



Photo: Lee West

## International collaboration to tackle food security

**It is not news that one of the 21st Century's biggest challenges is food security.**

By 2050, the world needs to produce at least 50% more food to feed over nine billion people.

Businesses like Peracto and Staphyt, along with American-based agricultural research provider RD4AG (Research Designed for Agriculture) are acutely aware of the task at hand.

"The predictions for global population growth and the need to sustainably produce more food present significant challenges for agriculture and the supporting industries," RD4AG co-owner/managing director Lee West said.

"Businesses like RD4AG and Peracto are being called on to make major contributions to solving these intractable problems and I believe we are up to the task.

"The technologies for what we do are expanding at a phenomenal rate and we are striving to incorporate as many useful tools as possible into our repertoire."

Lee and her husband Steve founded RD4AG in 1982, and for the past 10 years they have formed an invaluable relationship with Peracto.

The cross-continent networking has allowed the organisations to share insights, know-how and ideas, which in turn, benefit their own local agricultural industries and provide a foundation to help tackle industry challenges.

"The connection with Peracto began in 2006 through Ian Macleod and our common membership of the National Alliance of Independent Crop Consultants (NAICC)," Steve said.

"In July this year we spent an entire week meeting nearly all of the fabulous people who work at Peracto, and gained a huge amount of knowledge as well as valued comradery.

"It is through these relationships that we gain the knowledge, insights and courage to continue to forge onward to grow the industry and our respective businesses."

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## Editorial...

**Ian Macleod**  
 Managing Director

It's been a big year for Peracto, perhaps the biggest to date.

The merger with Staphyt earlier this year has further bolstered Peracto's international presence by joining one of Europe's fastest-growing agrosience businesses.

Recently, I travelled with Peracto's Technical Manager Phil Frost to Staphyt's headquarters in France to meet staff, tour operations, learn more about the company's European clients and discuss future business opportunities.

We travelled to Staphyt's offices in both the north and south of France, as well as meeting Staphyt managers outside the country too.

We also spent time with Staphyt owners Jacques and Catherine Boisieux and Managing Director Olivier Marchioro, who have had a long association with Peracto.

While there were many highlights to the trip, one of the most exciting

aspects were discussions around career development and opportunities for staff.

Staphyt is keen to implement their own graduate development program, modelling off the program Peracto has successfully hosted for a number of years now.

There is also a genuine desire from both Peracto and Staphyt to further support international staff exchanges.

While we have hosted exchange programs with Staphyt in the past, we aim to grow these opportunities in the future.

In the coming months, Peracto's Melbourne and Bundaberg offices will host two Staphyt technical officers, while Peracto is also helping to support staff from Australia to travel to France.

The merger has not only helped our clients, through broadening our resources, research and products, but staff too who can now broaden their own expertise and know-how on an international scale. 



*Phil Frost with Staphyt Marsillargues staff.*



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# International collaboration to tackle food security

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RD4AG started as a crop consulting business in the early 1980s in the mountain regions of Colorado country in the US.

Steve, an agronomist, came from a long line of farmers (his ancestors were farming citrus in Southern California in the 1880s), while Lee, an entomologist, led with an enterprising spirit.

Together, the first decade of RD4AG saw expansion of services to include contract research.

Operations were also extended with the company's footprint reaching to the Southwest, covering Arizona and California and more recently into the Northern high plains and a new facility opening in Montana.

"While we have built the company on a solid base of GLP regulatory field trials, we have always stayed even stronger in efficacy work," Steve said.

"Our Arizona location has immense crop and pest diversity which allows us to use our deep knowledge as a unique offering to help customers understand how to design research trials to best take advantage of current practices and best marketing strategies."

A major turning point for the company was in 1989 when the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) called on all pesticide manufacturers to re-test the safety of its products under current technology.

At the same time the Good Laboratory Practice Standards (GLP) were expanded to apply to the research.

"This single event in 1989 was responsible for launching the contract research organisation industry into full existence," Lee said.

"RD4AG's growth averaged 50% per year for the following decade. We performed hundreds of GLP studies both in the United States as well as across Central and South America, along with a full complement of efficacy work.

"This continued until the late 1990s, when most of the re-registration work was done and the consolidation of the agrichemical industry reduced R&D funding substantially."



