

THE AUSTRALIAN OILSEEDS FEDERATION

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INTRODUCTION

The role of the Australian Oilseeds Federation (AOF) is to act as the peak oilseeds industry body, with representation from all sectors of the industry. AOF provides leadership and co-ordination for the industry. The values that underpin the AOF's activities are equal participation for all members, complete industry integration and partnerships with the commercial sector.

While the AOF was established in 1970, it really began to drive industry growth in the early 1990s with the development of its first five-year industry development plan. The industry is now implementing its second five-year plan (Strategy 2002) and has made considerable inroads into the imports of vegetable oils and soybean meal. Strategy 2002 builds on the foundations laid by the AOF's first plan and continues the focus on ensuring the industry is profitable for players in the chain.

Strategy 2002 is focused on delivering the AOF vision, which contains the following key elements:

assisting the Australian oilseed industry to be a responsible, viable, world class producer, processor and marketer of quality oilseeds and products.
focusing on satisfying domestic market requirements and growing exports
encouraging innovation and investment in research, development and extension
seeking to maximise the efficiency of each industry sector.

AOF ACHIEVEMENTS FOR THE OILSEED INDUSTRY

Over the past seven years, the successful outcomes from the implementation of AOF's strategic plans has benefited all sectors of the industry. A key goal has been to create a stronger industry production base from which domestic value-adding and export opportunities can be developed. A major focus of this has been to build grower confidence in oilseed production.

Building Grower Confidence in Oilseeds

AOF activities that have assisted to build grower confidence include:

- free distribution of Australian Oilseed News which keeps growers and the industry up to date with production outlook, International market trends and local market outlook and events
- free distribution of the AOF Growers Marketing Guide, compiled specifically to assist growers in understanding their marketing options, the sources of information available and relevant contact information

- development of crop specific plans to allow resources to be targeted at the most profitable activities
- implementation of regional specific extension programs for particular oilseeds, which provide targeted support to new and existing growers in order to maximise results from their crops.
- market focused workshops and research plans to assist growers in understanding the market opportunities for their products e.g. high oleic sunflower, edible soybeans.

Building Consumer Demand

The AOF works with the end-users through a partnership with the Australian Oilseed Products Group to promote the natural and healthy characteristics of oilseed products. The most recent initiative has been the development of an education kit for school children to introduce them to the oilseed industry and human nutrition issues. Equally important for the industry are the consumers of oilseed meals. The AOF has had a pro-active role in promoting the usage of oilseed meals (particularly canola meal) for livestock feeding with considerable success. The AOF has funded trial work to establish a source of Australian data, with the emphasis to shift to the extension of this material in the next few years.

Supporting the Industry's Export Growth

The AOF has played a key role in supporting the industry's export growth in recent years. This has centred on market access issues and has included successful lobbying to gain access for canola seed and sunseed into Mexico and to gain comparable tariff treatment for canola oil and soybean oil in Korea.

A further important activity of the AOF has been the development of the Trading Standards Manual. These Standards have recently been completely reviewed, updated and brought in line with international standards. The Manual forms a valuable resource for the industry.

Building Australia's International Profile

The AOF has been active in promoting the Australian industry on the international stage. The emergence of Australia as a serious player in the world market has been reflected in the AOF winning the rights to host major events on the world oilseeds calendar, including the International Association of Seed Crushers Congress in September 2001.

Facilitating Industry Communications

A major focus of AOF has been to improve communications between the various industry sectors. To assist this, AOF provides funding support to the Canola Associations of Australia and WA, the Australian Sunflower Association and the AOF Soybean Committee.