



Know your Asian veggies?

Asian vegetables can have different names in different states, vary between retailers and be spelled in all sorts of ways. This causes confusion among growers, wholesalers, retailers and consumers.

For example, a retailer in Melbourne who orders a pallet of Chinese cabbage from a supplier in Queensland could end up with something quite different to what they were expecting!

When consumers don't know if pak choy is the same as buk choy, or even if what they really want is choy sum, they are unwilling to try new products, even with a recipe in hand.

The issues have increased lately with consumer concerns over country of origin labelling – "if it is Chinese broccoli, does that mean it comes from China?".

However, these problems will be a thing of the past with agreement on a new National names system for Asian vegetables. This system is a world first that will help everyone involved in the Asian vegetable industry, from farm to fork.

The system has been developed by the NSW Department of Primary Industries (NSW DPI) as part of the project "Increasing Market Access for Asian vegetables" funded by Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC), Horticulture Australia Ltd (HAL) and AusVeg – the vegetable industry peak body.

NSW DPI has been working with representatives from major retailers and wholesalers (Coles, Woolworths, Harris Farm Markets), Sydney Markets and the Australian vegetable industry to develop a standardised National system for Asian vegetable names. Agreement has now been reached on 14 important product lines. Use of these names will be phased in Nationally from next month.

This agreement addresses an issue common to most, if not all, non-Asian countries where Asian vegetables are grown and consumed. We believe that this agreement is a world first that will help everyone in the Asian vegetable industry, from farm to fork.

The NSW Minister for Primary industries – the Hon Ian MacDonald will be officially launching the names system on November 7th at Cabramatta. Those attending the launch will have an opportunity to visit an Asian vegetable farm, meet some farmers, have a guided tour of Cabramatta by Asian food specialist, author and celebrity chef Carol Selva-Rajah and enjoy lunch in a local Vietnamese restaurant. Lunch will feature many of the vegetables seen earlier in the day.

Asian vegetables suit the modern lifestyle, being quick to cook, healthy and flavoursome. We believe that this project will ensure that many more people learn about the new tastes and textures of these vegetables – grown locally, for all Australians.

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