This was a turning point for the company, who looked towards the future of agricultural inputs.

"What we saw was an increasing trend to find solutions through seed technologies, and while the agrichemicals industry continues to be a major source of research trials, we saw the opportunity to expand in this new direction as well," Lee said.

"We divided our business into two units, Crop Protection and Agronomic.

"The crop protection team works on trials for which the subject of measure is pest control, or other direct effects of applying a pesticide, while the agronomic team is more focused on trials evaluating parameters of crop health (bio stimulants, fertility or varieties) or providing trials for genetic trait testing.

"This allows our technical staff to specialise allowing the company to build greater competencies in these two areas.

"Additionally, our expansion into Montana, on the Northern high plains, has given us contra-seasonal capabilities, which is particularly useful for the seed business."

In over three decades, RD4AG has aimed to stay one step ahead and through networking with businesses like Peracto and Staphyt the benefits abound, especially for the agricultural industry.

"We are always looking forward and seeking ways to be better," Lee said.

"Our recent trip to Australia and wonderful experiences with Peracto and Staphyt have opened even more doors.

"We look forward to further collaboration and the exciting possibilities that can bring." 





# Peracto's biennial conference draws international guests

## Peracto's focus on innovation and opportunities in international markets were among the highlights at this year's staff conference.

Staff from across the company's Australian and New Zealand offices joined local and international guests for the four-day event held in Hobart, Tasmania earlier this year.

The biennial conference provides an overview and update on Peracto activities including GLP training and regional technical updates from various Peracto offices, a graduate presentation dinner and sessions on chemical resistance and report writing.

Special guests this year included Staphyt Managing Director Olivier Marchioro and Steve and Lee West, who own and operate American-based contract research organisation, RD4AG.

Each of the special guests gave presentations, with Olivier providing insight into Staphyt operations in Europe and the Wests discussing contract research projects in the Americas.

While new recruits to the company were welcomed with a special graduate dinner, long-term supporters of Peracto including company co-founder and former Chairman Buz Green and former board member Peter Valentine were honoured as part of an awards dinner.

New to Peracto this year, Research Officer Mitch Redpath said his first staff conference left him with a lasting impression.

"I went into the week not really knowing what to expect, but I absolutely loved my time at my first Peracto conference," he said.

"The opportunity to meet staff members from all across Australia and New Zealand was brilliant.

"We work with a wonderful group of people who get along and work well together.

"I am already looking forward to 2017."

Mitch said there were many highlights to the conference which he found informative and extremely helpful in getting to know the business including a session on an app which was developed by one of the New Zealand team members and designed to streamline data captured in the field.

"One of the sessions focussed on international perspectives, where we heard about commercial and research markets in the Americas, Japan, Europe and New Zealand," he said.

"It's fair to say this was a session enjoyed by all with opportunities to ask questions in a panel session.

"One of the other activities which was great was exploring the innovation topics.

"Staff were split into six teams, with each team given one of Peracto's core values (timeliness, brand, financial, client partnerships, quality and our people) to brainstorm and develop innovative ideas around that value.

"The response to this exercise was extremely positive as teams came up with some brilliant innovations.

"I'm sure many of these ideas will be pursued."

The staff conference was not just all about business with time devoted to networking and team building, a cruise down the Derwent River, and a scavenger hunt called the *quête de la connaissance*.

