NZGROWER & ORCHARDIST®

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HORTICULTURE NEW ZEALAND

FROM PICKING TO PROCESSING

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JOHN DEERE

GEARING UP FOR GREATER GAINS

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A regular advertorial section of new products and services. This publication does not endorse the products or services featured here.

On the cover:

Nick and Carey White have grown their Loburn, Canterbury orchard into a global juice business. See page 10. Photo by Tony Benny

NZGROWER & ORCHARDIST

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GROWER VOICES HEARD AND ACTED ON

The Government's proposals last month recognising the national importance of vegetable growing and enabling water storage are vital regulatory changes that will keep our industry moving forward.

Bernadine Guilleux: HortNZ chair

They're a clear demonstration that our collective advocacy is being heard – and acted on.

Horticulture New Zealand has been working toward this kind of policy shift over several years through our strategic priorities: proactively influencing policy, shaping sector strategy, facilitating grower connections, translating sector-wide change, and telling the horticulture story.

The proposed changes to freshwater rules – including enabling crop rotation and signalling a move away from resource consent requirements for vegetable production is a good starting point to give commercial vegetable growers the certainty they need to continue supplying fresh, healthy food for New Zealanders.

The Government's Situation and Outlook for Primary Industries (SOPI) report launch at Fieldays in Hamilton in June celebrated the clear signal that horticulture is a bright star, so the work to build a sustainable path to growth is now. The commitment to reduce barriers for water storage and managed aquifer recharge is a positive step in the direction of climate resilience, future planning and supporting this predicted export growth.

The recognition that productive land is more than just soil type is another important marker for us. The proposed 'Special Agricultural Areas' concept acknowledges the value of horticultural hubs – defined not just by land, but by climate, infrastructure and grower communities.

These proposals and figures reflect a government that is listening and willing to support, but the work continues, and the detail of these proposals is key.

From August, we'll be working closely with our newly appointed directors to build on our momentum, drive progress across our strategic priorities, and look to a thriving future for our sector.

Voting is currently open for the HortNZ Board director election – we have nine candidates standing. I encourage you to read the candidate profiles, watch their videos on the HortNZ website **www.hortnz.co.nz**, and vote.

We are motivated by the strong level of interest in these roles; ongoing succession at the governance level is crucial to an effective, united pan-sector voice to Government.

Voting is open now and closes 12 noon, Thursday 10 July.

I'm also pleased to share that HortNZ has appointed Kirsti Lovie as our new associate director. The board looks forward to her contributions.

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PROMISING **POLICY CHANGES**

The Government's recently announced national direction package promises meaningful change for growers, and not a moment too soon.

Kate Scott : HortNZ chief executive

After years of navigating increasingly complex and inconsistent rules around how we grow fruit and vegetables, it's encouraging to see proposals that mark a shift toward more enabling and fit-for-purpose regulation.

These proposed changes reflect a more balanced and realistic approach to regulation – one that acknowledges the pressures on growers and the critical importance of domestic food production, as well as the export value of horticulture.

The package, now open for public consultation, touches on a range of vital policy areas: freshwater management, highly productive land, infrastructure and water storage.

For commercial vegetable growers in particular, the proposals could bring significant relief.

One of the most promising aspects of the package is the proposed recognition of the national significance of commercial vegetable growing.

The Government is also looking to remove regulatory barriers to developing on-farm water storage and managed aquifer recharge. This is a smart move.

Reliable access to water is non-negotiable for horticulture, and reducing the compliance burden will help growers prepare for increasingly volatile climate conditions.

Being able to capture water during wet periods for use in dry ones is not just a business necessity – it's a smart, environmentally responsible way to manage our resources. It makes sense to collect and store it when it's plentiful and use it when you need it.

The package also proposes a more refined approach to protecting highly productive land.

The removal of blanket protections for Land Use Capability Class 3 land, in favour of allowing councils to designate 'Special Agricultural Areas', recognises that productive land is about more than just soil type.

> "

Our sector is forecast for strong growth

This could mean vegetable production becomes a permitted activity, provided growers operate under a certified freshwater farm plan, or other approved industry assurance plan. Such a change would offer certainty and flexibility, allowing growers to maintain soil health and manage their operations sustainably, without getting tied up in excessive compliance.

MINISTRY FOR PRIMARY INDUSTRIES RECENTLY PROJECTED HORTICULTURE EXPORT EARNINGS WILL RISE

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KIWIFRUIT IS LEADING THE WAY WITH APPLE, PEAR AND VEGETABLE EXPORTS ALSO TRENDING UPWARD

Horticultural hubs are built on a combination of climate, infrastructure and accumulated knowledge. A more nuanced, locally informed approach will better safeguard our ability to grow food where it makes the most sense.

On page 36 HortNZ's Emily Levenson provides more details about Special Agricultural Areas and how you can have your say before 21 July.

> "We need policies that not only support growth but enable it – removing the roadblocks that stop good growers from getting ahead

These proposals come at a time when our sector is forecast for strong growth. The Ministry for Primary Industries recently projected horticulture export earnings will rise 19 percent to $8.5 billion by June 2025. Kiwifruit is leading the way, with apple, pear and vegetable exports also trending upward.

This forecast is a strong vote of confidence in our sector's future. But it's worth remembering that export growth doesn't always translate into better outcomes at the farm gate. Input costs and regulatory overheads continue to squeeze growers' margins. That's why we need policies that not only support growth but enable it – removing the roadblocks that stop good growers from getting ahead.

HortNZ will be submitting on all aspects of the proposals relevant to horticulture and we're encouraging input from growers, product groups and district associations.

This consultation is a genuine opportunity for us to shape the rules that govern how we grow. Whether it's freshwater planning, land use or access to water, the decisions made now will influence the future of our sector for years to come.

We must make sure these settings reflect the realities of growing and support our sector's ability to feed New Zealand and the world. ●

Harvesting at Baygold's The Coast orchard. Photo courtesy of Baygold

OUTLOOK FOR GOLD

Baygold chief executive Carl Simmons shares what's next for the business, following a record 2025 kiwifruit harvest, as well as offering some thoughts on the future of the SunGold variety.

Carly Gibbs

Harvesting Zespri SunGold™ kiwifruit requires a superhero approach of smarts, timing and stamina.

So, gold grower Baygold Limited has what they call a "brains trust", a group of champions who spearhead decisions, which ensures fruit is picked at the optimum time.

"It is a big task, taking many hours each day," says Baygold chief executive Carl Simmons of the industry's most intense time of year.

This year's season was not only a record for Baygold but the industry, and is forecast to deliver New Zealand's largest ever kiwifruit crop, breaking the 200 million tray milestone – a modest increase from last year's record-breaking 190 million trays.

It's an amazing result, says the newly appointed New Zealand Kiwifruit Growers (NZKGI) chair, Whetu Rolleston, who was previously vice chair and owns a gold orchard.

Whetu says most growers experienced ideal growing conditions to produce plenty of high-quality fruit and should be excited about the potential returns following an "exceptional" harvest.

> **"We packed 4,900,090 class one trays, a 25 percent increase on the previous year, and we'll beat that again next year**

For Baygold, and its ten large-scale gold conventional orchards in Te Puke, this year brought their largest harvest, with 55,063 bins from almost 400 hectares, and their biggest-ever harvesting day on 16 April, when 3654 bins were picked in a single day.

Baygold chief executive Carl Simmons. Photo by Carly Gibbs

At the time of our interview, Carl and Murray were also headed to India's Himalayan region, Nepal, South Korea and China to understand overseas kiwifruit growing practices better, connect with international growers, and see Zespri's retail and supply chain in action.

"Given Zespri's 365-day Global Supply strategy, this trip is important to see first-hand how the strategy is being executed and to consider for ourselves if international growing is something that Baygold should consider in the future," Carl shares.

Baygold has chosen to grow only SunGold, but at one point did have some Hayward. When asked for his opinion on the future of Hayward, Carl says that with the rise of genetic transformation and gene editing (particularly in places like China), Hayward, as we know it, will likely be replaced with a better version within the next five years.

"The fact we do so well off Hayward now, when there are no Plant Variety Rights [PVRs], proves New Zealand does grow it better than anywhere else in the world."

"Overall, we packed 4,900,090 class one trays, a 25 percent increase on the previous year, and we'll beat that again next year, and be up closer to six million trays," Carl says, explaining that more vines are coming into mature stages.

While their harvest wasn't perfect, it was close to being perfect. Initially, dry matter accumulation was slow, which delayed fruit maturity. While at the back end, fruit ripened quickly, presenting time pressure to get it into Controlled Atmosphere (CA) storage.

Growing business

The overall result was excellent for Baygold, which comprises an orchard management and development business and separate orchard-owning shareholder entities.

The company was founded in the 1990s by Baygold chair Murray McBride, who invited friends to develop Te Puke orchards with him, and the enterprise was branded Baygold Limited in the early 2000s. Since then, they've developed 800 hectares of kiwifruit, sold 400 hectares, acquired 150 shareholders, and employ 100 full-time staff, 100 Recognised Seasonal Employer workers and 700 contractors.

The business continues to grow in Te Puke. They've just purchased a 140ha Pukehina farm and gold licensing at the 2025 price of $562,000/ha, for 17ha (with the hope of acquiring more later).

Baygold has ten large-scale Te Puke orchards, with one of the biggest being The Coast, pictured here, at close to 70ha. Photo courtesy of Baygold

Golden future

As for SunGold, the PVRs, aka the gold licence, expire in New Zealand in 2039, and sooner in other parts of the world.

Carl hopes Zespri will be "mindful and give good signals" around what is happening in the future as international PVRs cease, and Kiwi growers find themselves "fighting with the rest of the world".

"The cost of growing SunGold means growers can't afford for it to become a commodity product and need the supply chain and shipping of SunGold to be bulletproof. There have been some failures in recent years," he says, and he questions whether Zespri's supply chain needs to become a separate, independent entity, and whether Zespri just focuses on marketing.

In response to that, Whetu says that NZKGI acknowledges that issues across the supply chain have impacted the ability to maximise the volume of high-quality fruit reaching consumers in recent years. The industry is working together as part of an industry alignment initiative to reduce fruit loss, ultimately increasing grower profits.

"As our industry grows, we must retain the ability to process these increased volumes so that we may capitalise on the fruits of our labour," she says. "There remain ongoing discussions as to how our industry can most efficiently and effectively export New Zealand-grown fruit to our consumers around the globe."

When it comes to licensing, Whetu says Zespri has been clear about the rights associated with it, and growers have been encouraged to take the "risks and limitations" of the licence into consideration when participating in auctions. "NZKGI sees itself as an important player in discussions about the expiry of PVRs and the introduction of new PVRs and will continue to advocate for growers."

NZKGI's new chair Whetu Rolleston. Photo courtesy of NZKGI

Industry confidence

A recent upward movement in Zespri share price and gold licence price indicates a "grower rebound" in confidence, as does orchard investment, Whetu says. While the average yield per hectare has remained between 9500 and 13,500 trays per hectare over the last eight years, the actual number of producing orchards has increased by around 2000ha (17 percent).

Zespri's five-year outlook recognises continued demand for New Zealand kiwifruit despite an "increasingly competitive and complex marketplace", with supply forecast to grow to 228 million trays in 2029.

Asked if Donald Trump's trade tariffs cause concern for SunGold in the American market, Carl says not for Baygold at this time, and he notes it's mainly SunGold organic that goes to the United States, of which Baygold is not a grower.

"Conventional gold goes everywhere else, so with 10 percent tariffs into the States, it is not going to cause much issue. We've got 30 percent tariffs to get conventional gold into India, for example, and we still manage to sell close to a million trays a year, and that's barely touching the surface."

He says New Zealand growers are passionate and continue to grow kiwifruit better than anyone else.

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The transition from orchardists to exporters of juice to China has been a long process for Mill Orchard owners Nick and Carey White

BIRTH OF A **JUICE BRAND**

Nick White was just a teenager when he got his start as an orchardist after his mother helped him buy an abandoned apple orchard not far from home. Forty-five years later he and wife Carey have built that into a thriving fruit juice business, supplying both domestic and export markets.

Tony Benny

Brought up in Loburn, North Canterbury, Nick White was the youngest of five children. His father died when he was 11. His brothers and sisters all went to university but Nick decided to have a gap year when he finished school.

"Partway through the year, my mum thought I was drifting and there was an old derelict orchard that came up for sale just one road over. I still haven't figured out quite how it happened but I ended up being the owner of this orchard," Nick laughs.

Today there are just a few orchards in the Loburn area, just outside Rangiora, but in the 1980s there were dozens of them. "Back then, the Loburn Fruit Growing Association would have had 50 or 60 members. I was the youngest grower in Loburn at the time."

Nick had no time for drifting anymore and started work on resurrecting the orchard he now owned – pruning trees, removing others and planting more. He supplied the local market through the Apple and Pear Marketing Board that used to control the industry.

In 1985 he married Carey who he had known since childhood and she quickly learnt how all-consuming being an orchardist could be.

"Going on honeymoon was a rude awakening to what it was really like being an orchardist's wife. This guy was obsessed with looking at weather forecasts because nobody was looking after the orchard while he was away. If it rained, he was going to have to come back and spray it, no matter where we were," Carey recalls.

As it turned out, they didn't have to come home early and for the next few years they lived what Nick describes as an idyllic lifestyle, growing the crop, picking it into Apple and Pear Marketing Board bins and sending it to the packhouse in nearby Kaiapoi.

"We got paid our pretty big percentage of it straightaway and then the rest was paid out throughout the year and it was great. Over the winter we'd prune the trees and we'd go away whenever we wanted to," Nick says.

