

## Opening address.

(1<sup>st</sup> slide – cover picture of Tulameen)

Thanks to the Chilean Raspberry Industry and the Chairman of the Board, Antonio.

(2nd Slide– Overview of production)

Well, nothing too much has changed in the Australian Raspberry Industry - we are still a very small industry when it comes to world raspberry production. Approximately 95% of Raspberries in Australia would be for fresh sales and small amount of processing berries at this time would go into our own domestic market.

**First-grade fruit** is directed towards the fresh market. For many growers this is represented by a local greengrocer, farm gate sales of packaged fruit, or “pick your own” (PYO) sales. Larger businesses that can provide greater volumes over a longer period direct their fruit to supermarkets and wholesale markets, sometimes consigned to Agents who act on their behalf.

**Second-grade fruit** is processed into juices, puree and jams. Some 2,400 tonnes of imported processed product occurs annually. Whilst the Australian industry is considered uncompetitive against imports, at least one larger business is considering specialized mechanically-harvested plantings to supply the processed market.

### (3rd Slide– Production of Rubus crops: tonnes per state)

Estimated total annual production in 2003/04 of rubus fruit in Australia was 800 tonnes, with a gross value of approximately \$10 million. Imported rubus fruit during the same period totalled 2,400 tonnes with an estimated value of \$9 million. Actual production in 2007/08 (Australian Bureau Statistics 2008) was reduced to 723 tonnes which may have been as result of field plantings that were impacted by phytophthora and drought after 2004 (ARGA 2005).

Exports occur on a small scale. Processed fruit is a limited market due to competition from imports and an inability on both sides to establish long-term, large-volume contracts (ARGA 2005).

Due to the geographical diversity and range of business sizes that grow Rubus crops it is difficult to quantify the Australian production base. ARGA has about 140 members who are believed to sell about 800 tonnes of Rubus annually. If we assume an average marketable yield of 4 tonnes/ha, say, this production volume may equate to about 200ha of plantings. In 2008/09, industry levy was paid on 581 tonnes of fresh fruit sales.

## (4th Slide– Current projections)

Berry production is expected to double over the next 5 years

### Industry development by 2014

- We will double production during the next five years. Per capita consumption will have increased because new varieties and better supply chain practices will deliver exceptional fruit quality;
- There will be a longer “season”, due to more warm-climate, and protected, cropping;
- More co-operatives and brand alliances will have formed; and
- There will be more value-adding and on-farm processing;

I am led to believe that over 3000 tonnes of raspberries are imported into Australia from various places; IQF from Chile, Block frozen from Poland and Serbia and some from China.

## (5th Slide– Australian Rubus Growers Association)

We in Australia would be one of the very few countries in the world who actually have their own national representative – A.R.G.A. which is the Australian Rubus Growers Association.

With that we have a domestic levy imposed on all fresh sales in the Country. This money is collected at point of sale. The levy is 12 cents per kilo, 10 cents for Research & Development and 2 cents for marketing projects.

The committee then decides how to allocate the funds.

For instance:

- New Cultivars
- Testing and trials of new sprays

We also have an Industry Development Manager – I.D.M. whose role is to collect and collate information to send out to all members – keeping them up to date.

With Industry Development management several things have been put into place –

1. Growers Manual
2. Helped organise expos combined with Blueberry and Strawberry associations
3. Work shops
4. Web page

## (6th Slide– Growing Techniques)

Now for our growing Techniques:

Methods of Growing are changing. 80% of plants would have some types of covering.

Most plants are grown in a hedgerow style or in the traditional field grown way but there are some now trying different medium such as potting mixes and coir.

Protected cropping using either poly tunnels or shade and hail mesh is appearing more and more as Growers seek to deliver better quality and also ensure more reliable returns.

We recognise in Australia we need to become not only good growers but also good marketers.

As always all farms want high yields, good quality with lower input and better returns. In Australia we have seen that prices are actually coming down and input is growing at a rapid rate. Old varieties are also no longer performing as they once did and ARGA continues to support its members by seeking new and improved varieties from around the world. Also there is pressure from some large companies tying up varieties – but that is life.

A.R.G.A is searching the world for new cultivars so that we might find varieties that suit our climate: not an easy task as we have growers from Queensland down to Tasmania and across to Western Australia.

### (7th Slide– Packaging)

Our packaging varies in type but generally we pack into a 125g lidded punnet with a soaker pad in the bottom.

Most packaging comes from China and they do a very good job – their quality and consistency is excellent, the timing and shipping can be of concern but is getting better.

Better growers have strict quality guidelines when packing their fruit. Fruit that is more carefully packed generally travels better and has better shelf life.

### (8th Slide– Conclusion and Thank you)

So the challenge is out there – Australia is made up of a lot of small growers with an average medium grower of 7 – 10Ha and then a few of larger growers 10-30Ha. It is no easy thing for ARGA to serve all grower members just as it is no easy thing for Growers to serve people all across the country.

We are a big country with relatively few people that are spread over a vast area.

Also we are made of a lot of mixed growers - that is growers who grow strawberries, blueberries and blackberries.

At the end of the day, it is important that we enjoy what we do and that we make enough money to keep us viable!

Thank you for inviting us to be a part of this important exchange of information and networking.