

PARASOL SUNSCREEN

It's not often the opportunity arises to promote an agricultural product that can help to improve produce quality and the efficiency of water use in a range of crops.

Just as Australian agriculture faces the reality of higher temperatures and the potential of reduced water availability, Shaun Heidrich has landed the plum job of introducing Australian growers to a simple answer to assist with reducing sun damage, and to help make the most of dwindling water supplies.

As Australia/New Zealand regional manager for agricultural sunscreen products for Crop Care — in conjunction with US manufacturer Purfresh — Mr Heidrich is currently providing technical support to field representatives, dealers and growers for the liquid sunscreen Parasol.

Shaun Heidrich: "The potential for use in horticulture crops across Australia is massive, and growers are already keenly interested.

"Most crops suffer some form of solar stress, and growers are also facing limited or reduced water allocations.

"The liquid sunscreen Parasol provides the opportunity to grow crops more efficiently and to market higher quality produce."

Parasol was only introduced to Australia late last summer, but has already been successfully used on apples in Victoria, as well as capsicum, mangoes and transplanted seedlings in Queensland.

"Recent trials in pineapples — which suffer badly from sunburn and heat stress — have provided growers with an answer to sun damage. They have been looking for a solution, but there were problems with removing previously-tested products from fruit. But Parasol was shown to be easily removed from the prickly pineapple surface at washoff."

The impact of sunscreen on water use in wine grapevines will soon be monitored with a sap-flow machine. This will constantly monitor water use, with and without a cover of Parasol.

Grower interest in Parasol is now very high.

"In the past, growers of a range of crops have known that sun damage was affecting their returns. But because they had no practical solution, they just accepted their losses.

"Now that they are spending so much on other inputs such as fertiliser, they need to protect their investment, and are chasing improvements in returns.

"So the interest in a simple liquid product like Parasol has been enormous — even though they may not previously have contemplated protecting their crop from the sun.

"At meetings, growers are the ones coming up with other potential uses for Parasol.

"One tree crop grower, for example, also grows lucerne, and is interested in testing Parasol on the young lucerne crop to reduce heat stress and potentially improve the efficiency of water use."

Parasol is a liquid formulation of calcium carbonate that forms a thin, reflective film on produce, leaves and bark – to reduce the impact and damage from sun exposure; it can be applied by ground spray equipment or by aerial spraying.

It is available for use in Australia to protect both the fruit and foliage of agricultural crops including apples, pears, stone fruit, citrus, tree nuts, olives, grapes, avocados, bananas, mangoes, lychees, guavas, pawpaws, pineapples, vegetables – including capsicums, tomatoes, potatoes, onions, cucurbits, and lettuce, seedlings, ornamental and nursery plants, cotton and peanuts.

Small-scale testing is recommended for all other crops before use. Contact Shaun Heidrich, Australian Region Manager – sunscreen products, 0488 424 698 for more information.



Shaun Heidrich

Broad experience in horticultural agronomy; irrigation design, sales and support; and fruit crop growing, harvesting and packing shed management in Queensland, the Northern Territory, NSW and WA has led Shaun Heidrich to the position of Australia/New Zealand regional manager for agricultural sunscreen products for Crop Care – in conjunction with US manufacturer Purfresh.

Mr Heidrich is currently providing technical support to field representatives, dealers and growers for the liquid sunscreen Parasol – a timely tool for Australian growers facing hotter weather and reduced water supplies.

Prior to his new position with Crop Care, Mr Heidrich was sales manager (northern region) for Rutec; sales agronomist & irrigation sales with Coochin Creek Fruitgrowers Co-op, Beerwah, Queensland; operations manager at Territory Grapes (Table Grape Growers Australia), Alice Springs, NT; operations manager for Table Grape Growers Australia, Menindee, NSW; irrigation sales and merchandise manager for Wesfarmers Landmark, Kununurra, WA; field foremen with Bothkamp Farms, Kununurra, WA; and field and packing shed foreman for JG Benham & Sons, Mundubbera, Queensland.