



GROWING TOGETHER 2035

Aotearoa Horticulture
Action Plan

SECTOR PROGRESS UPDATE

July 2026

ACRONYMS

ACVM – Agricultural Compounds and Veterinary Medicines

AHAP – Aotearoa Horticulture Action Plan

APVMA – Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority

BSI – Bioeconomy Science Institute

EPA – Environmental Protection Authority

FTA – Free Trade Agreement

HSNO – Hazardous Substances and New Organisms

IFPA – International Fresh Produce Association

MBIE – Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment

MFAT – Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade

MfE – Ministry for the Environment

MoE – Ministry of Education

MPI – Ministry for Primary Industries

MSD – Ministry of Social Development

NOL – National Occupation List

NPPO – National Plant Protection Organisation

NPS-FM – National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management

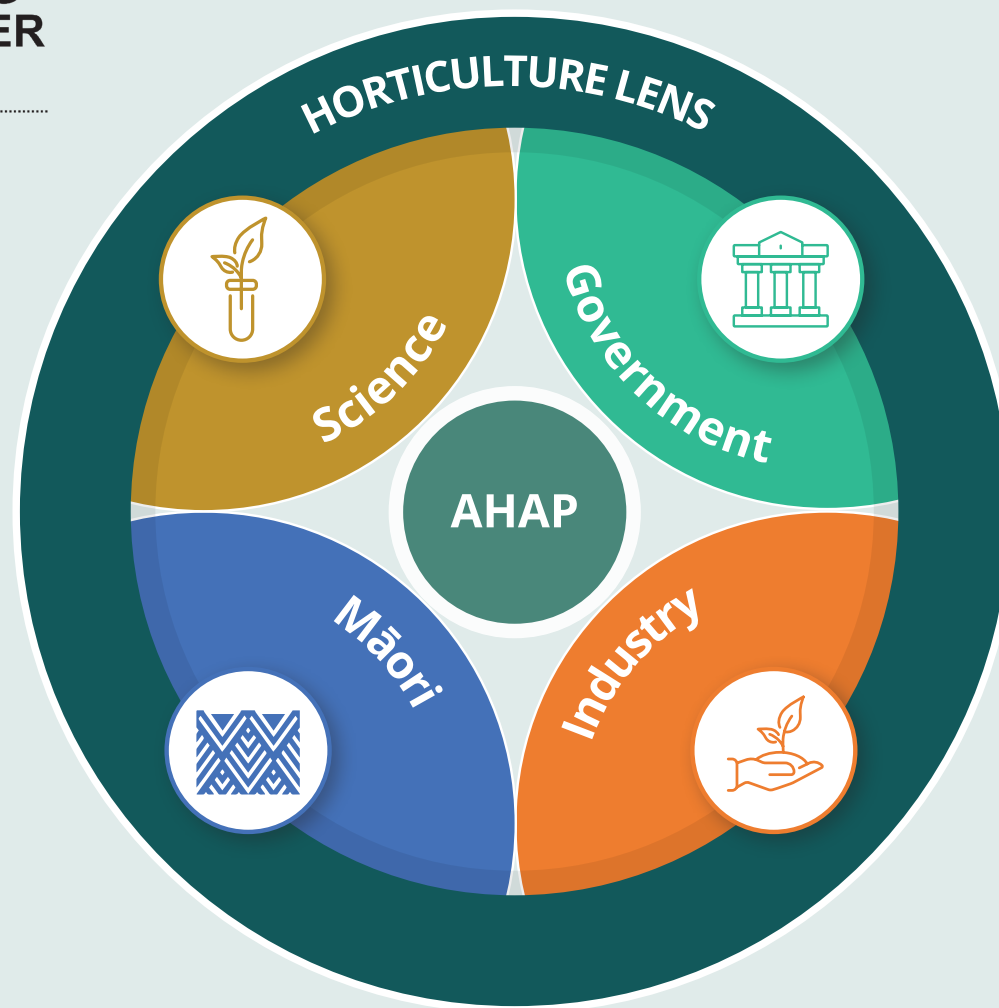
NZAPI – New Zealand Apples and Pears Inc

