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FRUIT INDUSTRY EXPERT SUPPORTS ONLINE INNOVATION

A senior horticultural industry representative says that a new internet-based marketing system for fruit growing, harvesting and supply will be a boon to the Victorian fruit industry.

The project involves twelve Yarra Valley family fruit businesses who have joined together to form a company called YV Marketing. With support from the Victorian Government, the project aims to streamline processes along the fruit supply pipeline to meet commercial, regulatory and QA traceability requirements.

The Victorian Minister for Small Business, Marsha Thomson, said the project was a practical example of how small business could compete more effectively with eCommerce and a little help from the State Government.

“YV Marketing are introducing eCommerce with the objectives of reducing costs, improving customer response, saving time, improving supply chain efficiency and in the end, winning more business,” Ms Thomson said.

“This is a lesson I hope other Victorians, and in particular regional small businesses, gain inspiration from.”

“The new online approach to supply chain management being developed in Victoria by YV Marketing should be beneficial for all of the project participants and help to ensure a competitive edge for the whole industry,” says Program Manager/QA Specialist, Horticulture Australia, Richard Bennett.

“These days, fresh fruit producers need to capture and exchange information quickly and efficiently right throughout the supply chain,” explains YV Marketing’s Project Manager, Steve Pasin. “Some fruit lines need to be harvested, packed and distributed within 24 hours.”

Steve says that the project is due for completion in April/May next year, but in its early developmental stages, is already providing the project members with benefits.

“We’ve deliberately taken a very detailed and methodical approach to developing this project,” he says. “Our architectural system development must be spot on before we implement the new system. Plus, a comprehensive scoping phase at the start has led to increased efficiencies with all of our project partners. We’ve adopted a centralised invoicing system, for example, which is already leading to benefits for the individual companies within the group.

Steve Pasin doesn’t shy away from the challenges the project has posed. “Like a lot of these centralised IT programs, we’ve had to take into account the different levels of computer literacy amongst our members, as well as factor in the range of operating systems they use. We’ve already learned a lot, with a lot more to go!”

Recent feedback from major customers, however, has been encouraging for the group. The YV Marketing project illustrates the point that small businesses working together are capable of developing and implementing systems which can allow them to achieve tangible results and grow in impressive ways.

“Once it is implemented, this project will mean a win win for all participants in the fresh produce supply chain. It will lead to greater efficiencies for all businesses involved and ensure that the customer gets the right product, in the right place at the right time.

As well as YV Marketing, four other projects around Victoria have been chosen for support and profiling by the Victorian Government. Called Track-A-Project, the program is a unique means of highlighting the challenges and issues faced when businesses implement eCommerce solutions. Track-A-Project monitors project progress via regular web-cam diaries. To check the progress of YV Marketing and the other projects, register for free - just click on to www.business.vic.gov.au/trackaproject For further information on Track-A-Project and other Victorian Government initiatives for small business, telephone the Victorian Business Line on 13 22 15, or telephone Media Advisor, Kym Carter, on mobile: 0419 294 049.

For project photographs, email vinita.kant@iird.vic.gov.au