When the board changed Canterbury from a local market district to an export district in 1989, Nick and his brother William, who'd also started growing apples, saw an opportunity to fill the need for a new packing facility. They built the shed themselves and ordered a high-tech apple sizer to handle both their own apples and those of other growers.

"After we placed the order, it became apparent that there was going to be a big shortfall of packing capability in Canterbury, so we thought, 'Let's double the size of that machine', so that's what we did."

In their peak season the business packed 250,000 export cartons. When the local market was deregulated they started supplying that year-round as well.

Nick and Carey White grow apples and also source New Zealand-grown apples, oranges, blackcurrants and carrots

In 2000 the industry experienced a serious downturn and the Whites found themselves with a surplus of juicing fruit. With the plant in Kaiapoi no longer operating, they weren't sure what to do with the fruit.

"So we thought, let's put a wee juice plant in and make some fruit juice."

So Nick and William set about building one. It was quite basic with bottling and labelling done by hand but before long they were supplying local retailer Raeward Fresh under that firm's brand.

"It took off and people started asking, 'Where else can we get this juice from?', so that's the point at which the Mill Orchard brand was born."

Mill Orchard (the brand is now MO) is available in New World supermarkets throughout New Zealand, a relationship that started when Carey slipped a note into the Rangiora New World's suggestion box.

"I suggested they needed to have Mill Orchard juice and I had to put a name and phone number on it. They called me up and said, 'Where can we get it?' I said, 'Well, I might happen to know…'."

Soon their juice was being sold in New World supermarkets throughout the South Island. With their children now at school, Carey found herself on the road with a full-time job doing retail support. A few years later that role grew to include the North Island as well but today that's limited to foodservice customers.

Building the business has involved borrowing "uncomfortable amounts of money"

They still grow fruit in Loburn, but these days it's exclusively for juice.

As the business grew the plant had to expand as well, and the Whites borrowed uncomfortable amounts of money to install a large monoblock filler to fill and cap bottles. Then four years ago what could have been a disastrous factory fire actually prompted more growth.

"A bit of equipment malfunctioned in the middle of the night. It was directly above a plastic conveyor belt that snakes 35 metres out of the plant and that burned like a wick and a candle and wiped out the plastic links in the chain," says Nick.

> **"We've learned some savage lessons but we're starting to get a bit more savvy now**

At about 7am his brother William heard the compressor running constantly, which it usually didn't, and went to the packhouse to check on it. "He opened the door and great clouds of smoke poured out and he thought, 'This is not good!'."

With timber inside just starting to burn, they were minutes from losing the whole building. But it seemed they'd escaped with minimal damage.

"I immediately got on the phone and ordered replacement parts and the guy I talked to said, 'You'll look back in a few years' time and you'll be grateful for this'. I remember thinking, 'You reckon?'."

It turned out the damage was much worse than first thought because acid in the acrid smoke from burning plastic had corroded electronics and bearings, causing machinery to break down and eventually the insurers paid out for total replacement.

The Whites took a deep breath and borrowed "quite a bit" of additional money to upgrade their relatively basic production line to a fully automated one. "I never thought I'd arrive at the day where I'd enjoy seeing my staff just watching, but we're at the point now where it's just about completely hands-off.

"The bottles are blown in the blow moulder, they travel into the fill hall, they're rinsed, filled and capped, they're labelled either with a shrink sleeve or a double-sided self-adhesive. Then they're date coded. We've just installed a video inspection system to inspect the date code and the cap, and then a machine picks up the bottles and puts them into a carton. We still have a person inspecting them just before the cartons close."

Mill Orchard now has a fully automated production line

Recently Mill Orchard's business structure has changed and Nick and Carey now have 100 percent ownership. As well as bottling juice under their own label, they also bottle under the labels of other businesses, including a firm that supplies juice to China. While that business is relatively small they have since added one very large Chinese customer, Walmart China.

Doing business in China has been a huge learning curve, Nick says.

"We've learned some savage lessons but we're starting to get a bit more savvy now. Things can seem great and then suddenly the order gets cancelled or postponed. You've gone out and bought a lot of stuff and then you've got to sit on it. If it's frozen stuff you're paying freezer storage as well so then you've got to dig yourself out of a bit of a hole."

As well as to China, Mill Orchard now export their Not From Concentrate (NFC) juice to Taiwan and the Pacific Islands. They source apples from around the South Island, oranges from Gisborne, blackcurrants from Canterbury and Nelson, boysenberries from Nelson and carrots from Canterbury.

At T&G Fresh: Ben Smith (general manager growing), Nilesh Patel (grower manager – covered crops) and Andrew Hutchinson (head grower – covered crops)

COMMERCIALISING BIOLOGICALS IN LARGE-SCALE GREENHOUSES

T&G Fresh, the country's largest greenhouse tomato grower, has achieved successful results using biological controls for whitefly in a trial with the A Lighter Touch (ALT) programme and TomatoesNZ. We asked Ben Smith, general manager growing at T&G Fresh, how the trial will change the covered crops division's approach to Integrated Pest Management (IPM).

Why did T&G Fresh agree to be part of the ALT/ TomatoesNZ trial into beneficial insects?

Whitefly has been the Achilles heel for the tomato industry for many years, with the gap between Aotearoa New Zealand and best in class IPM driven by a lack of beneficial insects and an obsolete range of available insecticides.

Whist being one of Aotearoa New Zealand's key produce items, tomatoes are still a minor crop, and therefore the sector struggles to attract the investment that major crops like kiwifruit, grapes and apples have been able to achieve for better IPM programmes and insecticides. We knew this lack of R&D was hurting Kiwi growers and consumers in ways that most people had probably never considered, with the secondary effects and costs probably being far greater than the direct effects of whitefly piercing and sucking the sap from the leaf. We could see that moving the dial on whitefly control was fundamental to long-term commercial and environmental sustainability of the industry.

T&G Fresh has always been committed to sustainable and innovative agricultural practices. We joined the ALT programme to explore effective biological control methods for managing whitefly and tomato potato psyllid in our tomato glasshouses. Over the past five years, our internal research, inspired by TomatoesNZ's (plus their partners like the Bio-Protection Research Centre at Lincoln University) findings, indicated that *Engytatus* could significantly improve pest management in our glasshouses. This ALT trial provided an opportunity to validate these findings and enhance the production and quality of our tomatoes.

Different T&G Fresh sites have taken part at different times over the project duration. Have any differences been noted between the sites?

Our experience has highlighted that while glasshouses may appear similar, they have unique characteristics that can affect the implementation of IPM. Variations in planting seasons, size, and layout of our sites have led to different outcomes. For instance, summer-planted crops require earlier and more intensive use of beneficial insects like *Encarsia* and *Engytatus* compared to winter-planted crops.

> “
> WE’RE INCREDIBLY PROUD OF WHAT WE’VE ACHIEVED SO FAR, WITH OUR BIOLOGICAL CONTROLS FOR WHITEFLY WORKING REALLY SUCCESSFULLY AS PART OF A ROBUST IPM PROGRAMME.
>
> Ben Smith, T&G Fresh general manager growing

Can you tell us any of the specifics about what you’ve been trialling, for example which beneficial insects or which biologicals?

We have successfully bred and deployed two beneficial insects: *Encarsia formosa* and *Engytatus nicotinia*.

Encarsia formosa is a parasitic wasp that targets the nymph stage of whitefly, while *Engytatus nicotinia* is a mirid bug that preys on both whitefly and tomato potato psyllid nymphs. Our trials focused on optimising the release rates of these insects based on pest pressure, emphasising the importance of early detection through robust crop scouting procedures. What we have also seen is the significant role that native predatory wasps can play, even in large scale monocultures.

What were some of the challenges and learnings from taking part in this trial?

One of the primary challenges we faced during the trial was managing other pests that affect tomatoes, such as thrips, russet mites, caterpillars, and tomato potato psyllid. Historically, these pests were controlled by the same insecticides used for whitefly. However, as we shifted towards biological control methods, we had to adapt our pest management strategies.

IN THIS VIDEO CASE STUDY, T&G FRESH'S ANDREW HUTCHINSON JOINS OTHER GREENHOUSE TOMATO GROWERS TO EXPLAIN WHY **FINDING ALTERNATIVE CROP PROTECTION TOOLS IS VITAL TO INDUSTRY CONTINUATION**

While we still have some insecticide options for certain pests, we increasingly rely on biological solutions like *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) and pheromone traps. Tomato potato psyllid remains a significant challenge due to the zero tolerance for psyllids carrying *Candidatus Liberibacter*. Although *Engytatus* helps control this pest, achieving zero tolerance with biological control alone can be difficult.

To address this, we have adopted a strategy of maintaining a "standing army" of *Engytatus* in our greenhouses. This approach allows us to continuously improve our pest management practices and respond quickly to any pest outbreaks.

> **One of the primary challenges we faced during the trial was managing other pests that affect tomatoes, such as thrips, russet mites, caterpillars, and tomato potato psyllid**

Our trials have demonstrated that biological control using *Engytatus* and *Encarsia* is both viable and cost-effective compared to an agrichemical-based approach. We are confident that the IPM programme will always win in the end, but the challenge remains to ensure that it always wins well before any economic thresholds are crossed.

Will there be any long-term changes in the way that T&G controls pests in their greenhouses?

Absolutely, we are committed to making biological control a cornerstone of our IPM strategy moving forward. We believe it is the most effective solution for sustainable pest management. However, the future success of this approach depends on the availability of insect breeding capacity and managing border incursions. We have established a strong partnership with Bioforce to enhance breeding capacity and are vigilant about potential threats – such as the recent fruit fly incursion – to prevent setbacks like those caused by the tomato potato psyllid.

TRIAL REPORT

The project team that has been overseeing the TomatoesNZ/A Lighter Touch trials is finalising a report to coincide with the end of the project. Updates for growers will be given by way of a workshop at the Horticulture conference, taking place in Wellington on 26-27 August.

INSIGHTS FROM **GERMAN ASPARAGUS**

Callum Turner from Boyds Asparagus reports on his visit to Germany to build on his knowledge of the asparagus grading machinery used at the Waikato grower's packhouse. Part of Te Ahikawariki's people capability workstream, the trip provided Callum with fresh insights into how German growers run their packhouses.

Callum Turner : Boyds Asparagus

I began my career at Boyds Asparagus Industries Ltd in Cambridge two and a half years ago, working on the grading line in the packhouse, where I was responsible for loading asparagus onto the conveyors. My strong work ethic and attention to detail led to a more permanent role, and I have since progressed to the position of packhouse supervisor.

In this role, I oversee the day-to-day operations of the asparagus packhouse, manage seasonal staff, and ensure smooth processing during the asparagus harvest. Outside of the harvest season, I'm also responsible for maintenance of machinery and support with upkeep of farm blocks, ensuring the facility and equipment are ready for the next season.

I was lucky enough to be awarded a Grower Capability Fund Grant through Te Ahikawariki, which has enabled me to further my experience and training in the field of horticulture, more specifically asparagus growing and packing.

Callum Turner, packhouse supervisor at Boyds Asparagus

Asparagus is a rewarding crop to grow and supply because it's relatively low maintenance once established and has a relatively long harvest season which runs from September to December.

At Boyds Asparagus, freshness is everything. We pick our asparagus in the morning, have it back in the shed and packed by the afternoon, and it's out the door that evening – ready to hit store shelves the very next day. You simply can't get it any fresher than that.

Recently I was fortunate enough to be able to travel to Germany to meet with the team at Neubauer Automation who specialise in the development of innovative modern machines for processing asparagus.

One of the two Espaso grading machines at Boyds Asparagus

The company supplies and services machinery worldwide and we have two of these grading machines here at Boyds Asparagus. We utilise the company's technical development to simplify work sequences, reduce costs and increase productivity.

During my visit to Neubauer Automation, I gained insight into the installation and construction process of the Espaso grading machine, as well as its programming, maintenance and servicing. I also learned more about the cultivation of various asparagus varieties.

> **Asparagus is a rewarding crop to grow and supply because it's relatively low maintenance once established and has a relatively long harvest season**

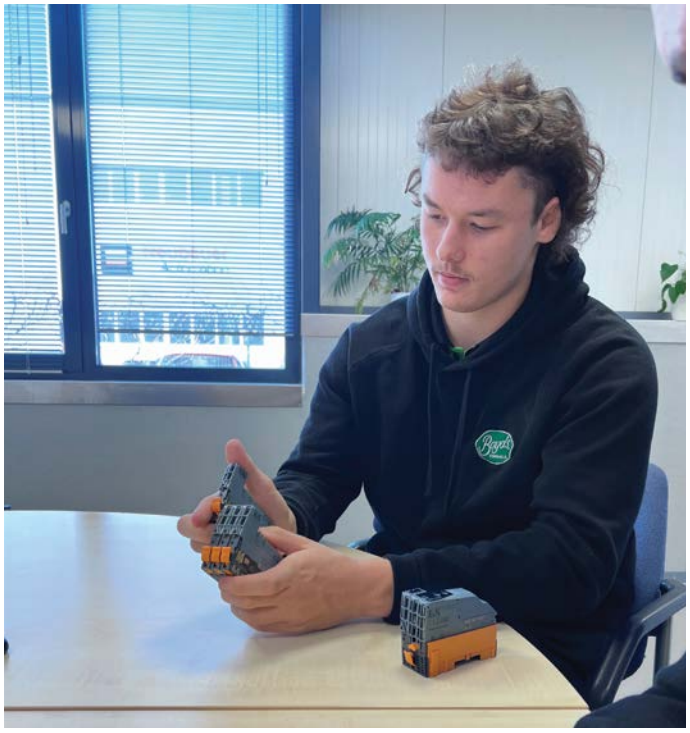
I had the opportunity to tour a local farm and packhouse. The region is known for growing white asparagus, which was prominently on display. Interestingly, the same machinery used for grading and packing the white variety is also compatible with the green asparagus more commonly found in New Zealand.