NZGAP – New Zealand Good Agricultural Practice

RSE – Recognised Seasonal Employer

GROWING TOGETHER 2035

Aotearoa Horticulture Action Plan



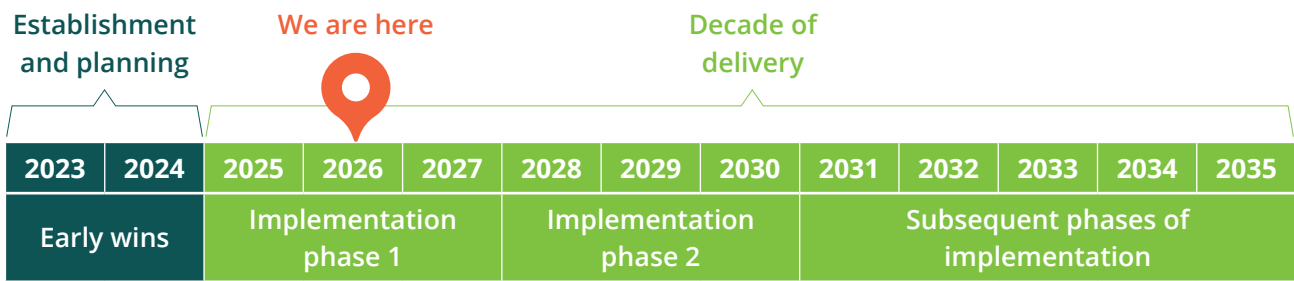
Launched in 2023, the Growing Together 2035 Aotearoa Horticulture Action Plan (AHAP) provides a guiding compass to achieve the ambitious goal of **doubling the farmgate value of horticultural production by 2035**. This initiative supports growers, aspires to improve the prosperity of our communities, and commits to safeguarding our environment for future generations.

What sets the AHAP apart is its collaborative foundation. It was developed collectively and is being delivered collectively by stakeholders across the horticulture sector.

MOMENTUM AND DELIVERY

The Phase One Implementation Roadmap, published last year, outlines priority actions for 2025 to 2027. It focuses on establishing critical foundations for New Zealand horticulture - those required to sustain existing productivity, volume and value over time. These foundations are the launchpad for future growth.

With delivery of the roadmap now well and truly underway, we’re seeing significant momentum build across the AHAP partnership. Together, we are creating a self-perpetuating ‘horticulture movement’.



At the roadmap’s launch in August 2025, we posed a challenge to all quad partners:

What contributions can you and your organisation make to promote sustainable sector growth?

While core AHAP functions are executed through the support of a small, dedicated project team from the quad partnership, this progress update highlights the remarkable efforts made by commercial entities, industry organisations, government departments, Māori in horticulture, and scientific institutions in advancing these priority actions over the past year. This report illustrates the incredible potential of aligning our investments and efforts to collectively propel the sector forward.

We encourage all stakeholders to actively engage with AHAP initiatives and stand up your own AHAP-aligned initiatives to continue the wave of momentum we have built – we are growing together.

A NOTE FROM THE CHAIR

The past year marks an important transition for the Aotearoa Horticulture Action Plan (AHAP) — from laying the foundations to building genuine momentum in delivery.

Our goal remains simple but ambitious: to lift the profitability and resilience of New Zealand growers by doubling the farmgate value of horticulture by 2035. What makes AHAP different is that it is owned by the sector and delivered collectively across growers, industry, Māori, science and government.

Twelve months into delivery of the Phase One Roadmap (2025–2027), we are seeing real traction. Across the country, more organisations are aligning their work with AHAP priorities. This is starting to create scale, moving us from a collection of good ideas to a coordinated programme of action across the sector.

For growers, this matters. It means more aligned investment, better use of limited resources, and a clearer pathway from issue » initiative » outcome.

We are seeing real progress on the ground and this year's achievements have been broad and practical:

- Water and infrastructure — work is underway to improve water availability, storage and planning, recognising this is fundamental to securing and expanding high-value horticulture.

- Regulation and tools — changes are being progressed to speed up access to crop protection products and reduce duplication in compliance, easing pressure on growers.
- Market access and value — continued focus on removing non-tariff barriers and supporting emerging crops is helping lift returns at the farmgate.
- People and labour — work on RSE scheme settings, workforce planning and leadership development is strengthening the reliability of labour supply.
- Māori horticulture — increasing investment and visibility is unlocking new land, capability and growth opportunities.

Individually, these are incremental. Collectively, they start to shift the dial.

The biggest constraint we face is not ideas — it is capital. Many AHAP initiatives are still early-stage. They require upfront investment in feasibility, planning and coordination before they become “shovel-ready”. However, most funding — both public and private — is weighted toward fully developed projects. Bridging this gap is critical if we are to move from momentum to scale.

Growers continue to operate in a tough environment with weather events, cost pressures, labour constraints and uncertainty in markets. Despite this, engagement with AHAP remains strong. That reflects a shared recognition that many of the sector's challenges require a coordinated, system-wide response — not fragmented effort. There is also a clear line of sight between AHAP and the Government's focus on export growth and regional development. This alignment gives us a real opportunity — but it will require continued engagement and a strong pipeline of credible, investment-ready projects.

The next phase is about scaling what works:

- prioritising high-impact opportunities
- strengthening collaboration across the sector
- aligning funding with sector priorities
- and moving more initiatives into delivery.

