

Facilitating the development of the Australian strawberry industry — key learnings

Angela Atkinson, Industry Development Officer, Strawberries

The strawberry industry strategic investment plan (2012-2017) identified industry adoption of research and development outcomes as a critical issue, in part due to a lack of effective communication. The identification of R&D needs within the strategic plan provided justification for a nationally focused industry development program, based on grower's needs and preferences.

In 2016, an industry development and communication program was introduced, with a national focus geared towards building a profitable and sustainable Australian strawberry industry.

The program consisted of three projects:

- **Facilitating the development of the Australian strawberry industry** – national oversight and communications (BS15002) – delivered by RM Consulting Group
- **Facilitating the development of the Australian strawberry industry** – sub-tropical regional delivery (BS15003) – delivered by Queensland Strawberry Industry Promotions Council
- **Facilitating the development of the Australian strawberry industry** – temperate regional delivery (BS15004) – delivered by Victorian Strawberry Industry Development Committee

BS15002 provided oversight of the three projects, and produced and maintained key industry communication channels, including the website for industry news and R&D communications (strawberryinnovation.com), the quarterly Simply Red newsletter and a monthly e-newsletter, The Punnet.

Projects BS15003 and BS15004 provided regional delivery of on-the-ground activities including workshops, farm walks, field days, study tours, case studies, grower groups and industry analysis, in addition to development of resources and contributions to the newsletters and website.

The use of the various communication channels through these projects resulted in a broad and extensive reach to growers and stakeholders across the Australian strawberry industry. The hard copy Simply Red newsletter was particularly well received by growers, and the industry newsletters and updates provided a regular update to growers and stakeholders on the outcomes of the industry R&D levy at work.

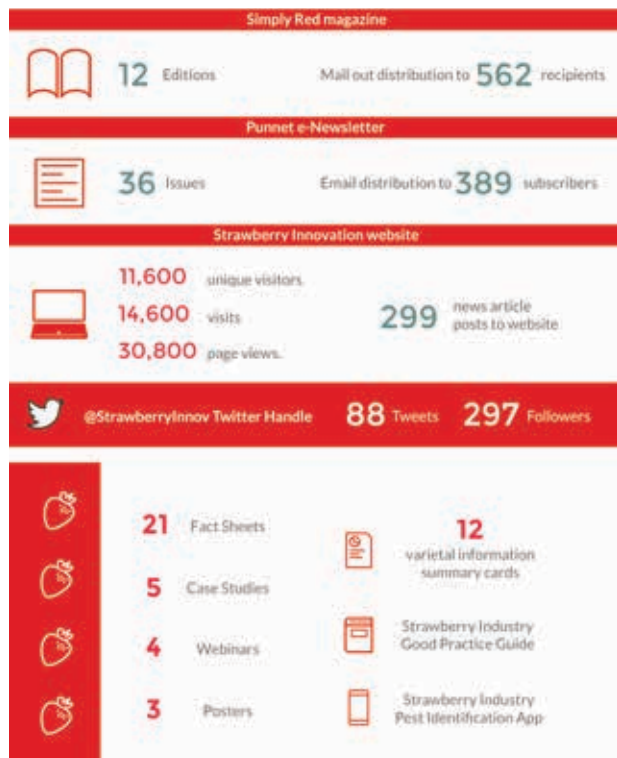
Resources produced through these projects included a Good Practice Guide, an Integrated Pest Management App, Australian Strawberry Breeding Program varietal summary cards, shed posters, chemical registrations and minor use permits for pest and disease problems in strawberry production, videos, fact sheets and case studies. All resources will be available through the new berry industry website that is in development as part of the new project www.berries.net.au

An important outcome of the coordinated delivery of these projects has been the building of strong partnerships and networks, both between the different states and growing regions; and between growers, researchers, industry associates and other stakeholders. This has contributed to a more cohesive and connected national strawberry industry.

With the formation of Berries Australia, there was support for a whole of berry industry development program, delivering activities and communications targeted to both individual berry commodities and the berry sector as a whole. Subsequently, the new project, **MT18020 – Facilitating the development of the Australian berry industries**, will build on the lessons from the strawberry innovation program and include the blueberry and Rubus sectors as well.



STRAWBERRY INNOVATION COMMUNICATION OUTPUTS



Hort innovation STRAWBERRY FUND
This project has been funded by Hort Innovation using the strawberry research and development levy and funds from the Australian Government. For more information on the fund and strategic levy investment visit horticulture.com.au

Vale Mirko Milinković

13.5.1966 – 20.11.2019

Frank Greenhalgh, Scott Mattner
and Peter Merriman



It is with sad hearts that we report the passing of the much-loved Mirko Milinković, and acknowledge his significant contributions to the Australian strawberry industry and science.

Mirko was appointed as Manager of the Victorian Strawberry Industry Certification Authority (VSICA) in 2013. He used his innovative skills and background in plant physiology and pathology to introduce new technologies and practices into the Victorian Strawberry Runner Certification Scheme. These included improved methods for maintaining pathogen-tested strawberry varieties for clients, and the development of a hydroponic system for production of runners and a system for production of plug plants in soil-less media under strict biosecurity and hygienic conditions.

As Manager, Mirko worked closely with VSICA staff and Board, and interacted with many clients, collaborators and runner and fruit growers. He was held in high regard by all involved. He was also a well-respected scientist of strawberry and other crops, and published his research in leading international journals. His research covered tissue culture, aeroponic production systems, plug plants, alternatives to methyl bromide, conditioning plants for increased production and the use of biostimulants for enhanced root growth. Mirko left VSICA in 2018 to concentrate on his health, but passed away recently during a visit to his beloved homeland of Serbia. He will be remembered as a quiet achiever, deep thinker, people person and a good man with a dry sense of humour.