



Quality input equals quality output for Childers leafy greens grower

APRIL 2013

“WOULD you feed an athlete junk food or run an F1 car on standard fuel and expect them to perform – of course not. Quality input equals quality output.”

This sums up the philosophy behind the special diet served up to premium, hydroponically-grown, leafy greens for Queensland grower Brian Ellis, who operates a 6000 square metre production area near Childers.

In fact, through extensive “trial and error” over the course of time, Brian

has developed his own branded nutritional blends under the banner, Hydromix Australia, which now blends crop specific premium nutrients for all crop types and sells product all over the country and internationally. Recent export destinations have included the UK and Pakistan.

Brian, who also represents the Leafy Greens sector on the Board of Protected Cropping Australia, spent many years in the agriculture and

transport industries, but always had an interest in horticulture and was originally involved in ground growing of chillies, tomatoes and other vine crops.

However, back problems from a serious car accident put paid to that and he soon recognised that growing hydroponic produce at table height using the Nutrient Film Technique (NFT) was the ticket to better health.

Cont. over page



Queensland leafy greens grower Brian Ellis, Childers, discusses the specific Nutrient Film Technique (NFT) method he has employed for hydroponic growing with Lindsay Rural Bundaberg Branch Manager Les Loney and Haifa Australia Sales Agronomist Peter Anderson.

Your Haifa Australia team

Trevor Dennis, Managing Director
E: trevor.dennis@haifa-group.com **0400 119 852**

Shaul Gilan, Southern Agronomist
E: shaul.gilan@haifa-group.com **0419 675 503**

Peter Anderson, Qld Sales Agronomist
E: peter.anderson@haifa-group.com **0459 488 850**

Jason Teng, Customer Service/Logistics
E: jason.teng@haifa-group.com **0400 124 155**

03 9583 4691
E: info@haifa-group.com



Pioneering the Future



Brian shows the root growth of lettuce grown hydroponically using the Nutrient Film Technique (NFT).

Most of Brian's production is now comprised of premium fresh cut salads, but over the years he has grown many different crops, and he has been honing his NFT skills for some 14 years, so much so that he now consults on its application and related nutrition.

Brian's NFT involves constant circulation of a nutrient solution to maintain a film



Brian, Peter and Les in the nursery.

of water in the NFT troughs, with auto dosing of the nutrients.

Osmosis allows lettuce roots to stay damp, while remaining exposed to atmospheric oxygen. Unlike floating hydroponic lettuce production, injection of oxygen into the water is not required.

Brian said he insisted on the use of high quality fertilisers from Haifa for his nutritional formulations.

He said the Haifa products were the main fertilisers used for his own lettuce growing and for the Hydromix Australia blends.

The primary Haifa products used include the company's popular Multi-K potassium nitrate and MKP fertiliser.

"Quite simply, they have better solubility than other products and they are free of contaminants," Brian said.

"The difference between using the best fertiliser brands and cheap inferior fertiliser and mixes is less than one cent per head of lettuce or a few cents per kilo of produce, and this is more than compensated for by increased output and more saleable product.

"Using a good, balanced fertiliser also assists to eliminate problems like blocked emitters and scale build-up in tanks and irrigation lines."

He said the specialist diet had resulted in improved production and weights, less tip burn, excellent colours, and improved shelf life and taste.

"Fancy hydroponic lettuce, if cultivated properly, is at least as good and often better than Iceberg lettuce for shelf life. You should get a minimum of 10 days out of leafy salads with the correct nutrition and cool chain."



Peter, Brian and Les discuss the nutritional formulations used for the hydroponically-grown leafy greens, including the popular use of Haifa's Multi-K Greenhouse Grade potassium nitrate.