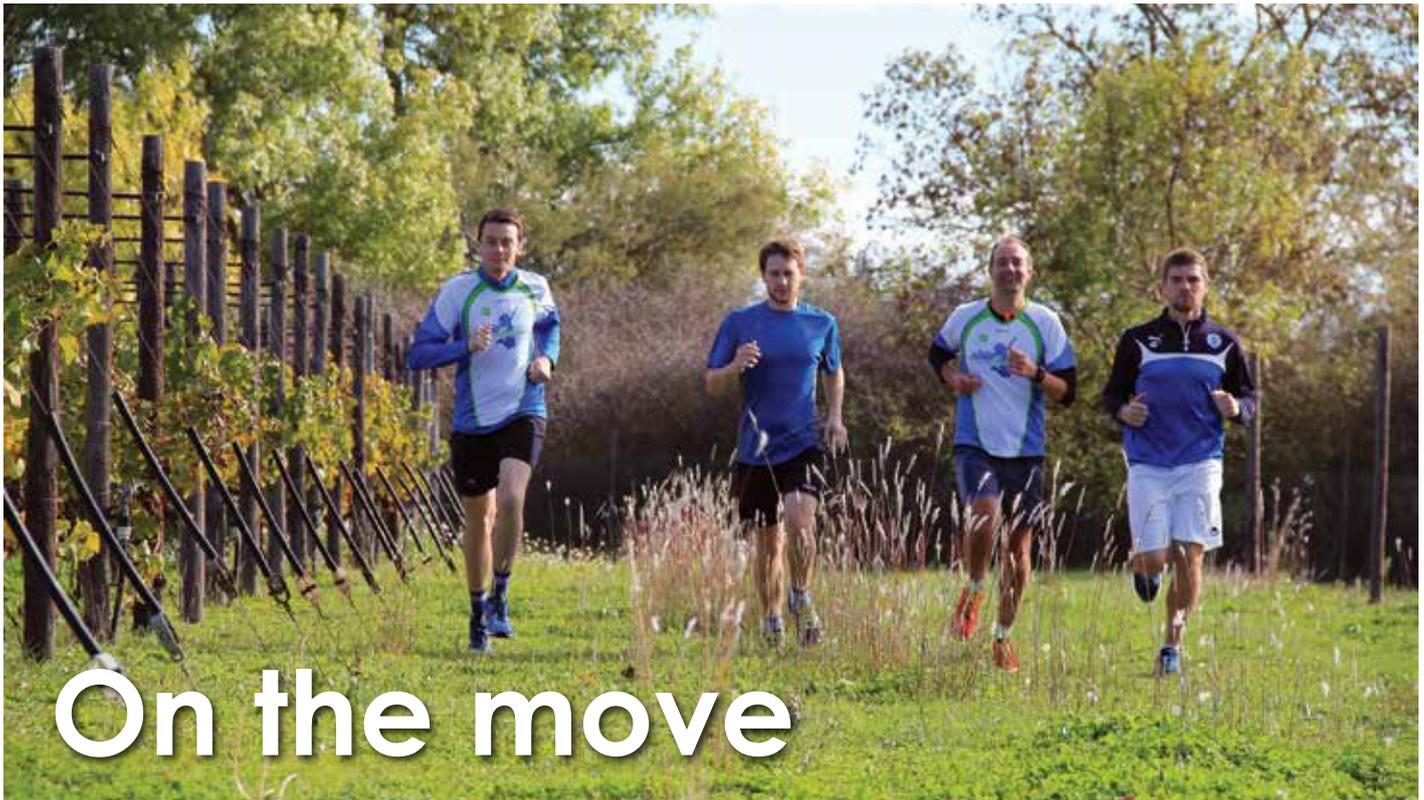
"It was a huge hit all around, with massive kudos going to Elizabeth Jolly for organising the activity," Mitch said. 



Steve West



Melbourne team receives annual award for excellence



**This year's merger between Staphyt and Peracto has created a global structure which has provided professional and personal fulfillment for Staphyt Managing Director Olivier Marchioro.**

### **What led you to pursue a career in the industry?**

I grew up in a family of farmers and I have always wanted to work in this field. I pursued studies with this objective and after my first professional experience in crop protection experimentation my choice of career was clear.

### **How has your career progressed to date?**

In 2002, I started my career as a field agronomist in a small company (VITI RD) based in southern France. The company was purchased by Staphyt in 2004 and in the same year I was given the responsibility of this experimental station and the Staphyt food processing laboratory. Thanks to the various positions I have held in the company, I have a good knowledge of the different jobs and a better understanding of my colleagues, customers and the

evolving market. In 2007, Jacques Boisleux asked me to be part of the Executive Committee and then in 2009 he proposed I become the deputy CEO of Staphyt and to take over the general management of the company. Staphyt is a very dynamic company thanks to its internal and external growth and the expansion of its range of services. Each year, the scope of responsibility is changing and that is why my job is exciting. In 2004, Staphyt had 40 employees in France. In 2009, after the first acquisition outside of France, we grew to 130 employees in three European countries. Today, in 2016, we have about 430 employees, based in 14 countries across two continents.