It was valuable to observe another packhouse in operation and to gain insights and ideas that could potentially be applied back home.

While it was a very busy trip, I did manage to see some sights on my travels, visiting the stone villages of Soest which were full of charm and history – the cobblestone streets and medieval buildings really transport you back in time. After seeing the historically significant Mohne Reservoir with its World War II background, I ended the tour with a few days experiencing the art and culture of Amsterdam. It was an awesome experience, and I feel very thankful to be given such an opportunity.

Finally, after several very difficult years marked by the dwindling of key export markets and a shrinking, consolidating grower base, the New Zealand asparagus industry is finally starting to see light at the end of the tunnel. The domestic market has stabilised, with encouraging signs of growing consumption and increased local demand. This renewed confidence is translating into reinvestment across the sector.

In recent years, we've seen promising developments, including new plantings and significant investment in modern machinery and automation within packhouses – moves that are enhancing the industry's long-term sustainability. Perhaps most excitingly, we are now beginning to see the next generation of growers stepping up, bringing fresh energy and optimism to the future of asparagus in New Zealand. ●



Callum Turner at Neubauer Automation learning about the Espaso grading machine

Callum's trip to Germany was made possible with support from Te Ahikawariki – a Ministry for the Environment-funded project that has been co-developed by vegetable growers, vegetable product groups, Horticulture New Zealand, and mana whenua partners to address gaps in the vegetable sector.

The project has three main focuses:

1. The development of a vegetable research farm in Pukekohe
2. Nationwide extension for growers
3. Developing people capability in the vegetable sector

There was plenty of sunshine in Hawke's Bay at this year's regional final. Photo by Bruce Jenkins

UPDATE FROM HAWKE'S BAY

As the Hawke's Bay apple season winds down, we look back at what was an exceptional growing year for the 2025 harvest. After five years of very difficult times starting with the Covid-19 years, ongoing rain events and then of course 2023's cyclone, it was a welcome relief to have such a good growing year.

Brydon Nisbet : Hawke's Bay Fruitgrowers' Association president

Harvest time for apples was early with excellent colour, quality and size. By all accounts we had the labour needed to get the crop off in a timely fashion, so we are thankful to all our orchard staff, Kiwi harvest crews and of course our overseas workers from the Pacific – our valued Recognised Seasonal Employer staff. Growers are now busy pruning and looking forward to next season's crop.

Heretaunga Sustainable Water Group

The Hawke's Bay Fruitgrowers' Association (HBFA) is an active participant in the Heretaunga Sustainable Water Group, with Callum Ross being one of our representatives along with HBFA's executive Richard Pentreath, who is also chair of the Horticulture Advisory Group (HAG).

With the region's freshwater limits under pressure and allocation decisions looming, the group's multi-stakeholder body has been focused on refining modelling scenarios, identifying potential storage opportunities, and finding pathways to the equitable sharing of water between iwi, primary industry and community users.

The group has welcomed a temporary reprieve from the Hawke's Bay Regional Council, which has paused its proposed cuts to water allocations (some of which would have

John Paynter received the Joe Bell Trophy from HBFA president Brydon Nisbet. Photo by Bruce Jenkins

reduced growers' access by up to 50 percent) until an Environment Court decision is made: this is expected in late 2026.

Our growers are committed to ongoing and sustainable water use and have made significant investment in environmental stewardship – supporting aquifer recharge, water recycling, efficiency improvements and water storage initiatives.

HBFA remains committed to ensuring the voice of fruit growers is not only heard but helps shape our future – a fit water allocation framework for Hawke's Bay.

Land usage – protecting our fertile soils

The local council currently has plans in place to build around 2000 homes (approx. 470ha) on our fertile lands between Hastings and Flaxmere. HBFA stands opposed to this along with Horticulture New Zealand.

With the Government looking at changing key aspects of the National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land (NPS-HPL), it's important for us as an association to continue to advocate for our growers to safeguard and protect our precious soils here on the Heretaunga Plains.

HortNZ do a superb job of spearheading the work around these issues by way of submissions and speaking to key Government officials on behalf of all growers in key growing areas not just in Hawke's Bay but around the country.

Sam Carter won the Hawke's Bay Young Fruit Grower of the Year and will go on to compete in the National Final this September. Photo by Bruce Jenkins

HBFA innovation award and scholarship evening

HBFA supports education in the horticulture sector. Trainee programmes taught through the Eastern Institute of Technology and the Primary ITO saw 27 graduates complete their studies in Fruit Production L2, 3 & 4 and L5 diploma in Fruit Production and L5 diploma in Post-Harvest on our awards evening night. We also awarded 23 HortNZ scholarships and 22 HBFA Charitable Trust and Horticentre scholarships.

Last year's Hawke's Bay and National Young Grower of the Year winner Grace Fulford took out the Emerging Achiever award. HBFA's award for innovation in the fruit sector, the Fourneau Award, went to Peter Richards from CR Automation.

Young Fruit Grower of the Year 2025 – congratulations Sam Carter!

This year's Hawke's Bay Young Fruit Grower of the Year competition was an outstanding showcase of the future talent driving our horticulture sector forward. The two-day event, held in Hastings, tested a range of practical and theoretical skills – from machinery handling, pest identification to the group leadership panel – and of course the speech competition which was held on the awards dinner night. The standard of competition was incredibly high with the passion, knowledge, and professionalism shown by our eight contestants outstanding.

We are proud to announce that Sam Carter of T&G Global took out top honours, claiming the title of 2025 Hawke's Bay Young Fruit Grower of the Year. Second place went to George Andrew from Mr Apple, while third place was awarded to William Hirst of Rockit Global. We're incredibly proud of all the finalists here at HBFA. Sam will no doubt be a strong contender for the National Young Grower of the Year final to be held in Christchurch mid-September.

Joe Bell Trophy awarded to John Paynter

The night also included HBFA's prestigious Joe Bell Trophy presentation for services to the industry. This year we were honoured to award the Joe Bell to John Paynter, in recognition of his decades of service and contribution to the pipfruit, summerfruit and kiwifruit sectors. John's career has spanned more than 40 years, most notably through his leadership of Johnny Appleseed Holdings and Yummy Fruit Company. John has been a tireless champion of New Zealand apples and a key figure in driving innovation, export growth, and brand development across the sector. His efforts have shaped both the local and international reputation of Hawke's Bay as a premium growing region.

We extend our warmest congratulations and thanks to John for his remarkable contribution to the industry and for inspiring the next generation of growers and leaders.

Q&A WITH **ERIN WAGSTAFF**

John Deere Australia and New Zealand Marketing Manager, Small Ag and Turf, Erin Wagstaff shares some of the products and technology supporting New Zealand tree crop growers.

A GUSS unit fitted with the Smart Apply Intelligent Spray Control System

John Deere Australia and New Zealand marketing manager for small ag and turf, Erin Wagstaff, at the launch of the 5ML in 2023

Erin, can you tell us about Smart Apply?

The Smart Apply Intelligent Spray Control System™ is a LiDAR-based sprayer system retrofittable to almost any pre-existing or new orchard air blast sprayer.

The LiDAR (light detection and ranging) sensor is mounted on the sprayer's front and detects the presence and density of foliage. Once foliage is detected it triggers the solenoids on the nozzles to release spray – so you are reducing chemical usage and airborne drift.

What kind of savings are you seeing in the field in real-world conditions?

In water and chemicals, it's up to 73 percent in an ideal scenario and in quite young trees. As trees mature, that comes back a bit. It also depends on sprayer configuration. Some vineyard customers use an over-the-row sprayer, which is more targeted on foliage areas, and we are seeing 40 percent reduction in chemicals and 87 percent reduction in airborne drift.

This targeted spraying results in better coverage and less frequent spraying, so customers are getting additional fuel and labour savings.

How does it work with farm management software?

Smart Apply has its own platform, linked with John Deere Operations Center™. Its data comes in 3D form, and it provides additional data like tree count, tree density, volume of foliage, etc. In the Ops Center you can combine spray data with machine statistics such as location, time and running hours.

Does it provide documentation?

Yes, the documentation comes in the form of a map based on plant density and you can see where the highest chemical output was across a field, and a report sheet showing data such as number of litres applied per hectare.

Does Smart Apply work with your semi-autonomous sprayer, GUSS?

Yes, Smart Apply can be fitted from factory on a new GUSS (Global Unmanned Spray System) unit or retrofitted if you have current GUSS units. Having Smart Apply on GUSS means you have a semi-autonomous machine (or fleet) and they are spraying to the best possible efficiency. One person can monitor up to eight GUSS machines and with Smart Apply also fitted, so you are saving on labour, chemicals and water.

What other products would be valuable to *NZGrower & Orchardist* readers?

The 5ML tractor was released two years ago and we have nearly 200 units on the ground across New Zealand and Australia. It was designed with our tree nut and orchard customers in mind with a very low-profile cab. It can be fitted with extras such as limb lifters to protect your trees, and we offer different axle configurations to customise to your application width.

Looking forward, what technology is coming to this sector?

John Deere has publicly shared our vision of an autonomous battery-electric solution for this market. We have made some fantastic progress and are looking forward to having these solutions in market in the coming years. We will also be offering a performance upgrade autonomy kit for the 5ML, so any existing New Zealand 5ML customers will be able to retrofit their machine. ●

JOHN DEERE

Visiting the Koala Farms nursery with Daniel Sutton, Michael Hicklin, Mike Hope and Calvin Geyde

AUSTRALIA HAS SAME ISSUES **BUT SIZE TO SOLVE THEM**

Australia's vegetable sector has the same issues as New Zealand's but has the size – sector and individual business size – to solve them.

Andrew Bristol : Vegetables NZ communications manager

That's my conclusion after spending five days in Queensland, as part of Vegetables NZ's Brisbane tour of learning.

Every Australian grower we met talked about the challenges of growing the best crop possible, responding to changing consumer preferences, and staying in business – and in that order. They were all upbeat about their businesses' future but knew they would have to adapt – just like they've always had to.

The tour spent the first two days in and around Gatton, inland from Brisbane, before returning to Brisbane for Hort Connections – which attracted more than 4000 delegates and more than 200 trade exhibitors from across the Australian vegetable, fruit, nut and flower sectors.

The tour joked that Gatton is the Pukekohe of Queensland. In the area, we visited three large growing operations: the Mulgowie Farming Company, Koala Farms and Kalfresh Vegetables. All three businesses are vertically integrated with packhouses. Koala Farms also has its own nursery – because they are big enough to do so and want the control.

All three growing operations had in common a focus on soil health and their growing having as little impact as possible.

Mulgowie grows sweetcorn and green beans. Sustainable agriculture manager Andrew Johanson talked about "learning how to do things without chemistry" since the mid-90s, when agchem resistance in the area first became rife.

Andrew's mantra is "healthy soil, healthy plants and healthy people". He's a big fan of as little tillage as possible and likes to "keep living roots in the ground" for as long as he can to optimise nitrogen.

Andrew's growing is all evidence-based. For example, he outlined how they have been able to increase their sweetcorn yield by 11 percent by using buckwheat as a cover crop. What's more, by using no till or little till, they have been able to reduce their fuel costs by 43 percent because the tractors are doing less work. However, because the cost of fuel has gone up so much, they are spending the same amount of money.

> **All three growing operations had in common a focus on soil health and their growing having as little impact as possible**

Andrew's colleague Steve Martin spoke even more passionately than Andrew at times. Steve talked about how their growing methods result in far healthier plants, with higher brix that "taste better and last longer in the fridge". Steve's vision is that, one day, vegetable growers like Mulgowie will be able to make nutrient claims in marketing.

At Koala Farms, we were welcomed by founder Anthony Staatz who said they were a "very open book sort of business. This doesn't mean that what we do is the best, but it works for us and there's much more value in people sharing."

Anthony, his son Nick and nursery manager Rohan Bonnell talked candidly about their business, and their trial-and-error approach – in the nursery and in the field. Koala Farms grows all sorts of lettuce, broccoli, cucumbers and spinach – between states so they can supply the chain stores (through a third party, which is rare in Australia) 365 days a year.

Like Mulgowie, Koala Farms practises a minimum till approach to growing and is very focused on soil health. They also rotate their crops constantly, which is helped by their size.

Kalfresh grows and packs carrots (May-January), onions (October-December), snacking capsicums and beans, which they even export to New Zealand. They also have a sideline in organic beans, corn and baby watermelon.

Head of agriculture Craig Dingle – who just happened to be named the 2025 Corteva Agriscience Young Grower of the Year later in the week at the Hort Connections gala dinner – said Kalfresh aims to "sell everything we grow". This objective was very apparent in the carrot packing shed, where they process and pack their carrots in many different ways, from whole to 'coins', in response to consumer demand.

Koala Farms founder Anthony Staatz

Horticulture™ New Zealand
Ahumāra Kai Aotearoa

Notice of the 20th Annual General Meeting (AGM)

Tuesday 26 August 2025, 4pm at Tākina Wellington Convention and Exhibition Centre.

