AUTUMN/WINTER 2017 | VOL 2.4

EL Development Commission

peel

PROGRESSIVE | PROSPEROUS | DYNAMIC

ature cus:

culture & Food

vation;

Food Zone

Capable people;

Driving economic growth + jobs

Peel Food Zone **Breakfast Seminar**

WORDS AND IMAGES | Peel Development Commission

Mid March this year, in partnership with the Department of Agriculture and Food WA (DAFWA), the Peel Development Commission were delighted to present guest speakers Professor David Hughes and Associate Professor Chris Vas to raise awareness of our Transform Peel program and ignite discussion and interest in the Peel Food Zone.

The event highlighted the role the Commission plays in development and support of agriculture.

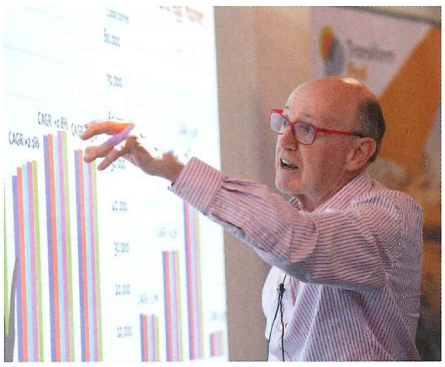
It also identified the major role DAFWA has within this sector and as our partner in the Peel Food Zone.

Transform Peel's Food Zone is an opportunity to capture new export value by investing in technology intensive horticulture farming and our two speakers addressed consumer-driven food and drink trends that are shaping the future today.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information on the Peel Food Zone visit: www.transformpeel.com

For a copy of the presentations please visit: www.peel.wa.gov.au/the-commission/peel-events



Transform
Peel

WORDS | Janine Hatch, Peel Development Commission
IMAGES | SCRIPT

Smart Urban Farm Factories

The Peel Development Commission (PDC) is engaging Murdoch University through their Singapore Centre for Research in Innovation, Productivity and Technology (SCRIPT) to undertake a feasibility study for new forms of urban farming to grow the horticulture industry in the Peel region.

In the context of the Transform Peel program, there will be more emphasis on innovative above-ground food production to address a number of regional issues including nutrient flow in the Peel-Harvey catchment area, sustainable water management, and high unemployment. In this context, new approaches in agriculture are required in the Peel.

Pursuing investment in new forms of urban farming (including potential vertical farms, aquaponics, hydroponics, closed loop etc.) in the region will:

- Stimulate investment in innovative agri-industry production techniques that insulate food production from the natural environment providing biosecurity safeguards, greater intensity, efficiency and increased yield;

WORDS | Janine Hatch, Peel Development Commission
IMAGES | SCRIPT

Smart Urban Farm Factories

The Peel Development Commission (PDC) is engaging Murdoch University through their Singapore Centre for Research in Innovation, Productivity and Technology (SCRIPT) to undertake a feasibility study for new forms of urban farming to grow the horticulture industry in the Peel region.

In the context of the Transform Peel program, there will be more emphasis on innovative above-ground food production to address a number of regional issues including nutrient flow in the Peel-Harvey catchment area, sustainable water management, and high unemployment. In this context, new approaches in agriculture are required in the Peel.

Pursuing investment in new forms of urban farming (including potential vertical farms, aquaponics, hydroponics, closed loop etc.) in the region will:

- Stimulate investment in innovative agri-industry production techniques that insulate food production from the natural environment providing biosecurity safeguards, greater intensity, efficiency and increased yield;
- Maximise water efficiency and reduce nutrient run-off;
- Sustain agricultural activities within an urbanising environment; and
- Have the potential to export produce to meet global food demand.

Urban farming is not a well-developed sector in the Peel region (or WA more generally) and there is great benefit in undertaking this initial research for the Transform Peel program. Given the higher infrastructure costs to develop this form of agriculture there is a need to identify higher value crops to ensure the longer term viability of this production system.

Working with Murdoch University on this initiative presents a number of additional benefits including the linkages to a global network of innovative horticultural companies through its research and development (R&D) arm in Singapore. This project builds on work SCRIPT has already undertaken given Singapore's interest in food security and trialling and localising the Singaporean technology. Working in collaboration with industry partners such as Sky Greens, Panasonic and others will help translate project outcomes into innovative business models, infrastructure requirements and technologies needed to meet Transform Peel objectives. Furthermore, having private sector involved in this research will strengthen industry networks and facilitate investment opportunities.

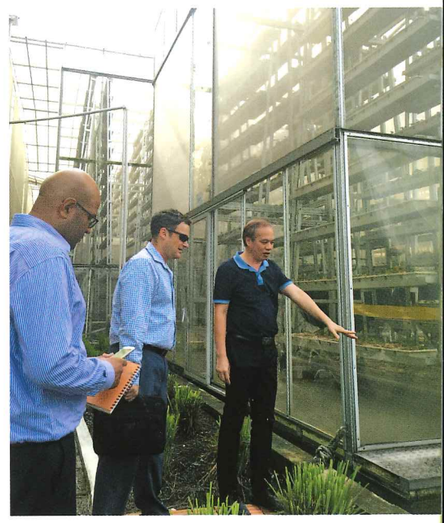
The project's scope is to investigate the feasibility of a range of technological interventions that may potentially be introduced to the Peel, with the aim of developing a pilot project business case for scaling up farming solutions for both the local and export markets. As well as undertaking stakeholder engagement in Singapore, the SCRIPT team is visiting Perth and Peel a number of times throughout the project to:

- Verify the accuracy of data/ information on WA food exports (e.g. volume, value, type of food), who the major trading partners are, and what the average export prices are;
- Information regarding current supply-chain (understanding the dynamics of the current processes from production to export/ consumption e.g. export ports, cold storage, water sources, wholesale/ retail dynamics); and
- Nuanced information on water, soil, and energy options.

Information gathered during SCRIPT's stakeholder engagement will assist the response to key questions posed for this study:

- What technologies and alternate farming systems will be most relevant to the Peel region?
- What are the varieties of crops that can be produced in urban farms?
- What are issues that relate to pests and diseases, soil and water-related issues that should be considered? How can these potentially be overcome?
- Price factors: cost of inputs, crop yield, existing market prices for output, global and regional prices, how competitive might the export market for urban farm products be given low farm labour costs prevalent across the Asia Pacific region;
- Demand and other economic impacts: the evolving food preference of the consumer in relation to pricing affordability;
- Supply chain opportunities within the region and into Asia for Peel as a supplier of farm technology and produce; and
- Infrastructure requirements (e.g. land tenure, transport, logistics, value-add processing).

Associate Professor Dr Christopher Vas is the project lead from SCRIPT. Chris joins Murdoch University from the Australian National University. He is the Director of Murdoch University's first offshore R&D centre SCRIPT and was Commissioner and Executive Director of the Second Murdoch



Commission on Food Security, Trade and Partnerships: Towards Resilient Regional Food Systems in Asia.

The PDC and the Department of Agriculture and Food WA were pleased to invite Chris as the guest speaker at the Harnessing Food Trends and Agri-Innovation for Profit Breakfast Event held at Mandurah Quay Resort in March. While in the Peel, the PDC joined Dr Vas in a number of stakeholder meetings with local government, State Government and the existing growers and food producers in the region. The feasibility study is expected to be finalised mid-2017.

MORE INFORMATION

Please contact the Peel Development Commission on 08 9535 4140 or email Janine.Hatch@peel.wa.gov.au