This is where AHAP will be judged — not on activity, but on outcomes for growers.

AHAP only works if the sector continues to back it. Growers, industry groups and partners all have a role to play by aligning effort, sharing ideas, and supporting initiatives that deliver real value on the ground. The foundations are now in place. The focus from here is delivery at scale.

Thank you for your continued support. I would also like to acknowledge the leadership of our Programme Manager, Anna Rathé, and the dedication of her team in delivering this year's achievements.



Andrew Gibbs
*Chair, Aotearoa Horticulture
Action Plan (AHAP)*

A guide to this progress update:

The following tables outline delivery under each of the AHAP's five pillars.

While the update captures progress over the past year, it should not be considered exhaustive. There is much happening in the sector and not all of it will be covered here.

As this progress update is partway through a three-year period, many actions remain ongoing, and some are yet to begin. This was expected.

For more information about a specific initiative please contact the organisation(s) leading it.





Grow Sustainably

Implementation Roadmap Phase 1 (2025-2027) Actions	Work under way	How does this help to double the farmgate value of horticulture?
Implement the recommendations in the 2021 and 2022 water availability and security technical papers (commissioned in by MPI and the Water Availability and Security Advisory Group), as appropriate. Lead entity: MPI	MPI is funding Te Uru Kahika to collaborate with regional councils and Earth Sciences New Zealand to integrate historical climate data with weather forecasts. This work will improve the assessment of dry conditions affecting the land-based primary sector and provide farmers and growers with accessible information to support farm-specific assessment of water availability and security.	Improving water availability, security and storage supports reliable production, reduces the impact of drought, and enables expansion into high value horticultural crops that depend on consistent water supply. (Key Priority Area 1.2)
Ensure regulatory settings enable water storage. Lead entities: MfE, MPI	In 2025, MPI and MfE consulted on proposals to amend freshwater national direction, including the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management (NPS-FM). The scope of freshwater policy proposals included new objectives, policies, and rules to enable on-farm water storage.	
Ensure Crown funding criteria allows for water storage applications. Lead entities: MBIE, MPI	MPI, MBIE, and Te Puni Kōkiri are working together to support the development of water storage projects in regions identified as suitable for higher value land uses such as horticulture. MPI's Primary Sector Growth Fund is now accepting proposals for feasibility projects for construction of large or community-scale water storage and reticulation to recognise the importance of reliable and consistent access to water for farmers and growers.	
Progress regional water storage projects that already have compelling evidence. Lead entities: Water user groups, Regional Councils	As a part of the ongoing regional water security strategy initiative, MPI has committed resources to update the online New Zealand Drought Index tool that provides primary sector water users advanced warning of emerging dry conditions. Revisions to the tool will provide a greater granularity of information on dry conditions, supporting on-farm, operational water management decisions.	
Implement the recommendations from the Ministry for Regulation review of the agricultural and horticultural products regulatory system. Lead entities: MPI, MfE, EPA	- The EPA and MPI are improving the approval pathway for agricultural and horticultural products. Key actions include: - regular Sector Leaders Forum meetings; - reducing application queues; - increasing assessment capacity; and - the first reading of the HSNO Amendment Bill and ACVM Amendment Bill in mid-May 2026. MPI specific actions include: - enabling more self assessable changes; - maximising use of overseas assessments (including closer collaboration with Australia's APVMA); - strengthening the independent data assessor framework; - publishing updated inhibitor efficacy guidance; and - progressing proposed amendments to the ACVM exemptions and Prohibited Substances Regulations. EPA specific actions include: - updating risk assessment models; - substantially increasing the use of rapid assessments; and exploring a strategic priority pathway.	These actions improve the speed, certainty, and efficiency of getting new crop protection products to market, enabling faster access to tools that support pest and disease management and lift productivity. (Key Priority Area 1.3)