Business

1. Welcome and apologies
2. Voting and proxies
3. Obituaries
4. Approve minutes from the 19th AGM
5. Chair and Chief Executive Report on Horticulture New Zealand activity
6. Approve audited financial statements for year ended 31 March 2025
7. Review of Constitution
8. Levy rate
9. Director remuneration
10. Approve 2025/26 budget
11. Approve auditors for 2025/26
12. Notices of motion
13. General business

Call for Notices of Motion

Any board member, affiliated organisation or active grower member wishing to have a matter considered at the AGM must give notice in writing to the Chief Executive of Horticulture New Zealand (email to: kate.scott@hortnz.co.nz) of the notice of motion no later than Tuesday, 8 July 2025 at 10am. Notices should include the wording of the motion to be voted on and up to one A4 page of explanatory notes. Notices of motions will be listed on Horticulture New Zealand's website www.hortnz.co.nz on Wednesday, 16 July 2025 and will feature in the NZGrower & Orchardist magazine (August issue).

The tour visited the Gatton research station and saw the ecorobotix ARA, ultra-high precision robotic weed sprayer – part of Queensland's VegMech initiative

Craig said whereas there used to be 32 carrot packing sheds in the area 30 years ago, today there are just two. However, Kalfresh does pack for other carrot growers.

In the field, Craig and farm manager Angus Stainlay again spoke candidly about the challenges of growing – rising labour, fertiliser and agchem costs – and keeping up with consumer preferences.

Kalfresh is experimenting with robotics in the field, namely a solar powered FarmDroid autonomous seeder and weeder. Craig said using the latest technology makes sense for them because of their size and rising labour costs.

> **Biostimulants along with robotics are part of the drive to use fewer agrichemicals by improving 'natural' soil and plant health, while increasing yields**

The trade exhibition as part of Hort Connections was full of new technology (including some very impressive tractors) and companies selling biostimulants. Tour sponsors, Fruitfed and Valagro+Syngenta Biologicals, told the tour the value of the biostimulant industry is currently around US$4 billion and expected to reach US$9.75 billion by 2032.

Biostimulants along with robotics are part of the drive to use fewer agrichemicals by improving 'natural' soil and plant health, while increasing yields. Biostimulants and robotics are where growing, white coats and laboratories come together. The tour was fortunate to go behind the scenes at the Queensland University of Technology (QUT), to see some of the research being done on plants (including genetic modified organisms) as well as the university's robotics development laboratory.

QUT's campus and facilities are outstanding, and we were made to feel very welcome – just like we were everywhere else we went. QUT is right in the city centre, by the river, and the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre is just across one of the many bridges, on the other side of the river.

But what if people continue to eat fewer vegetables? In Australia, exhaustive research has shown that Australians only eat 1.8 servings of vegetables a day. That is about the size of a medium apple.

Justine Coates is the managing director of Plus One Serve of vegetables. She spoke with passion about Australia's government, industry, health and retail sectors' multi-faceted behaviour change programme, to get Australians to add one more serve of vegetables (half a medium apple) to their diet a day.

Mulgowie sustainable agriculture manager Andrew Johanson

The return on investment on this six-year programme is outstanding: A$12.30 for every A$1.00 invested, with 85 percent of the total return going to growers, which is equally amazing. What's more, the extensive research that informs this programme says that increasing consumption by 58 percent – which is what adding one more serve represents – is achievable. The programme will provide A$3.3 billion in economic benefits and reduce health care costs by $1.38 billion, providing a whopping A$4.68 billion in total benefits.

"Andrew's mantra is "healthy soil, healthy plants and healthy people"

No wonder everybody in Australia – government, industry and retail – has got in behind this campaign. Vegetables NZ is currently liaising with Justine and Plus One Serve because we believe the programme could be applied in New Zealand. Watch this space…

Vegetables NZ would like to thank all the Australian hosts, and acknowledge the support of all the tour's sponsors: Fruitfed, Valagro+Syngenta Biologicals, and Te Ahikawariki.

Horticulture™
New Zealand
Ahumāra Kai Aotearoa

HortNZ Director Election

Vote to help shape our sector

Whether you're a large grower or a smaller operator, this is your opportunity to influence decisions that affect you.

The HortNZ Board provides vision, governance and strategic direction for HortNZ. There are no allocated seats for product, sector or regional representatives.

Voting is now open and closes 12 noon, 10 July.

Candidates

Simon Cook

Shane Flynn

Tom Keefe

Dermott Malley

Lochie McNally

John Murphy

Carol Palmer

Erin Simpson

Shaun Vickers

Visit www.hortnz.co.nz to learn more about each candidate - including their profile, Declaration of Interest, and watch a short video where they share their views on the value of pan sector advocacy for growers.

WARM AND WET WEATHER

It was a warm autumn, and wet for a lot of the country – with Hawke's Bay a notable exception. Heading into the winter season, NIWA expects air temperatures above average and a bit more rain than usual.

In NIWA's autumn seasonal climate summary, climate scientist Gregor Macara says there were more northeasterly winds than normal over the country, resulting in above average to well above average seasonal temperatures in every region of the country.

From 2-3 March, warm northwesterly winds over the South Island and lower North Island contributed to 17 locations observing record or near-record high daily maximum temperatures. Most notably, Clyde reached 33.1°C on 2 March, which was the town's highest autumn temperature since records began in 1978.

Up north, drought conditions extended into autumn for Northland, Waikato, Horizons, and Marlborough-Tasman regions. But by mid-to-late April, the dry conditions had eased for most of these regions. The exception was Waikato, where dryness persisted in some parts until early-to-mid May.

> **"The arrival of ex-tropical cyclone Tam on 16 April brought wet and windy weather with the greatest impacts observed in Northland, Auckland, the Bay of Plenty, and Coromandel**

Autumn was a sunny season in Auckland, with the city observing its highest autumn sunshine total since records began in 1963. Of the six main centres, Auckland was the warmest.

However, overall in autumn, rainfall was above normal or well above normal for many growing regions. From 3-4 April, an atmospheric river contributed to heavy rainfall and surface flooding for western and northern parts of the South Island, and northern parts of the North Island. The highest one-day rainfall was 290mm, recorded at Tākaka on 3 April.

The arrival of ex-tropical cyclone Tam on 16 April brought wet and windy weather with the greatest impacts observed in Northland, Auckland, the Bay of Plenty, and Coromandel.

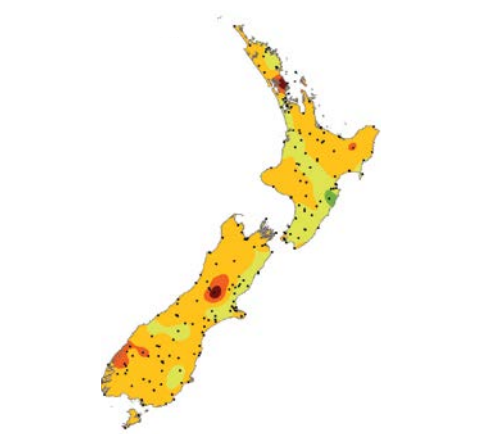
From 30 April – 1 May, persistent rain fell over many parts of the country. Parts of Canterbury recorded more than double their normal autumn rainfall. A state of emergency was declared in Selwyn District, Christchurch, and Banks Peninsula. Significant flooding was reported in Leeston, Doyleson and Southbridge (south of Christchurch).

On 29 May, numerous thunderstorms struck parts of the upper North Island. Large hail was reported in Cambridge.

In contrast, rainfall was below normal (50-79 percent of normal) in Hawke's Bay. At the end of autumn, soils were drier than normal in Whanganui, Manawatū, southern and central Hawke's Bay.

Looking forward to the winter season, sea surface temperatures (SSTs) remain well above average around most of New Zealand, except in offshore areas east of the North Island. Seasonal air temperatures are expected to be above average across all New Zealand regions. While cold snaps and frost will occur, they are expected to be less frequent than usual.

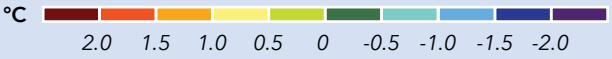
Rainfall totals are expected to be above normal for the north of the North Island and near normal for the east of the South Island. For all remaining regions of the country, rainfall is forecast to be near normal or above normal.

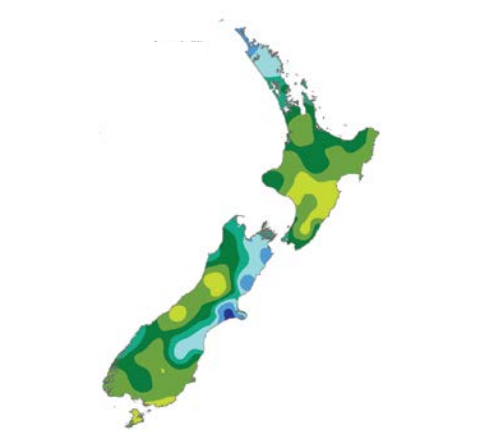


MEAN TEMPERATURE ANOMALY

March to May

Temperatures were above normal across the whole country this autumn – particularly in Northland, Auckland, Pukekohe and Bay of Plenty.

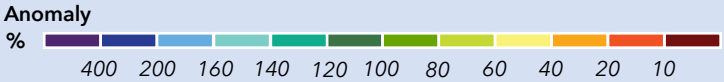


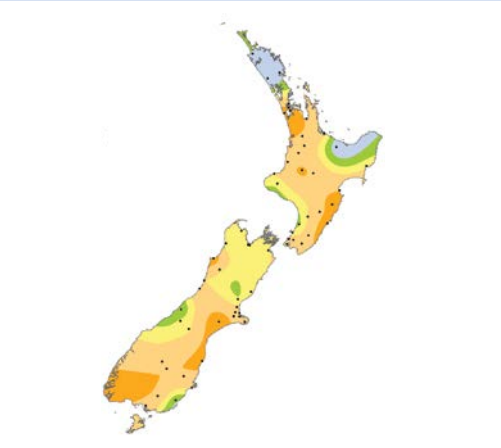


RAINFALL ANOMALY

March to May

Hawke's Bay saw a bit less rain than normal, while the rest of the country experienced more rain than normal – and a lot more in Northland, Tasman and especially Canterbury.

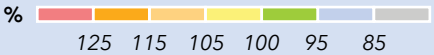




BRIGHT SUNSHINE ANOMALY

March to May

In Auckland and Pukekohe it was not only warm, but also sunny. The city observed its highest autumn sunshine total since records began in 1963.



Aspect	2024 rules	2025 changes
Upfront deductions	No upfront deductions (except for low-value assets ≤$1,000)	20% immediate deduction for new assets + depreciation on remaining 80%
Commercial buildings	0% depreciation rate reintroduced for non-residential buildings	0% rate remains, but eligible for 20% upfront deduction if newly built/improved post-22 May 2025
Low-value assets	Immediate deduction for assets ≤$1,000	Unchanged, but excluded from Investment Boost (cannot 'double dip')
Depreciation methods	Choice of diminishing value (DV) or straight-line (SL) methods	Methods unchanged, but total deductions increase due to 20% upfront boost
Eligible assets	Standard depreciable assets (excluding buildings with 0% rate)	Expanded to include new horticultural plants, land improvements, and aquaculture infrastructure
Second-hand assets	Depreciable if not excluded by specific rules (e.g., buildings)	Excluded from Investment Boost (must be new or new to New Zealand)

WHAT THE **2025 INVESTMENT BOOST MEANS**

The New Zealand Government's 2025 Budget delivers big news for the horticulture sector, with the new Investment Boost scheme reshaping how tax depreciation works for certain business assets.

Margaret Holmes : Director, Generator CA, Chartered Accountants Tauranga

The Government introduced the Investment Boost to drive long-term productivity and economic growth by encouraging businesses to invest in modern, high-performing assets.

By offering a 20 percent upfront depreciation deduction, the policy provides immediate tax relief and improves cash flow, making it easier for growers to upgrade equipment, adopt sustainable practices and reinvest in operations.

The scheme replaces broader building depreciation with a more targeted approach, focusing support on sectors like horticulture that are vital to New Zealand's export economy. Ultimately, it reflects a shift toward fiscally responsible incentives that aim to strengthen the economy through smarter, future-focused investment.

Here's what that means in practice – and how growers and horticultural businesses can benefit.

A fresh take on depreciation

From 22 May 2025, businesses can immediately deduct 20 percent of the cost of eligible new assets in the year of purchase. The remaining 80 percent is still depreciated under the standard rules.

For example, buying a new $100,000 irrigation system would allow a $20,000 deduction straight away – plus $8,000 more (at a 10 percent depreciation rate) over the rest of the year. That's $28,000 in deductions in Year 1, compared to just $10,000 under the current rules.

What qualifies?

The Investment Boost specifically includes:

- New horticultural plantings (e.g. kiwifruit, apples)
- Land improvements such as drainage and irrigation
- Greenhouses, equipment and machinery
- Some aquaculture and forestry infrastructure.

Crucially, second-hand assets already used in New Zealand do not qualify. Assets must be new, or at least new to New Zealand. Also excluded are residential buildings and land.

A special note on commercial buildings: though their depreciation rate remains at zero percent, if they are newly built or significantly upgraded after 22 May 2025, they qualify for the 20 percent upfront deduction too. This includes packhouses and storage facilities.

What this means for growers

1 Better cash flow
The 20 percent deduction provides early tax relief. That's cash in the business sooner, helping fund further improvements or buffer seasonal costs.

2 Modernisation and innovation
The scheme lowers the cost of investing in new technology, sustainable growing methods, and climate-resilient infrastructure. It rewards forward-thinking growers ready to upgrade.

3 Encouragement to invest
With the policy aiming to lift GDP (Gross Domestic Product) by one percent over two decades, this could drive broader economic gains.

Key considerations

There are a few catches. The assets must be first used or ready for use after 22 May 2025, so timing matters. Projects already underway may miss out unless they can be separated into individual assets. Assets with both business and private use must be apportioned correctly, and clawbacks may apply if business use later drops.

Clear documentation will also be vital. Proof of new asset status (especially for imports) and proper accounting records will be needed to stay compliant.

