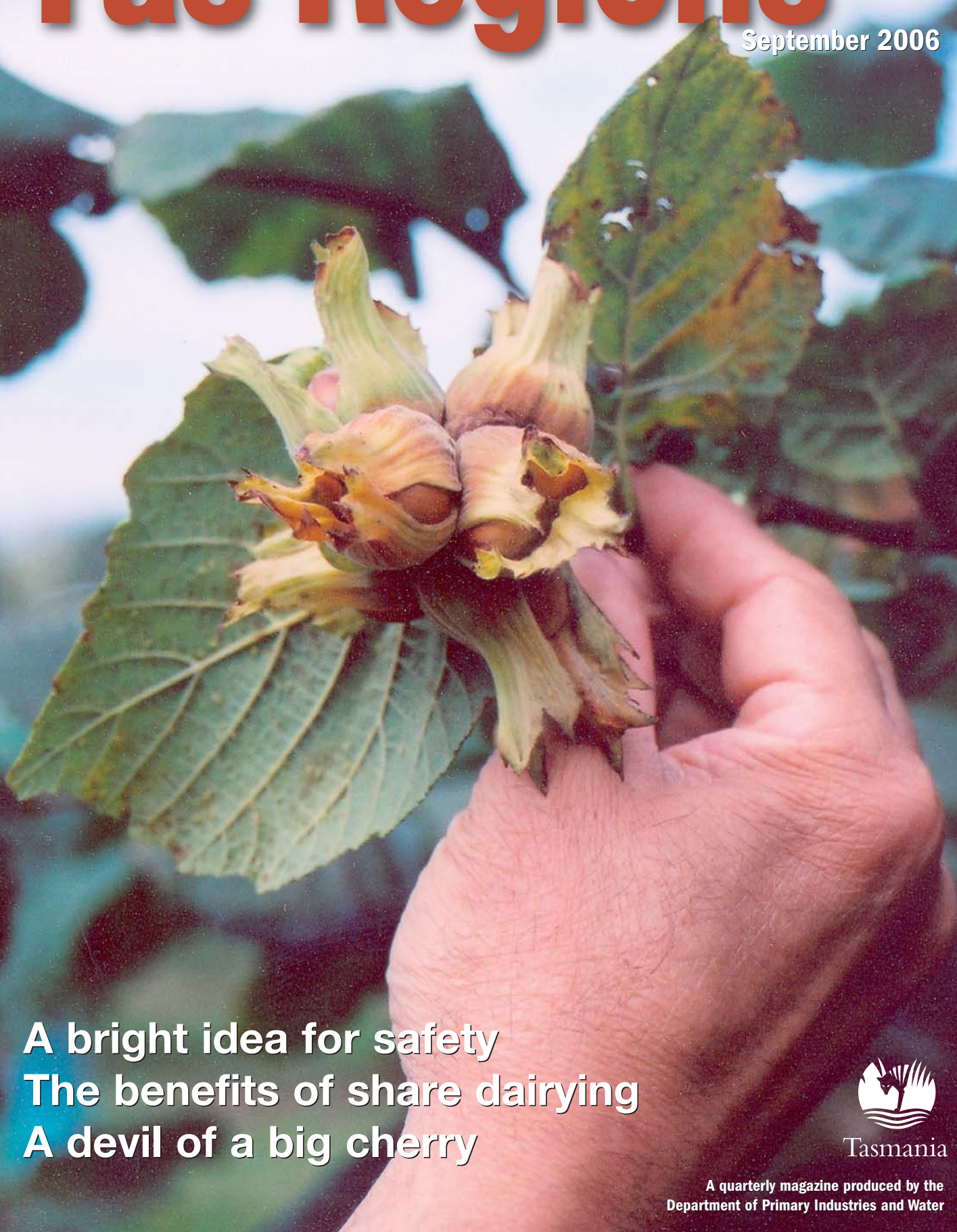


Tas Regions

September 2006



A bright idea for safety
The benefits of share dairying
A devil of a big cherry



Tasmania

A quarterly magazine produced by the
Department of Primary Industries and Water



Tasmania

DEPARTMENT of
PRIMARY INDUSTRIES
and WATER

Volume 12 Issue 3

ISSN 1444-6065

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A Turtle Press publication

Front cover photo: A cluster of hazelnuts
on the tree at Nutpatch Nougat

Photographer: Janette Brennan.