Implementation Roadmap Phase 1 (2025-2027) Actions	Work under way	How does this help to double the farmgate value of horticulture?
Recognise existing industry assurance programmes, wherever possible, as a way of meeting regulatory and market requirements. Lead entities: MPI, MfE, MBIE	• MPI aligned the Food Act 2014 and industry verification in September 2025. • The Resource Management (Consenting and Other System Changes) Amendment Act came into force in August 2025, which made farm plan certification and audit services more practical and cost-effective, allowing industry organisations to deliver these services. The Minister for the Environment can now approve industry organisations to deliver freshwater farm plan certification and audit services.	
Map the future assurance landscape Lead entity: HortNZ	• HortNZ is co-designing a strategic roadmap to help shift the assurance model towards a desired future state. The process includes a current state review, exploration of future possibilities, global trends and regulatory direction, and a gap analysis to assess how 'fit' today's assurance model is for the future.	
Quantify the cost of duplication in assurance and the impact on growers. Lead entity: HortNZ	• The review of the current state of the assurance landscape (outlined above) will use feedback from growers, auditors, and industry bodies to identify duplication across assurance, regulatory, and customer requirements.	Greater recognition of industry assurance programmes reduces duplication, enables growers to more easily meet regulatory and market requirements and allows investment to be focussed on productivity, sustainability, and value creation rather than duplicated compliance effort. (Key Priority Area 1.4)
Develop nationally consistent and enabling regulation for: - commercial vegetable production - horticultural structures and activities. Lead entities: MfE, MPI	• The Government consulted on proposed changes to the NPS-FM in 2025, including: • a new objective within the NPS-FM to enable domestic supply of vegetables and crop rotation; and • the option to develop standards so growers do not need to obtain a resource consent. • In January 2026, the Government updated the National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land (NPS-HPL) to better balance the development of greenfield land while retaining protections on the best land for primary production. • The new legislation replacing the Resource Management Act 1991 was introduced to Parliament in December 2025. The Government's goal is to have the two new Bills passed later this year, with the full new system in place by 2029.	The intent of the new resource management system has been designed to require fewer resource consents via national standardised land use zones, more permitted activities, and more national standards, reducing the regulatory burden on growers. (Key Priority Area 1.4)
Provide a coordinated, regular, advertised, pan-sector programme for knowledge exchange with officials who work on topics related to horticulture. Lead entity: HortNZ	• For the past three years the AHAP team has run a cross-pollination day - taking Government officials to visit horticulture sites and hear directly from growers about their businesses, including concerns and ideas for the future of the sector. Interest has continued to grow with more than 100 officials taking part to date. • HortNZ hosted three additional field trips in 2025 for local government officials based in Bay of Plenty, Nelson/Tasman and Canterbury. • Zespri runs an annual government tour programme and regularly engages with government stakeholders to ensure they understand the kiwifruit industry and its policy priorities.	Officials who have a good understanding of the sector and its challenges and opportunities are better equipped to design policy that works for horticulture. (Key Priority Area 1.4)
Identify where policy could enable sustainable ongoing horticulture production and where policy is adversely affecting the sector Lead entities: AHAP programme team, MPI, HortNZ	• MPI have drafted summaries of the high priority policy topics that were brainstormed in a government, industry, and science workshop in late 2023.	

Implementation Roadmap Phase 1 (2025-2027) Actions	Work under way	How does this help to double the farmgate value of horticulture?
Combine existing information from A Lighter Touch and product groups to identify priority crop protection tools. Lead entities: HortNZ, Industry bodies	Via A Lighter Touch, the NZAPI smart and sustainable research programme and other industry initiatives, pest and disease gaps are analysed, prioritised and canvassed with research partners and crop protection companies to identify control tools that could address gaps in the grower toolbox.	
Encourage grower adoption of Integrated Pest Management tools and practices. Lead entities: Industry bodies	- The A Lighter Touch programme and the NZAPI smart and sustainable research programme both have a strong focus on Integrated Pest Management tools. Field walks and demonstration days have extended this knowledge to assist growers with adoption. - Product groups including TomatoesNZ, NZAPI, NZAvocado and others have excellent IPM resources which are shared widely with growers. Zespri has current innovation projects related to integrated pest management of various pests including passionvine hopper, cicada and birds helping growers to manage pests with fewer, better targeted interventions.	Access to the right crop protection tools ensures growers can improve yield and access more markets while protecting the environment and people. (Key Priority Area 1.3)
Map future pan-sector grower extension needs. Lead entity: AHAP programme team	The AHAP team used subject matter expert workshops and interviews to capture regulatory and market driven requirements that may be coming down the pipeline for growers. Extension support can make adoption of particularly complex or challenging new practices quicker and easier for growers.	
Continue to progress nutrient management research. Lead entities: Vegetable industry bodies, Kiwifruit industry bodies	Zespri continue to work with science partners to understand the use of compost for building organic matter, supporting soil health, and contributing nutrients over time. - Five HortNZ industry environmental Codes of Practice have been updated this year to reflect the latest research, practices and decision-support tools. The codes of practice support growers to manage nutrient and sediment losses from their operations and meet regulatory compliance. - Regional workshops are being held to increase agronomist and grower capability with the Nitrogen budgeting support tool developed via the Sustainable Vegetable Systems project.	Having the right research, extension and training programmes in place helps growers keep up with best practice, which is required to meet regulatory and market requirements and to maintain social license for the sector. (Key Priority Area 1.1)