Final thoughts

This is a real opportunity for New Zealand's horticulture sector to reinvest in its future. While the fiscal cost of the policy ($1.7 billion per year) raises some sustainability questions, the direction is clear: invest in productivity and resilience.

Now is the time for growers to plan capital investments strategically, check eligibility carefully, and seek professional advice where needed. The Investment Boost could be just what the sector needs to stay competitive in a changing global market. ●

Disclaimer
This article is intended as general information only and does not constitute tax, financial, or legal advice. The depreciation rules outlined in the 2025 Investment Boost scheme may have different implications depending on your business's specific circumstances. Before making any investment or tax planning decisions, please seek personalised advice from a qualified accountant or business advisor. Legislative details are subject to change, and interpretation may vary based on Inland Revenue guidance and future updates.

REDUCING RURAL THEFT

The last thing growers need to worry about is theft – but it happens.

Earlier in this year's kiwifruit season, NZ Kiwifruit Growers chief executive Colin Bond noted that thefts on orchards in Te Puke and further afield seemed to be particularly prevalent. Growers around the country have reported people helping themselves to other crops as well – not to mention quad bikes, tools and diesel.

So what can growers do about theft? According to Inspector Dave Martin, manager rural policing at NZ Police, putting up deterrence signage does work.

"Indicate the use of cameras – and preferably use cameras," he says. "This will help obtain evidence of offenders, offending and times."

Produce theft occurs across many crop types. Photo by Ivor Earp Jones

Dave also encourages the horticulture community and businesses to share information about thefts and how to identify stolen produce offered for sale.

Growers should ensure employees, contractors and visitors know what security measures are in place and keep track of who has keys and access to different areas.

Gary Chisholm from WTE Wireless Technologies in Christchurch installs long-range wireless networks over farms, linking sensors and alarms to one base station which he says drives the costs down – whether using satellite links or cellular networks if in range.

Gary works with FarmSentry™, which is a solution to monitor intrusion and theft as well as crop growing conditions such as temperature and soil moisture.

He has worked with farmers who have installed CCTV cameras, but thieves often wear masks and cover up number plates. Sometimes it is too dark to identify offenders. The combination of wireless connectivity and the security app means growers can get notifications in real time as events happen – such as movement in an onsite garage or toolshed, a gate being opened or a diesel tank being used.

In a trial in parts of North Canterbury, NZ Police have been offering free security assessments and subsidised security packages to rural property owners. The trial aims to identify benefits that can be leveraged to prevent crime and harm in rural communities.

"The trial is still running and entering the evaluation stage," Dave says. "The continuation of the subsidised security assessments and packages will be part of that evaluation."

If a theft takes place the NZ Police encourage reporting in all instances. If witnessed at the time of theft, call the police emergency line on 111 immediately. ●

SECURITY MEASURES TO CONSIDER

- CCTV cameras with number plate recognition and motion detection
- Tank level sensors
- Motion-activated flood lights and horns, and movement detectors inside garages and stores
- Gate alerts or driveway beams
- Barrier arms or gates with electronic PIN code entry
- Door locks, trailer locks/couplings, high-tensile chains and quality padlocks
- Deterrence signage
- Wireless network connectivity and software to manage notifications when something unusual occurs

HOW TO AVOID **HIGH INTEREST ON PANDEMIC LOANS**

It's just over five years since the Government of the day rolled out Small Business Cashflow (SBC) scheme loans to help businesses, including those in the horticulture sector, to get through the after-effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The loans were made available from 12 May 2020 to help small-to-medium businesses affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. More than 129,000 businesses were issued loans totalling $2.4 billion. The average amount approved was $17,000.

Most loans were taken out in the first few months of the scheme (May and June of 2020), with a five-year repayment period. Many have now reached the end of the loan term and should be repaid in full or on a repayment plan.

For the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector (which horticulture sits in) more than 4000 loans were taken out by 3800 customers who borrowed $66.1 million.

As of June, Inland Revenue says there were 2300 outstanding loans taken out by 2000 customers in the sector. Of those loans, 460 are in default with a current balance of almost $8 million.

From this June Inland Revenue will start charging default interest on loans which have not been paid off or are not under a repayment plan. The default interest rate is currently 13.88 percent.

FOR THE AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND FISHING SECTOR MORE THAN

4000 LOANS
WERE TAKEN OUT BY
3800 CUSTOMERS
WHO BORROWED
$66.1 MILLION

To avoid unnecessary default interest, Inland Revenue is encouraging growers with outstanding loans to repay their loan.

If your SBC loan is unpaid 20 working days after the final repayment date, the loan will default, and Inland Revenue may:

- ⚠ Demand full payment
- ⚠ Add default interest at 13.88 percent to the outstanding loan balance
- ⚠ Take legal action to recover the debt.

Inland Revenue says there are a few things you can do to check you're on top of your loan:

- ✓ Log in to myIR to check how much you owe and when your final repayment date is.
- ✓ Make extra payments in myIR to avoid default interest charges of 13.88 percent. Make sure you select your SBC loan as the debt you want to pay.
- ✓ Set up a repayment plan if you can't repay the outstanding balance in full. To set up a plan, you need to send us a message in myIR or call us. Having a repayment plan means your interest rate will be 3 percent.

For any changes to a repayment plan or any changes in circumstances, growers can also contact Inland Revenue through the secure channel in their myIR account to discuss options.

ⓘ You can find further information about SBC loans on IRD's website: **www.ird.govt.nz** or follow the QR code

The Government's proposal could free up large areas of LUC 3 land for housing development – for example around Tauranga, still one of the fastest growing urban areas in New Zealand

HAVE YOUR SAY ON **SPECIAL AGRICULTURAL AREAS**

It's a story seen up and down New Zealand. When new neighbours settle on lifestyle blocks next to the orchard or a school moves in next to the vegetable farm, the concerns about spray, noise, trucks and even the dirt on the roads start to roll in.

Emily Levenson : HortNZ environmental policy advisor

Back in 2022, the National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land (NPS-HPL) came into place to address this problem. The objective of the policy is to protect the most fertile soils from housing development and save them for growing and farming for now and future generations. The policy defined 'highly productive land' based on soil type, categorised with the Land Use Capability (LUC) system.

LUC 1-3 – the most likely to be flat and fertile – was considered highly productive, but now the Government is looking to remove LUC 3 from the definition to free up more land for housing development.

What's interesting is that the Government is considering drawing boundaries around some of the country's best horticultural land and giving it all of the protections of the NPS-HPL, regardless of soil type. These chosen regions would be called Special Agricultural Areas.

No council has fully implemented highly productive land policy yet, so growers haven't seen its full power in action. While the NPS-HPL immediately stopped urban or rural lifestyle rezoning or subdivision of highly productive land when it became operative, there are policies with the potential to support growers that will only come into effect through regional and district plan changes. For instance, the NPS-HPL directs councils to prioritise and support the use of highly productive land for primary production and manage the complaints growers face from new neighbours.

With Special Agricultural Areas, growing regions that want those protections on LUC 1-3, not just LUC 1-2, can call for special recognition. Horticulture New Zealand can make that case if that's what growers want, but we'll need to present criteria for why the region is nationally or regionally important. Criteria could include a sufficient scale of low-

Potential pros and cons of Special Agriculture Areas

✓ Pros	✕ Cons
• Growing land (LUC 1-3) protected from subdivision and urban/rural lifestyle rezoning, reducing the likelihood of incompatible land uses next to horticulture • Protects the cohesiveness of growing areas, without pockets of housing or lifestyle in the middle • Council directed to manage reverse sensitivity effects on the area (meaning neighbours' ability to complain about noise, sprays, etc.) • Could be used as an advocacy argument to justify other policies that enable horticulture in that area, such as ability to discharge and access water	• Doesn't change other policies that might restrict your ability to grow, like the ability to discharge or take water • Means growers can't subdivide or develop their LUC 3 land as part of retirement or otherwise

emissions, high-value exports, contributions to domestic food supply or a unique combination of climate and soils to support a certain crop.

The downside of recognition as a Special Agricultural Area is that it would prevent you from subdividing or developing your LUC 3 land, which some growers consider part of their retirement plans.

Pukekohe and Horowhenua were listed as possible examples of Special Agricultural Areas in the consultation documents, but HortNZ wonders whether the Heretaunga Plains, Waimea Plains, Tauranga, Kerikeri or other dense horticultural land facing housing pressures should be considered. ●

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

Do you think your growing area should be a Special Agricultural Area? Let HortNZ know: **emily.levenson@hortnz.co.nz** by 21 July 2025.

Follow the QR code to see maps of your growing area with and without LUC 3 or visit: **www.hortnz.co.nz**

Kiwifruit New Zealand

Notice of election & nomination of candidates

Kiwifruit New Zealand is established under the Kiwifruit Export Regulations 1999 for the purpose of authorising Zespri to export New Zealand grown kiwifruit, to determine collaborative marketing applications, and to monitor and enforce measures that mitigate the potential costs and risks of a single desk exporter.

The Kiwifruit New Zealand Board consists of six members of which three members are elected by producers for a three-year term. Due to one member's term expiring on 30th September 2025, KNZ will be conducting an election in the coming months to fill that position.

Voting eligibility:

Producers who are eligible to vote in the election are:

1. the owners of land in New Zealand on which kiwifruit is produced for export sale; or
2. such other persons determined by the Board to be producers of such kiwifruit

All producers will be receiving a Notice of Election which will be sent early July 2025. If you believe you are eligible to vote in the election, and do not receive a Notice of Election, please contact Kiwifruit New Zealand (details below). To be eligible to vote, producers are required to provide sufficient evidence that they qualify as a producer. Based on the information provided, the Board will determine the eligibility to vote.

Nominations:

Nominations are invited for the election of one Director to the Board of Kiwifruit New Zealand. The election will be held in September 2025.

To request a candidate nomination form, please contact KNZ at the details below. If more than one nomination is received a vote will be held. The voting papers will be sent by email or post to all producers.

The candidate receiving the most votes will take office for a three-year term effective from 1 October 2025.

Timetable

Nominations open	21 July 2025
Nominations close	4 August 2025
Voting papers sent to producers	22 August 2025
Voting opens	22 August 2025
Voting closes	8 September 2025
Results announced	10 September 2025
Newly elected Director to take office	1 October 2025

Contact:
Amy Te Whetu
PO Box 4683 Mount Maunganui South, 3149
Phone: (07) 572 3685 Email: admin@knz.co.nz

A field day at the Kaipara Moana catchment to demonstrate native plantings

DUAL BENEFITS OF NATIVE PLANTINGS

Two separate projects in Northland have identified common ground that results in fewer pests, less pesticide use and reduced soil sediment flows into Kaipara Harbour.

Gina Jewell : A Lighter Touch programme

Kūmara grower Luke Posthuma farms near Te Kōpuru, south of Dargaville, within the Kaipara Moana catchment. Last season Luke trialled annual flower strips to increase biodiversity on his farm, part of a project run by the A Lighter Touch (ALT) programme.

Having seen pest management benefits from that trial, Luke was already considering the use of flowering natives in non-cropped areas as his next step. Then he joined the new Kaipara Moana Remediation (KMR) partnership with Horticulture New Zealand's Growing Change project.

That partnership has super-charged Luke's native planting ambitions – thanks to the fortuitous insights of KMR planting specialist and nursery liaison David McDermott.

David says he is a "bit of a plant nerd" and when he discovered the ALT native planting list, it got him thinking about what a native species mix for pest management benefits might look like in a Kaipara catchment context.

The Biodiverse Planting on Vegetable Farms project, an ALT partnership with Vegetables NZ and Onions NZ, aims to demonstrate that increasing plant biodiversity on vegetable farms can result in more beneficial species, fewer pests in crops and less pesticides required.

One component of the project is native perennial planting designed to provide food and habitat through winter to support key beneficial populations, which in turn contribute to pest suppression in the vegetable growing system. The project's location in Pukekohe also factored into the native plant selection.

The Kaipara Moana Remediation biodiversity plantings alongside drains will contribute to pest management as well as reduced soil sediment flows into Kaipara Harbour

David loved the concept of encouraging biodiversity in order to reduce chemical inputs and was keen to see if the KMR programme could support growers in realising pest management benefits from their planting, in addition to the native plantings' primary purpose of reducing soil sediment flows into the Kaipara Harbour.

However, he had to be conservative in choosing what to add to the KMR mix.

> **One component of the project is native perennial planting designed to provide food and habitat through winter to support key beneficial populations**

"With KMR, we're planting at large scale and we're typically using species that are going to do well in the open, they're hardy as. We have to be super mindful about survival in our species selection."

That said, there were some extra species in the ALT list which were a great match both in terms of sediment reduction and hardiness.

"The pōhuehue is a really awesome plant, it's great for controlling and reducing bank erosion, plus the bees and other beneficial insects love it too. It's a total winner for this situation.

SPECIES PLANTED


Karo

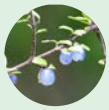

Kānuka


Akeake


Coastal tree daisy


Mānuka


Ti kōuka


Mingimingi


Pinātoro


Pōhuehue


Kāramuramu

Nine kūmara growers have signed up so far to the Kaipara Moana Remediation partnership with HortNZ's Growing Change, which will see 33,000 natives planted this winter across 7.3 hectares

"Also, pinātoro (New Zealand daphne) is well suited to the free-draining soils of the Kaipara eco district and is pollinated by a variety of insects, including native bees, butterflies and moths. We're also including lots of the usual suspects (in the KMR plant mix) all of which offer various biodiversity, shelter and soil conservation values," David says.

A Lighter Touch agroecological technical lead Jeff Smith says the synergy between the two programmes is a real win for growers.

