

THE HYDROPONIC FARMERS FEDERATION CONFERENCE




Presented by the Hydroponic Farmers Federation Inc.
4 - 6 May 2026
Pullman Melbourne Albert Park, VIC



THEME: Protected Crops - Doing More with less

DRAFT PROGRAM

Presenters, timings and session allocations are subject to change

MONDAY, 4 MAY 2026		
Time	Topic	Location
4.00pm – 5.30pm	Registration Desk Open	Exhibition Area, Grand Ballroom Lobby
4.00pm – 7.00pm	Trade Exhibition Open	Exhibition Area, Grand Ballroom Lobby
4.30pm – 5.00pm	Guest Speaker <i>TBC</i>	Exhibition Area, Grand Ballroom Lobby
5.00pm – 7.00pm	<p>WELCOME FUNCTION Canapes and drinks provided</p> <p>Sponsored by:</p>  <p>VAN DER HOEVEN Horticultural projects</p> <p><i>Sponsor Address by Merijn Kuiper, Regional Manager, Van der Hoeven Australia</i></p>	Exhibition Area, Grand Ballroom Lobby

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TUESDAY, 5 MAY 2026		
Time	Topic	Location
8.00am – 5.00pm	Registration Desk Open	Exhibition Area, Grand Ballroom Lobby
8.00am – 5.00pm	Trade Exhibition Open	Exhibition Area, Grand Ballroom Lobby
8.30am – 8.50am	Official Opening and Welcome	Grand Ballroom 1 / 2
8.50am – 9.20am	SESSION 1 <i>Regional Development, Aus Veg. Strategy for Future Incursions</i> Daniel Bosveld Regional Development Officer, AUSVEG VIC	Grand Ballroom 1 / 2
9.20am – 9.50am	SESSION 2 <i>Advancing IPM in Protected Cropping: Early Insights from the Trap Eye™ trial and Key Industry Updates</i> Dr Stephanus Malherbe IPM Product Specialist, Biological Services	Grand Ballroom 1 / 2
9.50am – 10.20am	SESSION 3 <i>Seeding, Scaling & Sustaining Talent in Controlled Environment Ag</i> Kelli McDougall Managing Director, Agri Talent and Global People Solutions	Grand Ballroom 1 / 2
10.20am – 11.00am	MORNING TEA	Exhibition Area, Grand Ballroom Lobby

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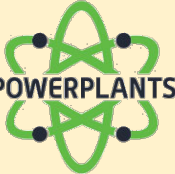
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11.00am – 11.30am	<p>SESSION 4 <i>Innovation From EU. Does it work in Australia? Investing in High Tech</i></p> <p>Timo Kleijwegt Sales & Product Manager, Certhon</p> <p>Alastair Delooze Oceania Regional BDM, DENSO Automotive Systems Australia</p>	Grand Ballroom 1 / 2
11.30am – 12.00pm	<p>SESSION 5 <i>How to maximise access to Government incentives</i></p> <p>Jonathan Zimet Senior Director, Alvarez & Marsal Australia</p>	Grand Ballroom 1 / 2
12:00pm – 12.10pm	Sponsor Address by Alastair McLean , Commercial Director, Powerplants	Grand Ballroom 1 / 2
12.10pm – 1.30pm	<p>LUNCH</p> <p>Sponsored by:</p> 	Exhibition Area, Grand Ballroom Lobby
1.30pm - 2.00pm	<p>SESSION 6 <i>Building a High-Performance Workforce Under the PALM Scheme</i></p> <p>Nicky Mann Manager, Family Fresh Farms</p>	Grand Ballroom 1 / 2

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2.00pm – 2.30pm	SESSION 7 <i>Sundrop Grower Story</i> Steve Marafiote Chief Executive Officer, Sundrop Farms (TBC)	Grand Ballroom 1 / 2
2.30pm – 3.00pm	SESSION 8 <i>Beyond the Scissor Lift: Automating the Future of Pollination</i> James Currie Co-founder, FTEK	Grand Ballroom 1 / 2
3.00pm – 3.30pm	AFTERNOON TEA	Exhibition Area, Grand Ballroom Lobby
3.30pm – 5.00pm	SESSION 9 <i>Aspects of Protecting Your Crops Grower Panel</i> Hosted by Chris Millis Chief Operating Officer, Flavorite Group Panellists: Rick Butler , Owner, Butler Market Gardens	Grand Ballroom 1 / 2