Optimise Value

Implementation Roadmap Phase 1 (2025-2027) Actions	Work under way	How does this help to double the farmgate value of horticulture?
Identify resources and support that would enable tier 2 and 3 crops to increase exports. Lead entities: Plant Market Access Council, AHAP programme team, Industry bodies	- The Plant Market Access Council and the AHAP team have interviewed people from six small-medium horticultural sectors to understand the barriers these groups face when exporting and identify the support needed to overcome them. Potatoes New Zealand has been successful in re-opening the Taiwan market with support from government.	By removing barriers, protecting market access, and supporting premium positioning, these actions increase export volumes and prices, ultimately lifting returns at the farmgate. (Key Priority Area 2.1)
Track and work to resolve non-tariff barriers for New Zealand horticulture exports. Lead entities: MPI, MFAT	MPI and MFAT both actively track non-tariff barriers. Some successful engagements to address non-tariff barriers include: - removing light brown apple moth from the United States quarantine pest list for New Zealand apples and avocados; - resolving long-standing onion import permit issues in the Philippines by clarifying access rules and connecting exporters with embassy support; and - facilitating in-country audits by trading partners, which help protect market access by demonstrating New Zealand's strong assurance and pest management systems.	
Connect efforts to raise public awareness of the New Zealand horticulture story so they are joined up and leveraging one another. Lead entity: HortNZ	The <i>Taste the Yakka</i> campaign, launched by HortNZ in 2024, encourages New Zealanders to show their support for our growers. In 2025 the campaign was leveraged to encourage public submissions on environment policy and it underpinned a 2026 National Fieldays campaign targeting the public.	Consumers that understand the Aotearoa New Zealand horticulture story and strongly value the contribution of growers are more likely to seek out locally grown produce. (Key Priority Area 2.2)
Map supply chain vulnerabilities and the horticulture value at risk if these vulnerabilities are realised Lead entity: AHAP programme team	The AHAP team commissioned research to quantify the volume and value of horticulture supported by regional supply chain infrastructure. The analysis was used to identify and socialise key infrastructure vulnerabilities for the produce sector.	
Establish an online library to share publicly available horticulture resources. Lead entity: HortNZ	- Grower Hub, a collaborative industry initiative, has compiled a resource library for members. HortNZ is in the initial stages of establishing an online resource library with artificial intelligence capability to house publicly available horticulture information.	Use of existing resources by multiple parties reduces duplication and supports informed decision making. (Key Priority Area 2.4)
Incorporate high level Good Agricultural Practice (GAP) programme data in Fresh Facts. Lead entity: United Fresh	United Fresh will incorporate NZGAP information for the first time in the 2026 edition of Fresh Facts.	



Māori are strong in Horticulture

Implementation Roadmap Phase 1 (2025-2027) Actions	Work under way	How does this help to double the farmgate value of horticulture?
Promote horticulture uptake of workforce development support opportunities. Lead entity: HortNZ	- Finalists from the 2026 Ahuwhenua Young Māori Grower of the year are being awarded scholarships to participate in the HortNZ Leadership Programme. - In 2026, Māori Kiwifruit Growers Manatōpū lead the inaugural Taiohi Leadership Programme to Hawaii to support the uptake of rangatahi Māori into the kiwifruit industry.	Rewarding development and career progression opportunities help to ensure a pipeline of talent to support the rise in Māori horticulture. (Key Priority Area 3.1)
Transition Māori participants from young grower competitions into the young Māori grower of the year competition. Lead entity: HortNZ	A participant from Gisborne Young Grower of the Year 2025 is competing in the 2026 Ahuwhenua Young Māori Grower of the year competition.	
Communicate Māori-led stories about success and leadership in horticulture. Lead entities: Māori horticulture businesses	- In early 2026, a series of five Mātauranga in Horticulture videos were released in which Māori growers and mana whenua share their approach to food production, environmental care and running a business. - Over the past year the NZGrower and Orchardist magazine has featured interviews with seven Māori horticulture businesses and leaders. - Mana whenua and growers are celebrating their work together via Te Tautara o Pukekohe to protect and enhance the freshwater environment while supplying fresh vegetables for the peoples of Aotearoa/New Zealand.	Celebrating leadership and success buoys the sector and helps to create momentum and confidence to build scale. (Key Priority Area 3.4)
Celebrate excellence in Māori horticulture via the Ahuwhenua Trophy competition. Lead entities: HortNZ, MPI	The Ahuwhenua Trophy, excellence in Māori Horticulture Award took place in 2026. The competition is supported by a range of organisations including HortNZ who launched it at the 2025 Conference, and MPI. As part of the competition, the three finalists host field days to showcase their operations.	
Leverage existing international arrangements, international forums and trade agreements to increase Māori trade. Lead entities: Māori horticulture businesses	In late 2025, Māori Kiwifruit Growers Ltd made use of the UAE-NZ free trade agreement and launched a UAE export partnership with Zespri and Mr Apple.	FTAs provide opportunities for Māori horticulture businesses to capitalise on such as access to new export markets, reduced trade barriers, and the ability to capture higher returns for their products. (Key Priority Area 2.1 and 3.4)
Raise awareness of free trade agreement opportunities for horticulture. Lead entities: MPI, MFAT	- The sector is engaged on technical market access negotiations through the Plant Market Access Council updates and bilateral discussions. - The New Zealand – India FTA was signed in April 2026 and provides valuable new quota access for kiwifruit and apples and phased tariff elimination for cherries, avocados, blueberries, and persimmons. - The FTA includes an interim organics Mutual Recognition Arrangement starting at entry into force, enabling reciprocal trade based on a shared third-country standard (Australia).	