Another significant benefit is that KMR is helping to regionalise the native plant list in a vegetable growing region.

"Part of the extension of our biodiversity project is to have satellite sites in key vegetable growing areas around the country, and we have a group of grower champions who are supporting that work by trialling the biodiversity components we've demonstrated at the Pukekohe Research and Demonstration Farm.

"Our project technical lead Olivia Prouse has been working with growers in other regions to tailor the plant species list to their specific region, and this collaboration with KMR is another step forward in that work which will benefit Northland vegetable growers."

KMR's David McDermott appreciates that for many growers the idea of retiring land for native planting is quite radical. "Starting off with a really generous offering that can get some people on board to show the value to others, I think it's a really good approach."

Thanks to 50 percent funding from KMR and 40 percent through Growing Change, Luke will have almost a hectare planted this winter with about 9500 natives established on land he regards as waste areas of the farm.

"We're planting along the drain banks, and we've got some mud springs which flow into our cropping area. It's right on the margins of where we're cropping. We're also doing a bit of wetland planting and riparian planting.

Work is underway to identify plant species lists specific to different regions of New Zealand

"In heavy rain, we can lose quite a bit of topsoil down the hill, so the planting will act as a buffer and will stop any sediment getting into the drain," Luke says.

Luke sees great value in being able to achieve dual benefits to his farming system from the native plantings, through selection of species which support pest management benefits, as well as reducing soil erosion and sediment flow.

> **Luke will have almost a hectare planted this winter with about 9500 natives established on land he regards as waste areas of the farm**

"I'm a young grower, and I think insecticide resistance is only going to become a bigger and bigger problem. If we can get natives planted now which will encourage beneficials, I'm creating a habitat to always have a source stock of them.

"Even if we're only doing trials for the next ten years learning how to get best use of beneficials, I can be fairly confident I will have beneficial insects in early spring. Our place is pretty barren, we don't have many trees on it, we're surrounded by dairy farms, with a lot of grass and grass weeds. This native planting is going to create a source area for those beneficial insects to come out of," he says.

SUSTAINABLE VEGETABLE SYSTEMS FOR KŪMARA

Kūmara growers have been supporting work to tailor the SVS tool to the unique growing requirements for kūmara. An initiative of the Northern Wairoa Vegetable Growers Association, the project will ensure the decision support tool also helps kūmara growers to optimise inputs and promote sustainable agricultural practices. Read our interview with Vegetables NZ vice chair Warwick Simpson in the May issue of *NZGrower & Orchardist*.

KAIPARA MOANA REMEDIATION AND GROWING CHANGE

Earlier this year Horticulture New Zealand, through its Growing Change project, partnered with Kaipara Moana Remediation (KMR) to support growers to take up KMR practical projects. These include fencing and native planting programmes to promote on-farm biodiversity, improve soil management practices to reduce overall freshwater impacts and contribute to wider freshwater improvements in the Kaipara Moana catchment.

KMR is the largest harbour restoration initiative in New Zealand and one of the largest catchment groups in the country. It invests in projects to restore wetlands, fence off rivers and streams, plant trees and regenerate forest on erosion-prone land with the long-term aim of halving sediment flows into the Kaipara Harbour.

Read more about the HortNZ and Kaipara Moana Remediation partnership on the HortNZ website.

www.hortnz.co.nz

FIZZ offers bold, invigorating taste and eye-catching pinky-red flesh that sets it apart in the apple category

NEW ZEALAND'S FIRST PINKY-RED FLESH APPLE

Prevar is 'fizzing with excitement' to launch its first pinky-red flesh apple cultivar, PremA021, under the brand name FIZZ™. This striking variety has been exclusively licensed to Snazzy Fruit for production and sales, with small volumes entering key markets this season.

"Its visually striking flesh colour makes it captivating for retailers and consumers," says Amanda Lyon, Prevar's brand manager.

Josh Parlane, managing director of Snazzy Fruit, describes FIZZ as "distinctive and exciting, with vibrant flesh and bold, effervescent berry-like flavour giving it strong potential in premium markets worldwide."

Containing anthocyanins with potential antioxidant and anti-inflammatory benefits, FIZZ appeals to health-conscious consumers. Commercial plantings are underway, with Snazzy Fruit actively working with growers and retailers whilst welcoming expressions of interest.

Developed through Plant & Food Research's breeding programme, FIZZ joins Prevar's innovative portfolio including Rockit™, Joli®, Dazzle™, Sassy™ apples and PIQA® Pears.

www.fizzapple.com

Kiwifruit waste is being transformed into a sustainable leather alternative for the fashion industry

TURNING KIWIFRUIT WASTE INTO HIGH-END MATERIALS

Scion researchers are collaborating with KiwiLeather Innovations to transform waste kiwifruit into a sustainable alternative to vegan leather, with additional funding from the Bioresource Processing Alliance.

Scientist Kelly Wade says the project taps into global momentum around sustainable textiles. The eco-friendly material could offer a better alternative to vegan leathers, which are often made with polyurethane or PVC – plastics that don't break down and stick around in landfills forever.

"Fashion brands are under growing pressure to use more sustainably sourced materials, reduce waste and plan for what happens to materials at the end of their life. This project speaks directly to that, while also creating new value streams for New Zealand's primary industries."

Technical challenges include managing the fruit's high sugar content, improving flexibility using vegan proteins like soy and pea, and enhancing water resistance through natural coatings. The material incorporates fibrous backing for durability whilst maintaining environmental benefits.

www.scionresearch.com

MPI's Sustainable Food and Fibre Futures has co-funded projects with industry, such as the A Lighter Touch programme – pictured here at a Zespri-hosted field day on tackling passionvine hopper

CO-INVESTMENT FUND REPLACES SFFF

The new Primary Sector Growth Fund (PSGF) has replaced the Sustainable Food and Fibre Futures (SFFF) fund. The Government is investing $246 million in the new fund over four years through Budget 2025. As a public-private co-investment fund, the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) will usually contribute up to 40 percent of the total cost of a project.

The Government says the PSGF will refocus MPI's existing investment tools to back projects that drive higher-value outcomes across the food and fibre sector value chain – supporting the Government's goal of doubling exports by value in ten years and returning value to the farmgate.

The SFFF fund is now closed for applications. MPI will continue to support current projects and programmes until their completion, including A Lighter Touch, the onion industry's Humble to Hero and the apple industry's Smart and Sustainable programmes. The SFFF fund was introduced in 2018, replacing MPI's Sustainable Farming Fund and the Primary Growth Partnership.

www.mpi.govt.nz

Mark Piper is the inaugural chief executive of the Bioeconomy Science Institute. Photo courtesy of Plant & Food Research

SCIENCE SYSTEM **SHAKE-UP**

From 1 July New Zealand's public research system is undergoing its most significant transformation since the Crown Research Institute (CRI) system introduced in 1992. Those CRIs are being consolidated into four new research organisations.

One of those, the Bioeconomy Science Institute, brings together AgResearch, Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research, Plant & Food Research and Scion. It will focus on horticulture, agriculture, aquaculture, forestry, biotechnology and the native estate. The combined institute will have around 2300 people, including more than 1500 researchers, based across 20 locations nationwide.

The horticulture industry's levy organisations engage CRIs as science providers for horticulture programmes including Vegetables Research & Innovation, A Lighter Touch and other joint industry-government funded projects.

For example, Prevar and the Kiwifruit Breeding Centre are joint ventures with Plant & Food Research. Other projects, such as the Woolworths and LeaderBrand regenerative agriculture project, work collaboratively with scientists from Plant & Food Research.

Work for these projects and programmes will continue under the umbrella of the Bioeconomy Science Institute.

> **"It's not enough to have great science – we need that science to power start-ups, lift productivity, and create jobs**

Plant & Food Research chief executive Mark Piper has been appointed as the Bioeconomy Science Institute inaugural chief executive to lead the transition into a single organisation. He says the new organisation will provide huge opportunities for horticulture.

"We are bringing together expertise right across the primary sectors and the native estate to create one amazing institute with a clear focus on impact," he says.

BIOECONOMY SCIENCE INSTITUTE WILL HAVE AROUND
2300 PEOPLE
INCLUDING MORE THAN
1500 RESEARCHERS
BASED ACROSS
20 LOCATIONS
NATIONWIDE

"It allows us to more easily pull together best teams with a range of capabilities and experiences to deliver the outcomes they need. This will support faster development and commercialisation of high-value products and technologies that anchor future growth, alongside a focus on the environment."

Another amalgamation of CRIs is the Earth Science Institute, which brings together NIWA and GNS Science. The Earth Science Institute is also significant for horticulture, with science into weather, climate and geothermal energy.

A report for Cabinet by the Science System Advisory Group chaired by Sir Peter Gluckman and published in August 2024, concluded that the CRIs, which are small by international standards, were showing mission creep.

"They compete with each other largely because of their commercial model and associated incentives. Such competition for activity and income to support institutional needs rather than giving priority to meeting the needs of 'NZ Inc.' is wasteful and does not well serve the needs of the Crown (the shareholder)."

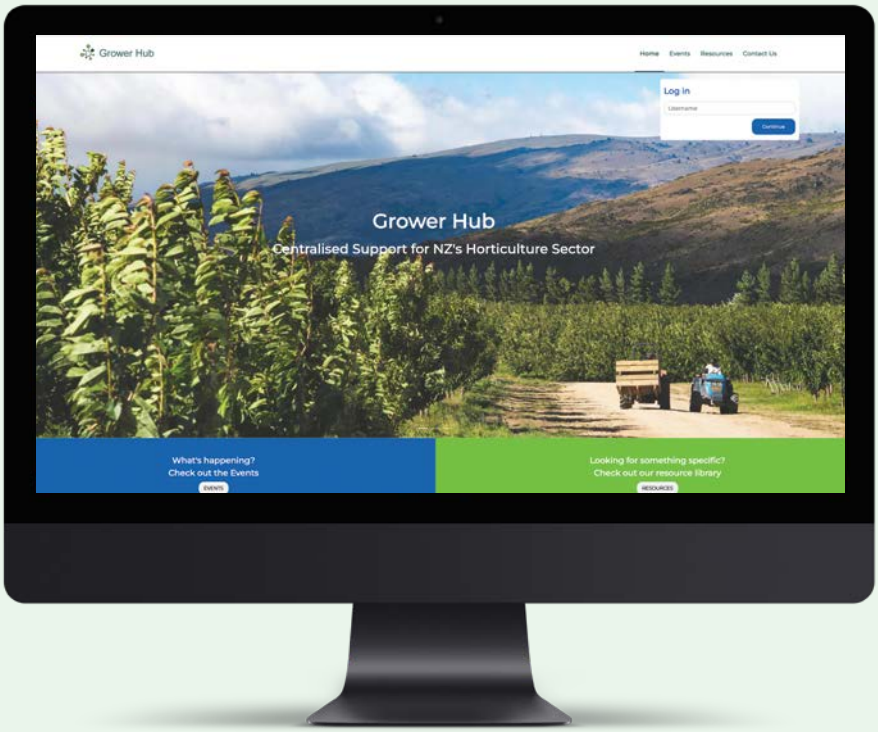
The amalgamation of the CRIs is the first step in forming four Public Research Organisations, which will also include Public Health and Forensic Science (formerly Environmental Science and Research) and a new advanced technology organisation. Appropriate legislation changes to establish the organisations are anticipated in 2026.

Science, Innovation and Technology Minister Dr Shane Reti says, "Critically, the new research organisations will have a strong commercial focus, with a mandate to translate science into real-world outcomes and commercial success.

"It's not enough to have great science – we need that science to power start-ups, lift productivity, and create jobs. This is about turning research into results for New Zealand's economy."

Callaghan Innovation, a Crown entity, is being disestablished. Administration of innovation and research and development grants will move to the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment. Responsibility for the Bioresource Processing Alliance, New Zealand Product Accelerator and New Zealand Food Innovation Network will transfer to the most relevant of the new Public Research Organisations.

The changes do not affect independent research organisations such as Lincoln Agritech, Cawthron Institute, Aqualinc Research and Bragato Research Institute.



GROWER HUB HAS LANDED

Last month HESL launched the Grower Hub – a new shared, central portal and secure website for growers, exporters, packhouses, and industry associations.

Key features include weather and disease platforms, GIS data and interactive crop maps, export registrations, levy payments and crisis management.

Made for growers

Developed by Horticulture Executive Services Ltd (HESL), the new portal has been designed with members at its heart, says James Kuperus, chief executive of HESL. The portal has been made possible with support from the Ministry for Primary Industries to better support crisis management.

"We're excited to announce the launch of Grower Hub," James says. "It simplifies how you interact with the industry by bringing everything you need into one secure, easy-to-use place.

"We're starting with four product groups and will continue onboarding others over time. At the same time, we are making it available to district associations."

The initial four product groups are: Vegetables NZ, Onions NZ, Summerfruit NZ and NZ Persimmon Industry Council. The Pukekohe Vegetable Growers Association, Horticulture Canterbury and Tairāwhiti Growers Association district associations are also on board. These seven entities will be live by the end of August.

Members – including growers, exporters, packhouses, and industry associations – can log in to manage their personal and company information. They can access both current and historical resources, manage levies and view events all in one place, James says.

"What this means, for example, is that if you're a member of three organisations like Onions NZ, Vegetables NZ and the Pukekohe Vegetable Growers Association, you can log in and see all of the events, resources, mailing lists, and more in one place."

