



Horticulture is part of the solution for growing a sustainable economy that works for all New Zealanders.

Our growers supply quality nutritious fruit and vegetables for New Zealand and the world, they also create jobs and export success in an environmentally sustainable way. Horticulture New Zealand strongly supports the Government's push for economic growth and doubling the value of exports in 10 years.

The Aotearoa Horticulture Action Plan is a partnership between industry, Government, Māori and science that has a goal to double the farmgate value of horticulture by 2035.

To achieve this, we want to work closely with the Government to create and maintain conditions for our industry to thrive.

We welcome the Government's positive progress on issues that matter to our industry and in this document provide our view on the essential next steps.

In 2025/26, we want to work with Government in six priority areas that will support horticultural export growth and a thriving New Zealand:

- **Water security and supply**
- **Reliable supply of healthy locally grown fruit and vegetables for New Zealanders**
- **Access to crop protection tools**
- **Effective assurance**
- **Align education with industry needs**
- **Certainty for Pacific workers and employers**

About our industry

We are New Zealand's growers...

We want every New Zealander to enjoy delicious and nutritious fruit and vegetables. We want New Zealand to prosper by exporting our world-leading kiwifruit, apples, avocados, onions, cherries and many other fruit and vegetables to millions of customers all over the world.

...we love our mahi...

We care about the land and water. Aotearoa is blessed with optimum growing conditions and prime soil. We have a vision for a world-leading commercial fruit and vegetable growing industry.

But with the right policy settings and support, we can do even better.



Our growers see this as a once in a lifetime opportunity to get settings right. Growers need confidence to invest.

Our industry faces challenges but with definitive action our growers can and will work to double export value.

 **\$7.48bn**
value of horticulture industry

 **\$4.67bn**
value of horticulture exports

 **\$2.81bn**
worth of domestic horticulture

 **Fruit \$3.94bn**
 **Vegetables \$0.73bn**

 **Fruit \$1.10bn**
 **Vegetables \$1.71bn**

 **4,500+**
commercial fruit and vegetable growers in New Zealand

 **100+**
types of fruit and vegetables grown in New Zealand

 **65,000**
people employed
♀ Female 40% ♂ Male 60%



Growing at a glance

 **Approx 80,000**
hectares of horticulture land in New Zealand

 **125**
export markets around the world

 **100%**
of fruit and vegetable exports are certified through an assurance programme

 **>90%**
of domestic fruit and vegetables are certified through an assurance programme

 **3,300**
growers use NZGAP or GLOBALG.A.P. assurance programmes

Sources: Ministry for Primary Industries, Statistics New Zealand, Fresh Facts and Food and Fibre Workforce Insights www.workforceinsights.govt.nz and Horticulture New Zealand.
Note: Horticulture exports based on value; domestic horticulture based on spend

Our priorities



Water security and supply

Plants need water to produce high-quality crops. Reliable access to water provides opportunities to use suitable land, including Māori land, for higher-value lower-emissions per hectare food production through horticulture.

Growers understand that water is a precious resource for people, ecosystems and the economy.

In some catchments, our water resources are already over-allocated, while in other catchments the available water resources are subject to increased demand from irrigators, industrial and municipal water users.

We need to work together to deliver water storage solutions that will take pressure off our waterbodies while providing reliable water to meet people's health and economic needs.

We welcome the Government's Fast-track Approvals Act that provides a pathway for consenting community-scale water storage. We also welcome planned changes to the National Freshwater policy and rules to support more balanced water allocation and storage decisions.

In 2025, we want policy, research and tools to support a catchment-wide approach to water management.

We ask that the National Direction for Freshwater better recognises the importance of water use as well as in-stream values.

We ask that the policy and rules support using harvested water, augmenting flows and storing water off-line, on-streams and in groundwater. We believe that effective water storage and supply needs a catchment-wide view, where water user groups integrate water storage with wider use of groundwater. While farm-scale storage is an option, for the highly productive lowlands a global approach will be needed.

We ask that the Government provide time for alternative water sources, such as storage, to be developed before existing water sources are reduced. Getting this policy setting right in the National Direction for Freshwater will create an environmental incentive as well as an economic incentive for progressing water storage.

To support a catchment-wide or globalised approach, we ask the Government to direct Councils to focus their science in this direction. This would mean more emphasis on understanding future water needs, opportunities for water storage, and identifying catchments with hydrology well suited to globalised water resource management.

Government can support industry to build greater understanding of crop demands and innovation to drive more efficient water use, including tools to support globalised consents and water transfers.



Reliable supply of healthy locally grown fruit and vegetables for New Zealanders

Nutritious, locally grown fruit and vegetables are core to a healthy diet. But many New Zealanders are struggling with the cost of living which is putting pressure on food budgets. With the right policy and regulatory settings, growers can provide a reliable and resilient supply of fruit and vegetables and contribute positively to New Zealand's food security.

The Government has made commitments to improve the regulatory settings for growers.

The Resource Management Amendment Bill and the National Direction under the Resource Management Act (RMA) that are being progressed in 2025 provide the Government with opportunity to provide legislative and policy support to enable the supply of fresh fruit and vegetables.

