

A comprehensive study of the commercial insectary industry in Australia

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The purpose of this study was to investigate the status of Australia's commercial insectary industry. The target population consisted of nine insectary company owners (including a previous company owner and a very small scale owner who does not mass rear). Semi-structured face -to- face and telephone interviews were conducted in 2011. There are only seven commercial insectaries in Australia that produce 29 species of biological control agents. Four other species of biological control agents are available but not on a commercial scale. Set-up cost is a major barrier to establish a new insectary. After 2000 only one new insectary has been established. Australian insectaries supply agents mainly to the horticulture industry. Most of the insectary companies produce only one or three biological control agents and are focused mainly on one crop. One biological control agent, the predatory mite *Phytoseiulus persimilis*, is the leading biological control agent in the Australian market. Producers do not record how many hectares of crop area receive mass produced biological control agents in Australia. Approximately 4500 farmers and other consumers use biological control agents and this translates to about \$3-5 million dollars gross in sales per year. All producers reported that insecticide resistance is the main reason that growers switch from a conventional chemical-focused to an integrated pest management strategy. Producers recommended increasing public awareness of IPM. They also support introducing new government legislation to reduce the use of chemical pesticides and believe this will help the commercial insectary industry to expand in Australia.