KEY FEATURES AT A GLANCE

- **Update your details:** Manage your personal and company information.
- **Access the weather and disease platform**: Located under 'My Dashboard' and then click 'My Tools' for real-time insights.
- **Access product group resources**: Quickly find the latest resources across product groups.
- **Control your subscriptions**: Choose which updates, notifications, and emails you receive.
- **Stay informed**: View and RSVP to upcoming industry events – all in one place.
- **Track levy payments**: See your levy payments.
- **Manage properties and crops**: Update GIS data, view interactive crop maps and block-level details.
- **Export registrations**: Register for export markets where required (Cherries to Taiwan, onions to Indonesia, etc.).
- **Crisis management**: Quickly respond to new biosecurity incursions or weather events, identifying those in the area by crop.

More features will be added as the development continues, including market monitoring, greenhouse gas calculators and trade data. Grower Hub is still evolving, and your input helps shape its future.

Why Grower Hub?

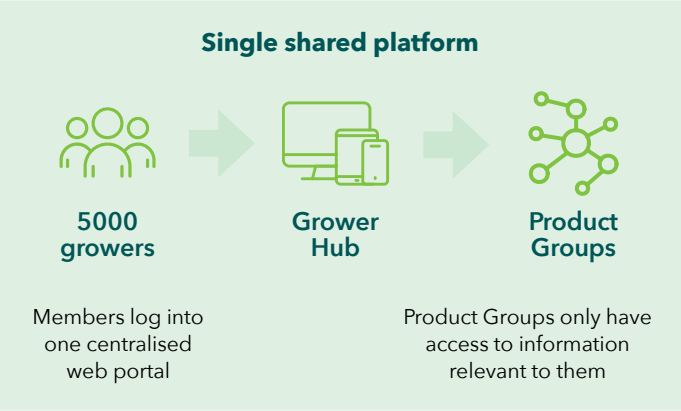
The horticulture sector in New Zealand includes roughly 20 product groups and 20 district associations, each with their websites and databases, totalling approximately 40 separate systems.

With so many systems, it becomes difficult for members to find information and update records. From the associations' perspective, it is hard to maintain accurate information.

Grower Hub solves these challenges by combining systems into one streamlined platform, reducing duplication, improving accuracy, and boosting efficiency across the sector.

Onions NZ general manager Kazi Talaska says the product group will be one of the first to utilise the new Grower Hub.

She says the portal will make it easier for onion growers to access industry intelligence, as well as its considerable library of market access and research reports.



"We have started onboarding members and are looking forward to using the capabilities that the portal can offer," she says. "We are moving toward increased requirements for exports and compliance. Having updated systems helps increase our resilience in this space, allowing us to be set up for better communications and data capture for future requirements." ●

SIMPLE, SECURE ACCESS TO GROWER HUB

Logging in is easy – no password required. If you are a Grower Hub entity member, enter your email, which is your 'username', and you'll receive a secure magic link straight to your inbox that gives you access to Grower Hub. **www.growerhub.nz**

If you have feedback, ideas, or need help logging in, please get in touch at **info@hesl.co.nz**

A strong season for organic kiwifruit is driving the increase in exports and higher returns, however organic growers face mounting costs and regulatory barriers

ORGANICS VALUE HIGHER DESPITE HURDLES

Organic fruit and vegetables are now the most valuable organic category in New Zealand, replacing dairy, according to a new market report published by Organics Aotearoa New Zealand (OANZ).

In June OANZ launched the 2025 Organic Sector Market Report at Parliament, updating the sector's 2020 report. Organic horticulture (excluding viticulture) is worth $244.7 million, an increase of 71 percent from 2020.

Fruit and vegetables are also leading the export categories at 40.3 percent, ahead of dairy (35.3 percent), and wine (12.2 percent).

This growth is driven by organic kiwifruit and shows a strong value proposition for the organic export category. However, the report also indicates that improving yields and higher premiums are behind much of the sector's growth, rather than an increase in hectares cultivated under organic certification.

The global market for organic products is forecast to continue growing. Furthermore, the premiums commanded by organic products in international markets are likely to increase over the next decades, according to the report.

"Organics is delivering strong returns and long-term market relevance," said OANZ chief executive Tiffany Tompkins. "But the sector is still working with one hand tied behind its back."

Tiffany says production in New Zealand is well behind global benchmarks, limiting the sector's ability to scale.

Zespri reported about 750ha of New Zealand organic kiwifruit in its 2023/24 production analysis.

Organic kiwifruit growers produced over 7 million trays in the 2024/25 season, which is around 4 percent of the total crop.

Demand for Zespri Organic Green and Zespri Organic SunGold™ is strong in key export markets.

"The Covid-19 pandemic saw the rapid growth of the general organic category," Zespri says. "Zespri has expanded in organic markets where genuine consumer demand exists, including Germany and the United States. With organic kiwifruit having less than 1 percent share of the organic fruit bowl, there is also significant headroom to grow."

Zespri says higher organic sales at its retail partners in the United States including Whole Foods, Costco, Trader Joe's and Sprouts was fuelled by the younger generations who grew up with organics and are willing to pay more for organic products.

On kiwifruit returns per tray, organics outperformed conventional, with organic SunGold the only to see an increase in 2024/25 to $15.20 per tray.

Zespri Organic Green growers – despite generally having lower yields than conventional growers – pocketed a record high $92,306 average per hectare, above conventional green's $89,783 per hectare.

However, certification and regulatory costs are rising, particularly impacting small and medium-sized producers and discouraging new entrants. The figures suggest a degree of consolidation in the organic sector, mirroring dynamics across horticulture. Organic operators, particularly those at the smaller end of the scale, are facing significant pressure from mounting costs, and as a result, the economic viability of organic operations is increasingly scale dependent.

OANZ chief executive Tiffany Tompkins says the organic sector is still working with one hand tied behind its back

The National Organic Standard remains unfinished, more than two years after legislation was passed and despite over a decade of sector advocacy. Without it, OANZ says, producers face uncertainty and inconsistent recognition in international markets.

Organic equivalency agreements with key trading partners remain undone, delaying access to lucrative premium markets and adding compliance costs for exporters.

According to OANZ, the Government's proposed Gene Technology Bill poses an existential threat to organic producers, "jeopardising New Zealand's GE-free brand and risking the loss of access to premium organic export markets that prohibit GE contamination."

Consultation on the Gene Technology Bill closed earlier this year, attracting thousands of submissions including from HortNZ, OANZ, NZ Certified Organic Kiwifruit Growers Association (COKA), BioGro and other organic growers and organisations. The select committee report is expected at the end of July.

MP for Taranaki-King Country and organic farmer Barbara Kuriger at the 2025 Organic Sector Market Report launch at Parliament

"This is a sector that's doing what Government strategies call for – lifting export value, protecting the environment, and boosting regional economies," said Rob Simcic, chair of OANZ. "But we can't lead the world with a regulatory system stuck in the past. If we get this right, organics can become a core pillar of New Zealand's future."

> **"With organic kiwifruit having less than 1 percent share of the organic fruit bowl, there is also significant headroom to grow**

HortNZ environmental policy advisor Emily Levenson was at the report's launch and says there was a strong political presence at the Parliament event.

"Hopefully that will muster Government support behind organic horticulture and the need for the National Organic Standard to be completed in time to meet trade deadlines."

HortNZ was proud to sponsor the 2025 Organic Sector Market Report.

"It's important for us to have reliable data about our organic growers to support our advocacy on their behalf," Emily says. "HortNZ will be making a submission on the Ministry for Primary Industries' proposal for organic cost recovery and future consultations related to the National Organic Standard in the coming months." ●

ORGANIC GROWERS PRODUCED OVER

7 MILLION

TRAYS OF KIWIFRUIT IN THE 2024/25 SEASON, WHICH IS AROUND

4 PERCENT

OF THE TOTAL CROP

The 2025 Organic Sector Market Report is available for download on the Organics Aotearoa New Zealand website: **www.oanz.org**

BLACKCURRANT IN SPACE?

The phrase 'imposter syndrome' seems to be something of a cliché these days, but we felt exactly that as we were setting up a NZ Blackcurrant demonstration booth at the recent American College of Sports Medicine conference in Atlanta – surrounded by high-tech medical and sports training and assessment equipment, not to mention organisations as diverse and well-known as WADA (World Anti Doping Agency) and Gatorade!

Mike Callagher : NZ Blackcurrant Co-operative general manager

For some background, the American College of Sports Medicine is the largest sports medicine and exercise science organisation in the world. It holds an annual conference bringing together sports science academics, sports team and association medical staff, nutritionists and students to discuss the latest in sports medicine and nutrition.

The 2025 conference was held in late May at the Georgia World Congress Center in Atlanta. Thanks to the efforts of Jeni Pearce, a well-known New Zealand nutritionist and technical lead performance nutrition at High Performance Sport NZ, the programme at the 2025 conference included a symposium showcasing the benefits of anthocyanins – the key active ingredients in New Zealand blackcurrants – in performance and recovery in sport.

The symposium was presented by a couple of leading academics from the United Kingdom, Prof Mark Willems (University of Chichester) and Dr Sam Shepherd (recently of Liverpool John Moores University) who have studied health benefits of New Zealand blackcurrants for more than a decade.

Each entertained and educated the attendees with their literally dozens of successful studies on New Zealand blackcurrants – revealing the plethora of health benefits. These include improving post exercise recovery, increased blood flow and even enhanced performance – something already well known to many sports organisations in this part of the world, but a complete revelation to the mostly American audience, many of whom knew nothing at all about blackcurrants.

This last comment is a salient point which is well understood by blackcurrant brands who have tried to break into the United States market for many years.

Blackcurrants were introduced by European settlers in the United States as early as the 17th century and were cultivated at large scale in the northern states until the early 20th century. It was thought the plant acts as a host for white pine blister rust and seen as a threat the timber industry.

It was a busy three days of introducing the mostly American high-performance sports crowd in Atlanta to blackcurrants

In 1911 the Federal Government banned the cultivation, sale, and transport of blackcurrants and removed all plantations. It has taken more than 100 years for some states to reverse the ban.

Put simply the population in the United States has not grown up with the fruit in the same manner as much of the Commonwealth and Europe, so the discussions with interested conference attendees nearly all started with an education piece on what blackcurrants are (and are not!)

Despite the conference being somewhat limited in commercial opportunities, the symposium and exposure of New Zealand blackcurrants to researchers, nutritionists and related medical staff should provide a platform for further research on New Zealand blackcurrant anthocyanins and raise awareness in the sports mad industry in the United States.

Oh, and to quickly explain the title, I had a very pleasant discussion with a nutritionist who was interested in introducing blackcurrant to her programme, and as she spelled out her email address ...nasa.gov… the horizon suddenly opened up to something beyond our imagination! ●

NEW ZEALAND HORTICULTURE CONFERENCES 2025

The countdown is underway for the horticulture sector's flagship event – the New Zealand Horticulture Conferences 2025.

The two-day event at the Tākina Wellington Convention and Exhibition Centre in Wellington on 26-27 August includes the popular Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) conference.

The theme for this year's RSE conference is *Honotahi* – together as one; it promises to deliver a great line-up of speakers and content relevant to employers, businesses and industry involved with the RSE scheme.

The 2025 horticulture conference features a programme specifically designed for growers, industry leaders, suppliers and all those who contribute to New Zealand's fruit and vegetable sector.

It will be a great opportunity to share stories, exchange ideas and draw inspiration – all aligned with the Aotearoa Horticulture Action Plan, the industry's strategic roadmap to a more sustainable, productive and resilient future.

The popular Recognised Seasonal Employer conference is part of the two day New Zealand Horticulture Conferences 2025

A strong contingent of Government ministers will speak at the Horticulture Conferences:

- **Nicola Grigg**, Associate Minister of Agriculture (Horticulture)
- **Winston Peters**, Minister of Foreign Affairs
- **Andrew Hoggard**, Associate Minister of Agriculture
- **Nicola Willis**, Minister for Economic Growth
- **Todd McClay**, Minister of Agriculture, Minister for Trade and Investment
- **Erica Stanford**, Minister of Immigration.

The Horticulture Conferences will also showcase a range of industry experts and leaders including:

- **James Kilty**, chief executive of Transpower, discussing future energy challenges
- **Sara Meymand** from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, providing insights on trade policy and negotiations
- **Arama Kukutai,** horticulture business leader and entrepreneur
- **Shamubeel Eaqub,** Chief Economist Simplicity
- **Con Williams**, Craigmore Sustainables
- **Dr Charlotte Severne** – Māori Trustee, Te Tumu Paeroa.

"This programme will deliver valuable insights on the issues that matter most to growers, capital investment and growth to workforce development and succession, all aimed at boosting productivity and environmental stewardship," says Kate Scott, HortNZ chief executive.

The event will also include the presentation of the Horticulture Industry Awards, recognising individuals and teams who have made outstanding contributions to the sector.

To learn more and secure your place at the Horticulture Conferences, visit: **www.hortnz.co.nz**

SUPPORT FOR YOUNG GROWERS

The two remaining regional competitions for the 2025 Young Grower of the Year take place in July – starting with Canterbury on 10 July and then 17 July in Gisborne.

Thanks to the hundreds of growers who have turned out to support young growers and enjoy the gala dinner events in Central Otago, Pukekohe, Hawke's Bay, Nelson and Bay of Plenty. We'll share the results of all the regionals in an upcoming issue of *NZGrower* & *Orchardist*.

For growers, these events and evening galas are popular as a break from the orchard and farm and a chance to catch up with the community. Supporting staff participation also delivers concrete benefits beyond simple goodwill. The investment frequently returns dividends through enhanced skills and motivation.

The winners of each of the regional Young Grower of the Year competitions will contest a range of modules and challenges for the national New Zealand Young Grower of the Year title and $10,000 prize package.

This year the final will be held in Christchurch at the Airforce Museum of New Zealand. The event comprises of competition days, 10–11 September, and a Leadership panel and Awards Dinner on 11 September.