Implementation Roadmap Phase 1 (2025-2027) Actions	Work under way	How does this help to double the farmgate value of horticulture?
Streamline the provision of regional advisory services offered by MPI and other providers so Māori-owned organisations can access advice on a range of land uses and issues from a source that best fits their needs. Lead entity: MPI	• MPI regional advisers support Māori landowners and agribusinesses to access MPI and wider government support, working closely with agencies to ensure a joined-up approach. • An MPI-led interagency panel (including MBIE, Te Puni Kōkiri, Te Tumu Paeroa, and Invest NZ) assesses MPI's Māori Agribusiness funding proposals, supporting collaboration and shared visibility of needs and opportunities.	Improving access to funding, advice, and coordinated support for Māori agribusinesses enables investment, capability growth, and expansion into higher value horticulture. (Key Priority Area 3.2)
Ensure regional advisors are knowledgeable about horticulture Lead entities: MPI, HortNZ	• This year MPI Māori agribusiness regional advisers attended the cross-pollination day to learn more about the horticulture sector. HortNZ has regional advisers that MPI regional staff are connected with.	
Map available funding sources that may be applicable to horticultural endeavours. Lead entity: AHAP programme team	• The AHAP team compiled and published a snapshot of the various sources of support (funding, expertise and more) that align with the five pillars of the AHAP. This will be updated annually.	This resource pulls together information from many sources so those looking for support to grow their business, people and/or sustainability goals can quickly see what options are available. (Key Priority Area 3.3)



Underpinned by Science and Knowledge

Implementation Roadmap Phase 1 (2025-2027) Actions	Work under way	How does this help to double the farmgate value of horticulture?
Provide post entry quarantine capacity and capability to efficiently service current and expected future demand. Lead entity: MPI	• MPI has invested and made operational 12 additional Level 3B post entry quarantine units in Mt Albert as an interim measure to manage demand for post entry quarantine services until the new facility is complete in 2029. • MPI is addressing the affordability challenges for smaller importers by offering bench size booking options.	
Initiate the regulatory reform of the germplasm import system to enable efficient and safe access to the imported plant germplasm that New Zealand wants. Lead entity: MPI	• MPI initiated a review of the germplasm import system in December 2024 and has: • engaged 300+ stakeholders (industry, Māori partners, and agencies) to co-develop solutions; • developed and tested risk-based, outcomes-focused, and user-friendly system principles; • prototyped simpler Import Health Standards that better recognise offshore measures; and • strengthened cross-agency collaboration and Māori engagement to inform system redesign.	Increased quarantine capacity provides the space to meet growing demand for new plant imports. Improvements to the germplasm import system will make it easier and faster for importers to bring in new plant genetics and varieties. (Key Priority Area 4.3)
Identify vulnerabilities in the imported seed germplasm pathway and mitigations. Lead entities: Vegetable industry bodies	• MPI reviewed the statistical basis for sampling and testing of seed for sowing to ensure its fit for purpose. • MPI has started a review of the import requirements for corn and maize seed for sowing, which includes identifying any new pests of concern and implementing measures to manage them. • MPI and industry bodies have monitored international developments in the spread of Tomato Brown Rugose Fruit Virus. MPI has engaged with exporting NPPOs around the risk from this pest.	
Continue to identify next horizon technology and innovation priorities for Tier 1 crops. Lead entities: Tier 1 crop industry bodies	• Zespri has identified three deliberate strategic priorities (unleash brand-demand, transform global supply, create the product portfolio of the future) to achieve their ambition of becoming the world's healthiest fruit brand. • NZAPI has identified six strategic priorities and associated actions to support the apple and pear sector to achieve their \$2 billion growth goal.	Innovation and investment is critical to position Tier 1 crops for ongoing global success. (Key Priority Area 4.4)
Identify crop-specific priority opportunities and challenges that need to be addressed to accelerate growth and build scale. Lead entities: Tier 2&3 crop industry bodies, AHAP programme team	• New Zealand Passionfruit Growers Association Inc, with AHAP team support, undertook analysis to identify challenges and opportunities for the passionfruit sector. • The BSI has taken the technology stack concept from the Information Technology domain and applied it to horticulture, creating a framework to systematically consider where to focus effort and resources to build scale. The AHAP team supported the fresh tomato and citrus sectors to use the framework.	
Scope the value of a collective approach to post-harvest research and technology where challenges exist that are common to multiple crops. Lead entity: BSI	• The post-harvest science teams at the BSI, with support from the AHAP team, have gathered insights from 10 medium-small crops about post-harvest challenges that are holding them back. The science teams are assessing whether commonalities exist across multiples crops.	Analysis of gaps and opportunities puts tier 2 and 3 product groups in a strong position to map out the steps needed to build scale and accelerate growth. (Key Priority area 2.3, 4.1 and 4.5)