In 2025, we ask Government to develop a National Environmental Standard that supercedes regional plans and makes new and existing vegetable growing a permitted activity, with the ability to rotate crops, with a freshwater farm plan, across all regions in New Zealand.

This issue cannot wait for the new resource management system.

We also ask that the Grocery Commissioner keeps pressure on the supermarkets and the grocery sector and ensures thorough oversight to help address the food security issue New Zealand is facing. We also ask for an increase in transparency around pricing.



Access to crop protection tools

The current regulations in New Zealand are stifling access to new products for controlling pests and diseases. At the same time, existing chemicals are being phased out, leaving growers with fewer options.

Our growers need a more efficient process for regulatory approvals, including increasing the use of rapid pathways, registration exemptions and self-assessments for appropriate applications. One of the solutions is for the Ministry for Primary Industries and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to make greater use of EPA's recognised international regulators' assessments.

Now that the Ministry of Regulation review has been completed we want to see a roadmap for tangible change, accountability and material impacts. Horticulture New Zealand is ready to work with the Environmental Protection Agency and Agricultural Compounds and Veterinary Medicines (ACVM) to develop solutions that will work for growers.

Beyond horticultural chemicals, biologicals and other crop protection tools, there is also significant potential to harness technology and innovation to support more profitable and sustainable growing.



Effective assurance

One effective way to reduce the regulatory cost for growers is to recognise our current GAP (Good Agricultural Practice) certification framework as adequate proof that growers are meeting regulatory requirements.

GAP programmes are internationally recognised as meeting global standards and provide a high level of assurance for environment, food safety and social practice.

We welcome the recent proposed amendment to the Resource Management Act (RMA) which enables a pathway for recognising industry assurance programmes (like GAP) to deliver audited and certified Freshwater Farm Plans.

We will need effective regulations which provide certainty and are focused on outcomes to enable growers to develop and implement their plans and adopt sustainable growing practices via their GAP programme.

In 2025, we want better recognition of GAP in Food Safety.

GAP programmes are currently recognised under the Food Act 2014, which is a huge benefit to growers.

However, there is no pathway for full equivalency which has led to major difficulties for the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) and industry while increasing costs, administration and reporting for the sector.

We ask that Government revise how industry assurance programmes are recognised under the Food Act and establish a more effective model which enables industry to do the heavy lifting on assurance with regulatory oversight, which in turn frees up regulatory resources for compliance, monitoring and enforcement.



Align education with industry needs

Horticulture employs around 65,000 people, but at times we face workforce shortages which remain a persistent challenge. To reach our potential, we must attract and retain many more motivated and skilled people to work in horticulture, from New Zealand as well as overseas, especially during seasonal harvest peaks.

There is much to be done in immigration and in the education system to grow a larger base of people with the skills needed.

Unfortunately, the Government's Redesign of the vocational education and training system proposal (published August 2024) and proposals for work-based learning (27 January 2025) do not deliver what we are looking for. The proposal is reminiscent of the system that under-served our sector in the past, and we do not see it supporting aspirations to double primary sector exports by value.

In 2025, we are looking for changes to ensure the system aligns the education on offer with what industry actually needs.

To ensure our growers can access a skilled, ready for work talent pipeline, we need a national, integrated, system-level delivery model with equitable funding that values work-based and strategically important provision. These delivery and funding models need to be underpinned by a system infrastructure that supports industry goals which means responsive, industry-led standard setting and advice and formalised input into funding decisions.



Certainty for Pacific workers and employers

Workers coming to New Zealand through the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) Scheme are a vital part of our workforce to enable harvest during seasonal peaks. Without this scheme, we would be unable to harvest many fruit and vegetable crops.

We want to ensure a fit-for-purpose RSE Scheme that is sustainable for both the Pacific and growers that employ RSE workers and that there is certainty in policy settings going forward.

In 2025, we want to see the RSE policy review concluded and implemented.

This is a top priority to provide certainty for workers and growers who rely on this world-leading scheme. The review has been going since 2019.

To provide certainty, it is essential to rapidly conclude work on policy settings and to keep costs of compliance affordable. The RSE Scheme needs to revert to its initial

principles of mutual benefits for its Pacific partners and fairness and equity for employers and New Zealand workers. To this end, Horticulture New Zealand has been working with industry partners to define a set of robust policy solutions to ensure growers can have certainty to invest now and into the future. We would like to see the Minister of Immigration direct the Ministry for Business Innovation and Employment to enact the policy paths forward to enable a more prosperous scheme for growers and the Pacific Islands.

Looking to the future, at the request of growers and sending countries, we have embarked on a new initiative, and we are championing *Whānau Moana Nui™* (meaning family of the Pacific) designed to protect and enhance the reputation of the RSE Scheme. *Whānau Moana Nui™* seeks to provide a world-class standard of industry-led government-enabled Pacific labour mobility practices that meet the increasingly stringent market requirements around socially sustainable and ethical production practices.

Horticulture New Zealand works with Government to create an enduring environment where growers thrive and New Zealand prospers.

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