



Newsletter

April 2006

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Australian Horticulture in a Globalised World

Join Farm Writers corporate members of the month Telstra Country Wide and DuPont (Australia) Ltd for lunch on Friday, 28th April to catch up on the world of horticulture and Australian horticulture in the world.

Our guest speaker is John Webster, Managing Director of Horticulture Australia Limited. John is well known to members of Farm Writers as a straight talker and strategic thinker, with strong experience in agriculture. This event provides an opportunity to quiz him on the current issues in, and future directions of, Australian horticulture.

John will cover the challenges and opportunities facing Australia's third largest, fastest growing and most diverse agricultural industry in today's highly competitive globalised environment. The importance of market access will not go unremarked. John will also canvass topical issues such as the growth in corporate horticulture and the impact of Cyclone Larry.



*John Webster, MD
Horticulture Australia
Limited*

John Webster joined Horticulture Australia in May 2001 as the inaugural Managing Director. He has focussed on improving the commercial return from industry investment in horticulture R&D and marketing levies, whilst developing strong relationships with peak industry bodies and government.

Since graduating with an economics degree, John has held senior management positions in strategic planning, research, marketing and, commercialisation of research and development across a range of agricultural industries. His skills are in developing strategic direction and building teams to deliver results. Achievements in these areas were recognised with the Howard Yelland Award in 2001 for "his outstanding contribution to the Australian and international beef industry".

To book your seat for lunch on 28 April go to our website: www.nswfarmwriters.org/BOOKINGS.htm

Join Farm Writers at the ever popular Budget Breakfast on Wednesday 10th May at The Menzies.

The Hon P McGauran MP, Federal Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries will be speaking at the event.

Register on-line for the luncheon on Friday 28th April 2006.

Corporate Members of the Month:

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

When: Friday 28th April 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 26th April**, on-line at <http://www.nswfarmwriters.org> or by emailing bookings@nswfarmwriters.org or by phone to Sarah Robson, (02) 8204 3730.

Late cancellations: Phone Sarah Robson, (02) 8204 3730

Website sponsored by Telstra Country Wide NSW

Burton Taylor Recipe for Reform

Contributed by Lucy Skuthorp of *The Land*

Prominent agribusiness identity Nick Burton Taylor wants the Australian grains industry to stop waiting for the results of the Cole Inquiry into AWB's involvement in the Oil-for-Food scandal and get on with the job of planning a better wheat marketing structure.

He says the industry must recognise that the single desk is no longer functioning, and believes the reasons why have not been dealt with in the "operatic atmosphere" of the Cole Inquiry.

Mr Burton Taylor is the principal of Hillgrove Pastoral Company, based at Boorowa in the NSW Southern Tablelands, and also the chairman of northern Australian beef giant, AACo.

At our April luncheon Mr Burton Taylor said some would question his credentials and objectivity on the topic because of his previous directorship on the board of GrainCorp, however he thought he spoke with experience as a grain grower, a feedlot operator and a stock feed operator.

He said he knew of no more emotive issue in the bush than the inquiry into AWB and the question over the single desk's future, describing it as a "table conversation stopper".

In the unravelling weeks of the Cole Inquiry into AWB, he said the Australian grains industry had lost a lot of natural goodwill and competitors have had "a leg up that they shouldn't have had".



AACo's Nick Burton Taylor AM

Mr Burton Taylor says the time has come to stop calling Australia's wheat marketing system a "single desk" which was "paternalistic terminology" no longer deserved since AWB became a publicly listed company. He said AWB was a statutory monopoly where a different set of ethical tests applied.

Mr Burton Taylor said that wheat was purchased against an international price, with the only access to that market through AWB.

"It is this lack of access to an international price, combined with the distortions in the domestic market, that discredit our current system," Mr Burton Taylor said.

Mr Burton Taylor said now was the time to separate AWB from the single desk and give the Wheat Export Authority the power to contest some delivery of service.

If reforms were not made soon the wheat industry in Australia would end up like the wool industry with "a whole range of producers who have no connection with what customers want".

Mr Burton Taylor gave equal time to the beef industry and the future plans of AACo. He remarked that one of the strengths of AACo lies in the family composition of its management teams and outlined the success they have had offering management training to the wives of their staff. His outline of beef market and AACo's generally positive position included a considered critique of ABARE's outlook for beef in which he disagreed with their assumptions, particularly the timing and quality of Brazilian competition.

With self-effacing comments regarding his supposed lack of expertise, Mr Burton Taylor presented a sound argument that the recent high prices paid for cattle country are a sign of structural change in the rural market rather than spikes driven by foolhardy sentiment.

In a lively question session, Mr Burton Taylor highlighted his view that individual producers of commodities like grain and meat needed freedom to choose how they enter international markets and needed to be closely involved in marketing decisions but that often a co-operative effort was more likely to succeed.

Thankyou to Corporate Members of the Month Rabobank Australia Ltd and Amvil Media Pty Ltd.

Rural Writing Competition Closed

Several high quality entries have been received for the NSW leg of the 2006 IFAJ Star Prize Writing Contest and the NSW winner will be revealed at Farm Writers' April luncheon. The NSW winner becomes the NSW Finalist in the selection of Australia's entrant in the IFAJ Contest. There is still time to enter the photography contents. For more information go to the IFAJ website (<http://ifaj.org/photocontest/index.html>).