Nurture People

Implementation Roadmap Phase 1 (2025-2027) Actions	Work under way	How does this help to double the farmgate value of horticulture?
Improve the horticulture sector's ability to forecast upcoming workforce needs Lead entity: HortNZ	- The forecasting initiative hit a roadblock when Muka Tangata, the organisation with the expertise and data platform, was disestablished. HortNZ is now working with Massey University to pilot the national workforce intelligence survey (developed as part of the original project) in Northland. - In 2025 StatsNZ introduced an independent New Zealand-focused occupation classification, the National Occupation List (NOL). HortNZ fed into the development of the NOL to ensure horticulture occupations are accurately captured. NZKGI commissioned a data-driven labour report for the kiwifruit sector. The 2026 report outlines current and future workforce needs and is designed to inform decision-making across growers, packhouses, and supporting organisations.	Understanding the evolving skills needs of the horticulture sector allows us to attract, retain and grow the workforce of the future. (Key Priority Area 5.1)
Develop a pan-sector workforce plan informed by forecasting. Lead entity: HortNZ	HortNZ is assisting the Food and Fibre Industry Skills Board to review and update 20 Horticulture-specific qualifications to make sure they will deliver the skills that industry requires.	
Ensure specialist courses critical for horticulture remain available. Lead entities: Tertiary education providers	HortNZ kickstarted development of the Emerging Leaders Micro-credential which was led by the Food and Fibre Workforce Development Council and is now being offered commercially. - Through the Growing Change project, HortNZ led development of a Freshwater Micro-credential which is now being delivered to growers, staff, horticulture advisors and council staff. Massey University currently offers a Bachelor of Horticultural and Plant Systems while Lincoln University offers a Diploma in Horticulture.	
Continue work to improve the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) policy to provide certainty in settings for the next 20 years. Lead entity: MBIE	- A new RSE accommodation cost methodology developed by MBIE took effect in April 2026. MBIE is reviewing the wider RSE scheme and completed targeted consultation with industry and Pacific stakeholders in early 2026. The review aims to ensure the scheme maintains its triple win objective for employers, workers, and the Pacific. Industry has identified RSE priorities and developed fit-for-purpose proposals focusing on accommodation settings, transport cost recovery, and alignment across policy settings that would result in a sustainable RSE scheme. These solutions were submitted to MBIE to inform the policy review.	Long-term certainty in RSE settings and a scheme that is beneficial for all involved gives growers confidence in reliable labour supply, enabling investment and expansion. (Key Priority Area 5.2)

