and supported the efforts of local growers in the region, showcasing its produce. During the event, Nardia gave a presentation, encouraging people to reconsider pears and engaging them with some interactive fun by providing spot prizes of giveaway pear recipe books. This was an important message since the Donnybrook region contributes to more than half of the state's pear production. A key message of the presentation was: 'Good things come in Pears.' This will serve as a reminder to consumers about the many attributes and value of pears in their diet, as well as the fruit's versatility, especially as a 'perfect' snack option. Additionally, Nardia contributed to the local Western Tourist radio segment to boost the consideration more broadly. We want to express our gratitude to the Licciardello family and the Taste Donnybrook organising committee for inviting us to support their unique event again this year. It was made possible thanks to local produce growers, wine and food producers and local businesses. It was a great success and the images captured speak for themselves.



Royal Show Success

Thanks to the hard work of Noelene Swain from Fresh Finesse, our participation in the 2023 Perth Royal Show was a huge success! Fruit sales increased dramatically from the previous year with many visitors stating that purchasing an apple has become their show tradition, and many are still surprised to learn the Pink Lady is a WA-bred apple. However, many were familiar with the Bravo apple. This event provided a fun and unique way to enjoy fresh food, it was great value for money and had a social consciousness. We want to express our appreciation to all of our supporters, including Terry and Diane Fogliani from Eagleview Orchards, Fruitwest Co-operative, WA Farm Direct and RASWA, for providing the venue, fruit and volunteers to help make this event a cost-effective option for our industry. Thanks, too, to Pomewest staff Susie and daughter Evelyn and WA Farm Direct's Rebecca Blackman and her children who helped at the event.

Did you WAHU?

WAHU included leaders sharing their experiences and knowledge in adapting to changing technology, consumer expectations and trends. A trade show enabled growers to access the latest in tech and more. Nic Giblett, of Newton Orchards, was one of five pome growers at the event. She said: "WAHU was once again an excellent opportunity for networking in WA hort. Yes, it's difficult to force yourself to take the time out of your business, but very worthwhile, even if it's just sharing the trials and headaches that so many of us are going through as growers in the 2020s. It's good to be reminded that you're not alone, and that there are like-minded people working towards solutions and/or support for industry. It's rejuvenating to be able to refocus on just doing 'the next right thing' as you head back to the farm."

Locals on National Panels

Hort Innovation and APAL have established two advisory panels to drive innovation and development. These panels will play a vital role in ensuring the sector's sustainable growth and prosperity. The Hort Innovation Apple and Pear Levy Fund panels and the Apple and Pear Research Development and Extension (RD&E) Strategic Investment Advisory Panel (SIAP) now have representatives from WA, including Terry Martella from Kirup and Nardia Stacy from Pomewest. Panellists bring diverse expertise, from production to logistics and communication, ensuring the industry's prosperity; others have a strong background in retail, export and industry know-how, and will play a part in shaping the industry's growth.

What's Next for Pome?

The 2024 APAL Future Orchards International New Zealand Grower Tour is from January 15–19, 2024. During the tour, AgFirst consultants will lead orchard walks in their home regions, exposing participants to a wide range of growing systems, high performance blocks and knowledgeable people working for world-leading orchards. We look forward to hearing back on this tour from local growers taking part.

New Project Officer to Build Capacity

We are pleased to announce that we are progressing towards achieving our strategic plan's strategies, tactics and outcomes for 2021–2025. As part of this effort, we have hired a new pome project officer – Jennifer Riseley – to build capacity for the sector and ensure continuity for industry support. This diverse role is focused on delivering field-based trials and industry development for national five-year projects. She will work out of Manjimup. We will share more about Jennifer and her role in the next issue of *WA Grower* magazine.

In This Issue

Apple ambassador Dr Helen Cripps and Rebecca Blackman of WA Farm Direct give an update on Soluna in the Thailand market this year. I also want to wish you all a Merry Christmas and prosperous New Year. On behalf of the committee, Susie and myself, it has been a pleasure working for you and the industry throughout 2023. We are excited to continue our work in the upcoming year. 

MORE INFORMATION

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Soluna takes HONG KONG

Soluna apples made their Hong Kong debut in September in what was a crisp tour de force.

Words Rebecca Blackman WA Farm Direct

IN 2023, the launch of Soluna apples included a special gift box that proved to be popular with online shoppers in Asia. WA Farm Direct collaborated with its exclusive partner in Hong Kong, Top Weal, to execute the next phase of its marketing strategy for Soluna apples in Hong Kong.

Soluna apples, the premium apple brand known for its unmatched quality and slow oxidation when cut, took it to the lively streets of Hong Kong with a grand launch event on September 9. The event included tastings, giveaways and other exciting activities that captivated the hearts of Hong Kong's apple enthusiasts in a unique and unforgettable way.

For four days, the Soluna apples truck showcased all-Australian produce and created a lively centre of apple excitement. The truck moved around the city to ensure that as many apple enthusiasts as possible could experience the taste of Soluna apples. Attendees were offered the opportunity to sample sliced Soluna apples and refreshing apple juice. Determined to make its launch unforgettable, the team offered free apples in exchange for a social media follow or online post to boost brand recognition.