Last issues photo was incorrectly identified,
It was Emu Valley Rhododendron Garden.**NEWS AND FEATURES**

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Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research

The Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research (TIAR) is a joint venture between the Tasmanian Government and the University of Tasmania. It brings together the research and development (R&D) of the two major agricultural R&D providers in the State, the DPIW and the School of Agricultural Science, into an institute within the University of Tasmania.



Partnerships for catchment science



Farmers, scientists and extension workers meet to discuss water quality research in the Montagu catchment in March this year.

(Photo Catherine Phelps, Dairy Australia).

The Centre for Environment at the University of Tasmania was established in August 2005 to promote greater collaboration between the University's environmental researchers, government, industry and the community.

One of its first activities has been to put together a catchment research partnership between UTAS researchers and DPIW, Forestry Tasmania, CSIRO, industry groups and Tasmania's three NRM regions.

Managing the allocation and quality of water coming out of Tasmania's catchments is an environmental issue that grows in significance every year.

With a drying climate, increased interest in irrigated agriculture and plantations and the demand of inland towns and growing coastal communities, we are facing increasingly complex decisions.

Over the last few decades it has become increasingly apparent that environmental problems require approaches that bring together experience from many different disciplines.

Managing water quality is a good example. It requires expertise in soil science, agronomy and silviculture to understand the sources, timing and pathways by which nutrients,

pesticides and other constituents such as bacteria enter waterways.

It also requires expertise in ecology to understand the water needs of native ecosystems.

It relies on an understanding of estuarine ecology to determine the tolerance of coastal waters to nutrient loads in rivers.

It needs an appreciation of resource economics to understand the market forces that drive land use practice, and an understanding of environmental law and planning to understand water rights and the planning regulations that apply at different levels of government.

It is also important to understand the water use behaviour of consumers and the likely response to incentives and regulation from the perspectives of sociology and community psychology.

Expertise in climatology and oceanography is also necessary if we are to plan for the medium to long term effects of sea surface temperatures and ocean currents on rainfall patterns.

TIAR research in the Montagu catchment funded by Dairy Australia and the National Landcare Program is focusing on some of these questions. Work led by TIAR researchers Drs Greg Holz and Lucy Burkitt in the

Montagu catchment is measuring the amount of nutrients contributed by dairy production, when and where those nutrients enter the water way, and testing alternative management options for farmers.

While there is a good understanding about individual bits of the picture for many catchments around the country, there has not been much success in putting the whole lot together to develop management strategies that are feasible and likely to be taken up.

The Centre for Environment's first project aims to combine the findings of research like that in the Montagu relevant to agriculture, forestry and nature conservation with local knowledge using decision networks.

A decision network is a technique that maps out possible interactions between different types of change such as changes in land use, climate, markets or planning laws.

It deals with the uncertainty of current knowledge by assigning probabilities to different results. These probabilities are propagated through the many possible combinations in a network to produce a statement of the likelihood and impact of different combinations of events.

This approach will be tested as a management tool in several case study catchments to be selected in Tasmania and Victoria. The approach features several characteristics of what has become known as sustainability science.

Namely that it is inter disciplinary, involves participation of those affected, and acknowledges the considerable uncertainties in our understanding of the interactions between humans and their environments which demands a different approach to problem solving than the rational certainty typically associated with much scientific research.

The establishment of the Centre for Environment reflects another characteristic of sustainability science, the greater flexibility of our institutions required to respond to environmental problems.

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