

**Adoption of EMS by
NIASA and AGCAS**

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Nursery & Garden Industry
Australia (NGIA)

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**Nursery & Garden Industry
Australia**

Final Report

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Completion date 31 August 2005

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Environmental
Management Systems by
NIASA and AGCAS**

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Media Summary

Under a previous HAL project, NY03014, an Environmental Management System (EMS) was developed for the production and retail sectors of the nursery and garden industry. The draft documents of each EMS were completed in November 2004 and this therefore lead to the next phase of testing each system and then introduction to industry to facilitate uptake by businesses. A key element in the strategy to achieving uptake is to target the most receptive businesses within the industry. These were deemed to be those businesses that had already achieved industry best management practice through the Nursery Industry Accreditation Scheme, Australia (NIASA) and the Australian Garden Centre Accreditation Scheme (AGCAS). In addition to targeting these businesses for initial industry adoption, the role of the Development Officer network was also considered imperative to facilitating industry take up of EMS.

The activities under this project have centred on testing each EMS and training the industry's field operatives – the Development Officer network – in each of the systems so that they can impart knowledge to industry and facilitate adoption of each system through AGCAS and NIASA.

Initial efforts focused on EMS in a production nursery context and in May 2005 a two day workshop was convened in Brisbane to discuss and train Nursery Industry Development Officers in EMS and the associated Hazard Analysis & Critical Control Point risk assessment system (HACCP). This forum confirmed many aspect of the EMS for production nurseries and allowed the developers to initiate five trial sites in south-east Queensland. At the time of compiling this report, these trials had not concluded, however initial results have indicated that the draft EMS appears workable within the trial sites to the extent that the EMS can be expanded to other state's trial sites and then to industry more generally.

In terms of the adoption of EMS for the retail sector, further work on the November 2004 daft was required and input from the Garden Centre Development Officer network (GCDO's) was put forward. At meetings of the National AGCAS Advisory Committee

in February and August 2005 it was resolved that the incorporation of the EMS principles was important to the AGCAS program however some modification to the original draft EMS is required to ensure that consumer concerns are also addressed by the system. This may include a modular format that embarks initially on particular areas of community concern relating to the environmental impact of water availability, chemical usage and invasiveness of garden plants. Further work is to be conducted in expanding the draft EMS to incorporate these concerns and to imbed within the system practicalities that make it easier for industry to engage with and adopt.

Technical Report

Much of the work within this project has been about taking a documented model of EMS for production nurseries and retailers of amenity greenlife and developing them further so that adoption by businesses is practical. At the time of writing this report the following activities have either been completed, are in train or have been planned for prompt execution.

Nursery Industry Development Officer Training

Although Environmental Management Systems have been developed and in place in other agribusiness industries for some time, the concept is somewhat new to the field of horticulture. As such it was deemed that the implementation strategy should be driven by the industry's technical support network of Nursery Industry Development Officers (NIDO's). Particularly given that these people have been integral in the expansion of best management practice within the industry via the Nursery Industry Accreditation Scheme, Australia.

To ensure that NIDO's are well equipped to do this a two-day training workshop took place in Brisbane in May 2005 and included training in aspects of the HACCP program. The workshops were conducted by Mr John Bagshaw and Mr Matt Rogers – both of the Queensland Department of Primary Industries & Fisheries, the organisation originally engaged to develop the EMS. In addition to knowledge exchange, the workshop group collectively reviewed the system for production nurseries for its comprehensiveness and potential practical application.

In attendance at the training workshop were:

Ms Edda Keskula – NIDO NGISA

Mr John McDonald – NIDO NGIQ

Mr Michael Danelon – NIDO NGINA

Mr Robert Chin – NIDO NGIV

Mr Sandy Pate – NIDO NGIWA

Mr Warwick Scherf – NIDM NGIA

Production Nursery Trials

Post the collective workshop review and training for the EMS for production nurseries, the EMS then went into field trials in five nurseries in South-East Queensland. This was conducted by QDPIF, under the guidance of John McDonald of NGIQ. Once these trials have run their course and any glitches have been identified and then rectified, trials will then be pursued in each state around Australia.

Adoption by NIASA

Discussion by the National NIASA Advisory Committee at its meeting in June 2005 resolved to explore a means of incorporating the finalised and fully trialled EMS into the NIASA best management practice guidelines. This is likely to be further explored at the committee's next meeting with recommendations for adoption provided to the NGIA Executive.

Adaptation for Retailers

The initial development work for an EMS for nursery industry retailers was concluded in November 2004. However, whilst the EMS's framework were conceptually sound, much of the language and practical applications proved difficult for industry. Therefore further development work in this area is required. Again, strategically to establish the best possible opportunity for take up by industry, it was considered important to target businesses that were already operating at industry best management practice and these were identified as being those within the Australian Garden Centre Accredited Scheme (AGCAS).

Adoption by AGCAS

The adoption of EMS within the AGCAS best management practice guidelines was considered by the National AGCAS Advisory Committee at its February and August 2005 meetings. Growing consumer awareness of environmental issues were viewed as an opportunity to encourage retailers to embrace EMS. It was felt however, that a requirement for a holistic adoption of EMS would likely be too big of an 'ask' for most

businesses and that a modular approach to uptake of EMS would prove more successful in terms of penetration of the number of businesses engaged and commitment to making changes and achieving outcomes.

Further work on the EMS will be required to pursue development of an accreditation module using the EMS framework and other project such as Wise about Water and Chemwise Retail Chemical Training, will be the focus of up coming work for retailer sector adoption, particularly through AGCAS.

Recommendations

Recommendations for moving forward with EMS adoption by industry vary for both the production and retail sectors of the industry

Production

- Successful completion of trial sites in S-E Qld and other states
- Utilisation of testimonials from trial businesses to heighten industry awareness and to encourage engagement by other businesses.
- Inclusion of EMS principles into the NIASA guidelines for industry best management practice.

Retailers

- Development of a comprehensive module based EMS that includes consideration for marketability to end consumers
- Training of the Garden Centre Development Officer (GCDO) network to ensure clear articulation of the EMS and facilitation by engaged businesses.
- Partnership with third party bodies that have parallel objective eg local governments, environmental groups, industry sub-groups.
- Further investigation of the linkage of EMS to retailer best management practice via AGCAS.

Acknowledgments

This report acknowledges previous work completed the Queensland Department of Primary Industries & Fisheries (John Bagshaw, Matt Rogers and Vicki Lane), the input by the industry's Development Officer network and the involvement of both the National NIASA and AGCAS advisory committees.