WA Farm Direct is committed to establishing Soluna apples as an exciting new apple offering in Hong Kong, rather than just a fleeting trend. To ensure the availability of the apple in various retailers across the city, WA Farm Direct is continuing to collaborate with local marketers. It's just the beginning of developing the brand in Hong Kong, with several new and exciting digital marketing campaigns and in-store sampling events planned for the rest of the marketing period. 🍏

MORE INFORMATION

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“For four days, the Soluna apples truck showcased all-Australian produce and created a lively centre of apple excitement. The truck moved around the city to ensure that as many apple enthusiasts as possible could experience the taste”





Tickled **PINK**

Dr Helen Cripps takes us on a European journey of insight into the popularity of the Pink Lady apple brand.



“... every metre of land was utilised with orchards, often even in between the houses in the town”

GROWING up with John Cripps as my father, I did gain some insight into the importance of his apple breeding. When Dad turned 90 a few years ago, he seemed pretty down about reaching such a magnificent age. I told him at the time to cheer up as he was the only person I knew who had invented several apples that employed thousands of people worldwide. This impact on people’s lives was something I could never hope to achieve. It was only when he passed away in 2022 that I began to understand the global impact of the Pink Lady apple.

From my previous travels in Europe over the past 20 years, I have become aware of the incredible strength of the Pink Lady brand in Europe. I would take photos of Pink Lady apples in places such as Norway, Sweden, Slovenia, Croatia, Germany, the UK and the Netherlands to send home to my father. After meeting representatives of growers from around the world in 2022 in Thailand at the International Pink Lady Alliance conference, I promised to visit the growers in Europe.

Orchards of Italy

In September, I arrived in South Tyrol, a valley across which apple orchards extended as far as the eye could see. I had visited the orchards in Manjimup previously, but never had I seen a landscape covered with apple orchards to this extent. This was only one small growing region in the north of Italy. However, every metre of land was utilised with orchards, often even in between the houses in the town. My hosts Georg, Vincent and Manfred, introduced me to every member of the village as the daughter of the man who bred the Pink Lady apple because the apple has been very profitable for the growers and the region. Orchardists often grow grapes next to their apples, so I was offered numerous glasses of local orchardists’ own wine. All the orchards were family businesses with the fathers, sons and grandsons working together, so meeting me, as the daughter, was very special. Apples in this region are grown up to 500 feet above sea level along the valley sides. I was told that altitude affects ripening, which I didn’t know earlier, and the orchardists follow strict controls, growing to set standards.

POMEWEST pink lady



James Simpson and Tom Christensen of the Adrian Scripps Ltd Orchard in England.

Presenting a paper on Pink Lady apple marketing in Finland in June 2023 after winning a best paper award.



Pink Lady in France



Original Pink Lady Family in Italy



Manfred, Helen and Georg in South Tyrol Italy

Pink Lady in France

Star Fruits in Avignon was where Pink Lady was first planted in France. Here, I conducted research interviews on the success of the Pink Lady apple and spent a day at the Toulemonde orchards. I also had lunch with Dominic and Philippe Toulemonde's youngest son, who joined the family business after working in New York. Although retired, Dominic and Philippe are still active in the orcharding business. I learned that the pristine conditions of WA had caused issues for French growers and that breeding scab- and disease-resistant apple varieties was the future for the industry. Further, poor ripening conditions of the 2022 season had led to the inclusion of apples with lesser colouration in the Pink Lady brand in Europe. Additionally, I learned that the changing climate potentially threatens the Pink Lady apple brand in Europe.

Grapes and Apples in the UK

I was surprised to see Pink Lady apples being successfully grown in England. The changing climate encouraged French wineries to buy up land across the south of England, so now grapes and apples are being grown alongside each other. Kent, where Scripps' orchards are, is predominantly a hop-growing region. When Pink Lady was initially being commercialised, WA was heavily exporting apples to England. Later, UK supermarkets would sell Pink Lady apples from Europe and the Southern Hemisphere. Because of this, I did not expect to find Pink Lady apples grown in England. About five years ago, I had visited Steyning, where my father grew up and perfected his horticultural skills. As a teenager during the Second World War, he grew vegetables that fed not only his parents, but were also sold neighbours during rationing. Dad showed his entrepreneurial spirit and willingness to undertake complex work at a young age. My father's experience during the Second World War marked him for the rest of his life as it bred in him a determination that bore fruit in the apple varieties that are famous around the world. I am immensely proud of my father and the impact he has had on the global apple industry, and I am committed to continuing his legacy by promoting the future success of Dad's apples. 🍏

MORE INFORMATION

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Staff & Committee

Pomewest Committee

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Budgeted income 2023–24

Project	\$
General Account Budget including FFS, Interest, Project Grant Funding	430,000
Biosecurity Account Budget FFS, general account transfers and interest	76,250

Budgeted expenditure general account 2023–24

Project	\$
Quality Testing Project	35,200
Narrow Orchard System Project	20,000
PIPS4	9,000
RIM Disease Modelling Systems	5,400
Apple and Pear Heritage Trail Project	5,000
Promotion and Publicity	28,000
Event Sponsorship	6,000
Annual Meetings and Communications	15,000
Admin, including salaries and office costs	263,200
APC Admin Charge @ 11% of FFS budgeted Income	46,200
Total	433,000

Budgeted expenditure biosecurity account 2023–24

Project	\$
Codling moth	35,000
On-farm preparedness workshops	10,000
APC charge @11% of FFS budgeted Income	4,400
Total	49,400

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