### **What have been some highlights to your career?**

The two most important things I have experienced in my career are linked to international development. Firstly, my participation in making Staphyt a European company, expanding into Germany and followed by Poland, England and Spain among others. Secondly, the big step towards Australia and New Zealand which means the transformation of a European company into a global one thanks to the merger with Peracto. In addition to meeting our goals, this development is truly

exciting. Having the opportunity to meet new people from different places and cultures, share and learn their ways of working and their way of life are all an important part of my professional fulfillment. I was given the opportunity to lead Staphyt by Jacques Boisleux (chairman and shareholder) who believed in what I could do. At the same time, I am proud to work with a team of passionate people who are strongly invested in the development and excellence of our work, in a simple, direct and friendly manner. In Southern France, where the office is located in Marsillargues, colleagues and I meet at lunch time once or twice a week for an hour of running. We really like running together, enjoying the countryside while striving to better our run times. As part of my hobbies, I enjoy pursuing sport activities in the country or the forest, including mountain hiking or skiing during winter. However, the two sports I enjoy on a more regular basis are trail-biking and running.

### **What attracted you to work with a company like Peracto?**

The purchase of Peracto was initiated by Jacques and Catherine Boisleux.

Both Staphyt and Peracto have maintained a strong relationship for a



very long time, and have participated in collaborations across the southern and northern hemispheres. When Buz Green (former co-founder and chairman of Peracto) contacted us to express his desire to sell Peracto, a merger seemed natural. Both companies share in many common values including excellence and commitment to work and staff. It was perfect timing for Staphyt as we were building our new strategy with international growth as a top priority. Staphyt is a European company, Peracto is an Australian one. Now, we are a global structure offering many advantages which help to meet our clients' needs.

### What are you looking forward to with the new merger with Peracto?

For Staphyt and Peracto, this merger is the first step in global growth. Together we are able to grow and develop further, to pool our strengths and our networks to help build an international structure. A structure which aims to invest in order to meet the market with a stable solid foundation. Collaborating with one another provides us with an edge in the international contract research organisation market. It also allows for professional development and networking opportunities for staff across continents. 🌱



# Peracto joins in national fight against new pest

Peracto is among a group of key players in the national fight against a new pest in Australian cereal crops.

The Russian wheat aphid (*Diuraphis noxia*) was first detected in May this year and has the potential to cause significant damage to all cereal crops including wheat, barley and oats.

The exotic pest is 2mm in length with a double tail and is pale yellowish green with a fine waxy coating. It injects a toxin into susceptible crops which can severely retard growth, or under heavy infestations, kill the plant.

The pest has currently been identified in South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales with affected plants showing whitish, yellow and red leaf markings and rolling leaves.

Governments and industry have moved swiftly to respond to the pest's arrival including the Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) which has undertaken a broad range of research, development and extension activities to help inform future management of the pest.

As part of activities, Peracto is carrying out 19 GRDC-funded trials across a range of environments in Victoria and South Australia.

"Initial work has been both timely and critical in guiding the short-term management where aphids have been present in high numbers during winter," GRDC Southern Manager Grower Services Craig Ruchs said.

"The GRDC has recently initiated a broader research program to gain greater insight into the control of Russian wheat aphid using a range of commercially available insecticides."

Peracto's trials include:

- Provide a direct comparison of the relative effectiveness of commonly available insecticides including organophosphate, synthetic pyrethroid, carbamate and sulfoximine chemistry (Group 1A, 1B, 3A and 4C modes of action);
- Evaluate insecticide dose response;
- Better understand the interaction of temperature on pirimicarb and chlorpyrifos activity, including dose response;
- Provide guidance on the impact of spray volume and spray quality on the efficacy of chlorpyrifos and pirimicarb;
- Investigate the effect of spray adjuvant on insecticide efficacy and crop safety;
- Determine the yield response to Russian wheat aphid control using insecticides and provide data to inform future economic thresholds for control.

The trials may also be extended to New South Wales depending on local response to the pest.

Results from the Peracto trials, along with GRDC-funded projects and other industry partnerships and activities, will help inform a number of targeted management strategies for the Russian wheat aphid. 

