

Conclusion

The SPAD-502 chlorophyll meter did not demonstrate its usefulness as a tool for rapid field estimation of LN levels in citrus trees, taro or melon crops.

There were some problems with methodology. However, the nature of this preliminary study precluded in-depth analysis needed for clear recommendations. It is also clear that the usefulness of the SPAD meter may be restricted to perennial crops or to crops grown under very homogeneous conditions.

The ability of the SPAD meter to indicate citrus tree health could be very useful to measure the level of stress applied to citrus trees to encourage flowering. It is recommended that this potential be examined in-depth in 2006 using improved calibrations.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to Eumaralla Plantation for the use of the citrus orchards, Graham and Anne Beech for the use of their melon crops and Phaly Soc for the use of his taro planting.

References:

Vock, N., Owen-Turner, J., Smith, D and Mayers, P. (1997). Why nutrition needs to be carefully managed? *In: The Agrilink, Citrus Information Kit*, pp.35-41, QDPI&F.

Wright, R., Meurant, N., Vawdrey, L and Hojmark-Andersen, J. (1997). Fertiliser, *In: The Agrilink, Rockmelon and Honeydew Information Kit*, pp, 1-8 QDPI&F.

Project: Asian Vegetables – Best Practice

Project Officers: G. Walduck, M. Traynor, J. Thomas, G. Owens, and B. Thistleton

Location: Darwin Region

Objective:

To support the Asian vegetable industry and its organisation.

Introduction:

The industry is centred near Darwin with over 50 small growers producing a range of Asian and traditional vegetables for local and capital city markets. A major new development has been the emergence of large shade house operations growing Lebanese and green slicer type cucumbers to supply high-priced demand in winter.

The main effort this year has been to develop capacity in the industry and promote some past trial results through direct contact, tapping into industry social and commercial groups.



Figure 1



Figure 2

Figure 1. Lebanese cucumber growing in a shade house in the Darwin area

Figure 2. Returnable crates for local vegetables in the Perth market

Perth has a well established local returnable crate system based on low transport distances from farm to market and closed loops.

Activities

1. Distributed more copies of the English/Vietnamese publications of current DPIFM printed information on Asian vegetables including the two-poster set on pests and diseases of Asian vegetables.
2. Further developed working version of a PC-based 'tool box' for agricultural pesticides for use in Asian vegetables in cooperation with Biosecurity and Product Integrity, which is currently producing recommendations on pesticides.
3. Collaborating in a RIRDC-funded project to map the supply chain for winter Asian vegetables to capital city markets and to develop support materials. This has involved surveys of local producers in the NT and WA, transport operators and consolidators and surveys of wholesale and retail markets in Sydney, Melbourne and Perth. The Perth market is unique in that much of the local Asian vegetables are handled in a returnable-crate closed loop system.

A draft report is being prepared which will be available during the second half of 2006.

4. Geoff Walduck organised a meeting in Sydney in June as part of the activities for the final year of a RIRDC-funded project to improve interaction between Asian vegetable researchers. Prepared a CD of the proceedings for distribution to participants and RIRDC.
5. Produced a number of draft product description language [PDL] documents as part of a RIRDC funded project to produce PDL for tropical fruits and vegetables.