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6.30pm – 7.00pm	Conference Dinner Pre Dinner Drinks	Grand Ballroom Lobby
7.00pm – 10.00pm	<p>CONFERENCE DINNER <i>To be entertained by special guest Brian Nankervis from Rockwiz</i></p> <p>Sponsored by:</p>  <p><i>Sponsor Address by Julian Horsley, Systems Division A & D Australasia Pty Ltd</i></p>	Grand Ballroom 1 / 2
From 10.00pm	<p>AFTER PARTY CELEBRATIONS... <i>"Hoe Down Throw Down"</i></p> <p>Sponsored by:</p>  <p><i>Sponsor Address by Enza Zaden Australia Pty Ltd</i></p>	Grand Ballroom Lobby

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WEDNESDAY, 6 MAY 2026		
Time	Topic	Location
7.30am – 2.00pm	Registration Desk Open	Exhibition Area, Grand Ballroom Lobby
7.45am – 8.45am	<p>BREAKFAST (sit down service)</p> <p>Guest Speaker: Michael Simonetta Director, Perfection Fresh Australia</p> <p>Sponsored by:</p> 	Grand Ballroom 1 / 2
8.45am – 2.00pm	Trade Exhibition Open	Exhibition Area, Grand Ballroom Lobby
9.00am – 10.00am	<p>SESSION 10 <i>Integration of AI in Areas of Protected Crops</i></p> <p><i>What's in it for us? – Plant research and how it can impact your business.</i> Ricarda Jost, Senior Scientific Advisor, La Trobe University</p> <p><i>Experiences with AI Applications</i> Ben Hoodless</p> <p><i>From Automation to Intelligence: The Future of Glasshouse Climate Management</i> Tony Bundock, Director, Genesis Horticultural Solutions Marcus Van Heijst, Account Manager, Priva Oceania</p> <p>Followed by Q&A</p>	Grand Ballroom 1 / 2

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10.00am – 10.30am	<p>SESSION 11</p> <p><i>Growing more with less. Creating an 'active' growing climate at higher efficiency, and how to monitor it</i></p> <p>Ton Harbraken <i>Greenhouse Climate Expert, Ludvig Svensson BV</i></p>	Grand Ballroom 1 / 2
10.30am – 11.10am	MORNING TEA	Exhibition Area, Grand Ballroom Lobby
11.10am – 11.40am	<p>SESSION 12</p> <p><i>Calcium Absorption Under Stress Conditions: Mechanisms, Limitations and Practical Solutions</i></p> <p>Zenon (Zen) Kynigos Crop Science Technologist, Prodoz International Pty Ltd</p>	Grand Ballroom 1 / 2
11.40am – 12.40pm	<p>SESSION 13</p> <p><i>Seed Industry Innovation Panel</i></p> <p>Panellists: Steffen Kraushaar, Business Development Manager, Bayer James Bertram, Account Manager, Rijk Zwaan Australia Keimpe Veenstra, Regional Sales Director, Enza Zaden Bill Brown, Mainfreight</p> <p>Moderator: Graeme Smith, Graeme Smith Consulting</p> <p>Session sponsored by:</p> 	Grand Ballroom 1 / 2

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12.40pm – 12.50pm	SESSION 14 <i>Crop Pollination, Quality and Efficiencies</i> Session sponsored by BeeSTAR	
12.50pm – 1.40pm	LUNCH <i>including Award Judging for best trade booth</i>	Exhibition Area, Grand Ballroom Lobby
1.40pm – 2.00pm	Conference Wrap-Up Platinum Sponsor address by Rijk Zwaan Award Announcements Special thanks to the trade, speakers, delegates and organisers	Exhibition Area, Grand Ballroom Lobby