



WINNER: Field Fresh Tasmania

- **Export Award (sponsored by Monash University Gippsland)**

Field Fresh Tasmania (Field Fresh), a division of Webster Limited, is Australia's largest exporter of onions, with an average production of 50-55,000 gross tonnes. Ninety per cent of sales revenue is generated through export sales; in 2011 onions were sold to 16 countries. The company is fully integrated, from in-house seed production through to growing and marketing.

Primary markets are Northern Hemisphere countries, filling a counter seasonal window with fresh onions when local production in those markets cannot meet demand. Tasmania can grow and ship high quality, long lasting onions that will stand up to the rigours of shipment to the other side of the world.

There is a two person dedicated R&D team whose current main project is identifying onion varieties suitable for export destinations, to reduce risk and build further reliability for customers.

Field Fresh operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week for four months commencing from early January. The upside of the business model is the long lead time prior to the season to get equipment and systems in order. But once the season commences there is no opportunity to ship and deliver late. Infrastructure geared to meet those demands includes a 20,000 tonne storage capacity, dedicated machinery such as forklifts and dedicated heating and curing facilities for onion drying to guard against the weather.

While most export businesses establish a domestic base market before export markets, Field Fresh focuses on and serves its export markets first.

The company is committed to an extensive overseas travel and market visitation program, with eight market trips annually for the sales and marketing team. There is an absolute minimum one face to face visit per annum for customers and Field Fresh encourages customer visitation to the operation. To support its two key markets there are also representatives based in Europe and Japan to work with customers, shipping lines and other associated entities to reduce risk for errors.

On an annual basis, the Field Fresh board adopts a FX and hedging policy to minimise exposure to currency fluctuations and maintain profitability in challenging circumstances. When sales contracts are secured, Field Fresh immediately hedges and takes the appropriate currency. FX advisors provide daily FX updates and the company meets formally quarterly to review FX position and policy.

Field Fresh is committed to being an export-lead business in the future. Forty-four per cent of the 2012 crop has been pre-sold to Europe prior to planting. A \$1.1 million capital investment program will move the company to automatic bagging and palletising with the aim of reducing costs to be more competitive, assist in sustainability, reduce work place injuries and improve throughput.

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