Implementation Roadmap Phase 1 (2025-2027) Actions	Work under way	How does this help to double the farmgate value of horticulture?
Progress the Whānau Moana Nui framework – begin pilot with Pacific Nations and employers. Lead entity: HortNZ	- The HortNZ-led Whānau Moana Nui pilot group has drafted and tested pre and post departure, reciprocity and pastoral care performance standards, completed the needs assessment, stakeholder engagement plan, and draft compliance systems. Worker voice has been incorporated and resources that support growers to better engage with their workers have been developed. MBIE, MFAT, and international organisations are showing interest in Whānau Moana Nui, with positive feedback indicating it could help inform the future direction of RSE.	Strengthening cultural awareness and support for RSE workers helps improve worker wellbeing, retention, and productivity, ensuring a more stable workforce that supports consistent production and higher-value horticulture outputs. (Key Priority Area 5.2)
Continue to build RSE employers' and workers' cultural awareness by introducing a framework and training tools. Lead entity: MBIE	MBIE shared the first draft of the Cultural Awareness Framework with select industry stakeholders and employers. This framework was developed by the Sector Workforce Engagement Programme, a government initiative designed to strategically develop and align workforce skills with industry needs. A pilot for implementation is being developed and will be officially launched by MBIE at the 2026 New Zealand Horticulture Conference.	
Embed social practice initiatives into horticulture businesses. Lead entities: HortNZ, MBIE	- The number of growers covered by GAP social practice certification has increased over the past year, indicating greater uptake. - The currently underway Whānau Moana Nui pilot is centred around nurturing people and seeks to provide a world-class standard of industry-led, government-enabled Pacific labour mobility practices. Zespri runs the GLOBALG.A.P. Contractor Programme, which requires all growers and contractors employing or supplying labour for harvest, vine maintenance, spray or fertiliser services to hold a Compliance Assessment Verification (CAV).	An attractive and ethical industry in which individuals thrive provides the foundation of a successful horticulture sector. (Key Priority Area 5.3)
Establish a descriptive, enduring and cross-government policy programme to ensure workforce, labour and employment settings support horticulture and are well aligned across agencies. Lead entities: MP, MBIE, MSD, MoE	MPI, MBIE, MSD, and MoE are leading different and complementary pieces of work across the workforce, labour, and employment policy space. MBIE recommenced the review of the RSE Scheme in early 2026. MoE is leading the vocational education and training reforms which were passed in October 2025, which disestablished Te Pūkenga and established 10 regional polytechnics and eight Industry Skills Boards from 1 January 2026. MSD continues to support jobseekers into seasonal roles through employment support services and financial assistance, helping workers transition into and sustain employment in horticulture. MSD has also developed clear guidance for employers, promoting consistent, transparent engagement between RSE employers and MSD across regions.	Joined up workforce and labour settings across government helps to give growers reliable access to the right workers when and where needed, supporting timely production and harvest activities. (Key Priority Area 5.2)
Build suitable flexibility into policy and legislation to provide workers with more options for full employment in their region and to enable people to work across industry. Lead entities: MPI, MBIE, MSD	The Sector Workforce Engagement Programme has played a key leadership role, co-establishing the Horticulture Market Intelligence Group, now progressing to phase two with a sector taxonomy being applied at a subsector level (starting with kiwifruit) to better understand short-term skills demand.	

Implementation Roadmap Phase 1 (2025-2027) Actions	Work under way	How does this help to double the farmgate value of horticulture?
Promote New Zealand horticulture jobs for holiday visa applicants. Lead entities: MBIE, HortNZ	- The PickNZ website, a horticulture industry initiative administered by HortNZ, exists to promote seasonal work in New Zealand's fruit and vegetable industries. Immigration New Zealand maintains a seasonal work calendar setting out the type of work available to those on Working Holiday Visas and where the work can be found. The calendar highlights many horticulture opportunities.	Access to skilled and seasonal workers helps growers meet peak labour demand and reduces shortages of workers and skilled workers. (Key Priority Area 5.2)
Ensure (non RSE) visa settings allow the horticulture industry to: - access skilled seasonal workers - meet seasonal surge labour requirements. Lead entities: MBIE, MPI	MBIE announced the Global Workforce Seasonal Visa and the Peak Seasonal Visa, which opened for applications on 8 December 2025. The Government also added two new residence pathways to make it easier for experienced and skilled workers already contributing in New Zealand to get residence, helping employers retain skilled workers.	
Provide a horticulture-specific leadership programme. Lead entity: HortNZ	- The HortNZ leadership programme is specifically designed for potential and current leaders in the fruit and vegetable industry. The programme was fully subscribed in 2025 and 2026. - The IFPA Produce Executive Programme, a course designed for middle to senior managers and emerging leaders across the produce industry, was delivered in New Zealand for the first time in late 2025.	The horticulture sector is facing a succession issue, and supporting the development of future leaders ensures they will be well equipped to transition into critical sector and business leadership roles. (Key Priority Area 5.4)
Build a horticulture alumni. Lead entity: HortNZ	HortNZ intends to lead this initiative in 2027.	
Ensure horticulture leadership offerings incorporate learnings from the Māori leadership development framework. Lead entity: HortNZ	Feedback from Ahuwhenua Māori Young Growers taking part in the 2026 HortNZ Leadership Programme will be incorporated.	
Empower women in horticulture to achieve their full potential by encouraging their entry into leadership roles. Lead entity: United Fresh	- The Women in Horticulture initiative, managed by United Fresh, has: - run workshops and webinars on topics such as Celebrating Women in Horticulture: Visible and Valued – Know Your Worth and Navigating Leadership within Traditional Male-led Structures - provided sponsorship and scholarships for women to take part in industry events - conducted research to understand the current state and career aspirations of women in the horticulture industry, as well as barriers and support required for women to grow their careers.	

GROWING TOGETHER 2035

Aotearoa Horticulture
Action Plan