The Young Grower of the Year competition is an annual event, run by Horticulture New Zealand, designed to recognise and celebrate our most talented young growers. The competition highlights the skills, knowledge, and leadership potential of our next generation, ensuring the industry remains strong and sustainable.

Eight contestants took part in the Hawke's Bay Young Fruit Grower of the Year – demonstrating the high calibre of talent in the region. Photo by Bruce Jenkins

Hawke's Bay growers turned out in June at the Young Grower regional gala dinner, a great opportunity to support talent and catch up with local networks. Photo by Bruce Jenkins

For more details and to secure your gala dinner tickets, visit **www.younggrower.co.nz**

FROM PESTS TO POTENTIAL: LATEST RESEARCH

To stay ahead in a landscape shaped by environmental regulation, emerging pests and shifting consumer demands, Potatoes New Zealand continues to invest in a robust research, development and extension programme.

Kate Trufitt : Potatoes New Zealand chief executive

Focused on supporting growers by reducing production challenges, increasing yields and ensuring the sector remains competitive as well as sustainable, Potatoes New Zealand's current research and development activity spans six core priorities.

What follows is an overview of the current and potential projects aligned with these priorities:

1. Powdery scab management
2. Tomato potato psyllid / Liberibacter control
3. Potato tuber moth management
4. Early blight control
5. Nitrogen management – Sustainable Vegetable Systems
6. Common scab (Literature review and extension)

1 Powdery scab management

Powdery scab, caused by *Spongospora subterranea,* is a persistent challenge, with spores that can remain viable in soil for over a decade.

Lead researcher: Prof Calum Wilson, University of Tasmania

Two major approaches are currently under evaluation:

Diffuse to confuse
One field trial, recently harvested and pending final reporting, assessed five treatments designed to disrupt zoospore migration, a critical step in the infection process. These compounds work by 'confusing' the zoospores, preventing them from locating their potato host roots, and in some cases, killing them before infection.

Germinate to exterminate
A long-term trial is about to start which will use copper gluconate to stimulate premature germination of resting spores in the absence of a host. Since germinated spores cannot survive without a plant, this method could dramatically reduce the pathogen's presence in soil over time. The trial is set to take place over a three-year period at a location with a long-standing incidence of severe powdery scab.

Next steps: Pending technical panel approval
Future research to be determined may also explore the use of soil nutrients like manganese (Mn), zinc (Zn), and boron (B) as well as soil microflora to enhance resistance or suppress pathogen development.

2 Tomato potato psyllid (TPP) / Liberibacter control

The Canterbury Potato Liberibacter Initiative (CPLI), established and funded by a committee of Canterbury growers and processors, with additional financial support from Potatoes New Zealand, is pioneering work to manage TPP and *Candidatus Liberibacter solanacearum* and it is scheduled to conclude this year, however several critical projects will be continuing:

Calcium propionate trial
Lincoln University is assessing the efficacy of calcium propionate (a food preservative), applied via seed and/or foliar, in reducing *Candidatus Liberibacter solanacearum* infection or psyllid activity. Trials are still underway.

Longevity of different insecticides on potato crops
These trials focus on determining how long various insecticides can be detected within the plant following a spray application. The next step will be to investigate how long these residues remain effective in controlling psyllid populations.

Psyllid suction trapping and gut content analysis
To find out the feeding source of psyllid during winter, the idea is to collect psyllids through suction traps or sweep netting and analyse the gut contents to determine where they have been over-wintering.

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) in potatoes
There is a proposal to set up a commercial production site in Canterbury using a strict IPM approach with the aim of achieving comprehensive pest management without relying solely on pesticides.

3 Potato tuber moth management

The Pukekohe region continues to experience high pressure from potato tuber moth (PTM), exacerbated by soil cracking, warm and humid climates, pesticide resistance and ambient storage conditions.

Key activities
Monitoring Network: An expanded PTM trapping programme includes deployment of smart traps that enable real-time monitoring, data collection and distribution of results. Comparative analysis is planned to be conducted against traditional pheromone traps.

Post-maturity management
Trials will examine various soil moulding techniques post-crop maturity to assess efficacy in minimising tuber exposure and subsequent infestation.

4 Early blight control

BioScout spore detection technology is under consideration to enable early warning and targeted fungicide application. The system comprises an autonomous spore trap and a real-time dashboard for fungal disease monitoring. It identifies airborne spore presence prior to symptom expression, supporting precision spray decisions and reducing unnecessary inputs.

A proposal is being developed to explore the impact of chitosan, a naturally derived biopolymer, on disease suppression, plant vigour and tuber quality.

5 Nitrogen management – Sustainable Vegetable Systems (SVS)

The SVS tool (www.svstool.co.nz), developed collaboratively by industry stakeholders, supports growers in meeting environmental standards while maintaining productivity.

Some of the benefits of the SVS tool include:

- Informed nitrogen management decisions
- Reduced nutrient loss and leaching
- Compliance with regional freshwater regulations
- Enhanced agronomic and economic performance

Next phase: Ongoing maintenance, industry engagement and education initiatives are planned to ensure wide adoption and integration of the SVS platform.

6 Common scab (Streptomyces spp.)

A comprehensive literature review is in progress in response to rising concern about common scab. This will summarise over 50 years of global research, with an emphasis on:

- Crop rotation strategies
- Soil and seed treatment options (biological and chemical)
- Practical, regionally applicable recommendations for New Zealand growers.

Looking ahead: A future driven by innovation

As the industry faces increasing pressures from climate change, cost volatility, shifting consumer expectations and evolving environmental regulations, innovation is more critical than ever. Potatoes New Zealand's research and development strategy will be shaped to reflect these realities, with science-led, grower-driven research, technology and new ideas. This will include investigating alternative products, value-added opportunities and precision tools that will support growers to adapt and thrive in a changing landscape.

Potatoes New Zealand remains committed to delivering high-impact research and practical tools for growers, processors and the wider industry. Through a strong research and development agenda, Potatoes New Zealand's goal is to:

- Strengthen and enhance pest and disease management
- Improve resource use and input efficiency
- Unlock market opportunities through value-add and alternative products
- Equip the industry to adapt to environmental and economic pressures
- Foster long-term resilience, sustainability and global competitiveness.

The future of potato growing will be shaped by our ability to think ahead, adapt quickly and work collectively. Potatoes New Zealand's investment in science-led, grower-informed innovation is central to that vision – for today and tomorrow.

POTATOES CONFERENCE 2025 – REGISTER NOW!

Join growers, processors, suppliers and industry leaders from across Aotearoa at the Potatoes Conference 2025 – packed with insights, innovation and connection.

Date: 12 – 13 August 2025
Location: Christchurch Town Hall

Discover the latest in research, technology and market trends – all focused on growing a strong future for New Zealand's potato industry.

conference.potatoesnz.co.nz

SPONSORSHIP AND EXHIBITOR OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE

To register your interest and find out more, please email: **info@potatoesnz.co.nz**

WET AUTUMN HITS PERSIMMONS

At the NZ Persimmon Industry Council Annual General Meeting in late February, there was a great deal of optimism for the coming season – even after some difficult years caused by unfavourable weather conditions (back to Cyclone Gabrielle which ravaged our growing regions). Exporters reported good interest from markets and growers reported crops showing fantastic quality in volumes back to high average levels.

Ian Turk : NZ Persimmon Industry Council manager

So, with great concern in April, we watched heavy rain warnings coming in for the North Island, resulting in widespread rain, right up to the first days of harvest. Persimmons are highly susceptible to humidity marking, a skin blemish which doesn't affect fruit quality, but makes fruit ineligible for export.

It took us back to 2024 when heavy rain on 19 May saw export packouts drop significantly the very next day.

Now in the 2025 persimmon season, our packouts started at a low percentage and did not recover due to ongoing intermittant rain. At the time of writing a significant volume drop is clear, but not yet finalised.

An upside of course is that there is less fruit in our markets, so less pressure to decrease prices and push volume. It promises to be a short and sharp export season this year. Continued growth in some of our developing markets such as Canada is positive, reducing dependency on Australia which has recently taken around half of all total exports. Australia, as all exporters will know, has rigorous entry requirements so it is pleasing to see a decreasing reliance on this market.

The persimmon industry continues to promote in the New Zealand market, which continues to grow quickly. We partner with 5+ A Day to get our message across and always have fantastic results through their social media. Pick-up by mainstream media from the season start-up press release gives the season a good profile. This year we were excited to have 'Persimmon buses' in the main centres. Persimmon fruit certainly lend themselves to vivid and eye-catching imagery.

Shelf life has always been an interest for our industry, so we are pleased this year to be able to trial 1-MCP [a postharvest application] in different formats. That work is underway now with Plant & Food Research – fruit from the trials is being put away now for assessment in the coming weeks.

TomatoesNZ

CALLING ON SUPPLIERS TO DO THE RIGHT THING

There are many lessons for the New Zealand fresh tomato industry to learn from what has happened in Australia in the last ten months since Tomato Brown Rugose Fruit Virus (ToBRFV) was first detected in South Australia.

Dinah Cohen : TomatoesNZ general manager

One lesson is that every part of the sector has a role to play in biosecurity. This starts with the seeds that are imported, continues with the nurseries that are used to propagate those seeds, and then everyone that provides services to those that nurture the plants to grow the tomatoes that New Zealanders love to eat.

In the last few months, TomatoesNZ has been working with NZ Plant Producers Inc (NZPPI) – the organisation that looks after nurseries – to draw up a list of hygiene guidelines that nurseries should incorporate into their management systems. This includes offering testing for pathogens if a customer asks for it.

> TomatoesNZ has been working with NZPPI to draw up a list of hygiene guidelines

While this guidance is undergoing a review, you the grower can already ask for your seedlings to be tested for ToBRFV. This could be a plant material test or a water sample test.

Doing this before your seedlings are released to you will allow some assurance that the seedlings you plant in your greenhouses are ToBRFV free.

We then call on all of those that offer services to our growers to do the right thing – whether you're a transport provider delivering those seedlings, dropping off crates or picking up plant material waste or taking tomatoes to market. You might be an electrician, a plumber or boiler maintenance specialist. Maybe your service is offering advice to growers on nutrient management or crop protection. Perhaps you deliver bees to our growers to ensure the vital pollination of the flowers. We thank you for the services that you provide to our growers but ask that you do so in a way that considers the biosecurity threats that our industry faces.

Please don't ask to go inside the greenhouse. Where possible transport drivers shouldn't leave their vehicles. If you do have to, as a minimum, please use a clean pair of disposable overshoes and gloves. Have a safe place, away from the greenhouse and packing shed, to leave deliveries. Can a meeting between a rep and a grower happen off-site?

A workshop for 20 Korean growers was provided thanks to Horticentre

Today the threat comes from ToBRFV but tomorrow, next month or even next year, the risk might be from another disease. If we want to have fresh tomatoes on our supermarket shelves, it takes everyone to play their part.

I still have a few tickets available for tomato growers to attend the Horticulture Conference in Wellington, 26-27 August. If you are a TomatoesNZ member, claim a free ticket worth over $600. There will be sessions on energy, our greenhouse tomato Integrated Pest Management guide and much more. Book your trip to the Capital and come and network with like-minded growers. Email me to receive one of the free tickets.

And finally, thank you to Horticentre who provided another fantastic workshop at the end of May for over 20 Korean growers, ably translated by Ian Yong. Thank you for being willing to share your knowledge and your time for the benefit of our growers.

If you have any questions about anything fresh tomato related, please don't hesitate to contact me: **dinah.cohen@tomatoesnz.co.nz**

TOMATOESNZ ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Calling for nominations to the TomatoesNZ board and remits for discussion. These need to be emailed to **dinah.cohen@tomatoesnz.co.nz** by 29 July.

All papers available on the TNZ website: **www.tomatoesnz.co.nz/about/2025-agm**

RESEARCH ROADSHOW
NUMBERS UP ON LAST YEAR

This year's Vegetable Research Roadshow travelled further, connected with more people, and brought research into the hands of growers in more regions than ever before. Now in its second year, the roadshow continues to grow – both in reach and in impact. Organised by Vegetables NZ and Vegetable Research & Innovation, the aim remains simple: to ensure that valuable research, insights and resources are shared directly with the people who need them most – our growers.

Daniel Sutton : Vegetables NZ research, development and extension manager

Over the course of the season, the roadshow made its way to ten locations across the country: Dargaville, Pukekohe, Ohakune, Palmerston North, Ashburton, Ōamaru, Invercargill, Gisborne, Havelock North and Richmond. Each stop offered a tailored programme, reflecting the unique crops, challenges and opportunities of the region.

In Dargaville, for example, the focus was on kūmara. Lincoln University researchers travelled north to speak directly with growers about the latest work on nematodes, a growing concern for kūmara producers. Meanwhile, onion growers in Pukekohe, Palmerston North, Havelock North, Ashburton and Richmond received focused presentations relevant to their local cropping systems.

The roadshow also created a platform for sector-wide issues that affect all growers. One of the most impactful sessions was a presentation on Residues and Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs), specifically addressing minor crops and off-label use. This was a collaborative effort, bringing together expertise from the Agricultural Compounds and Veterinary Medicines (ACVM) register, Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) On-Farm Support, and representatives from the vegetable sector. The discussion covered both the regulatory framework and the real-world responsibilities of growers who need to make use of off-label crop protection options. While this is a common practice in vegetable production, it is not often talked about so openly. The roadshow helped to change that, offering clarity, fostering dialogue and encouraging good practice.

There were many standout moments. One of the most memorable was the participation of Associate Minister of Agriculture Nicola Grigg, who officially opened the Ashburton event and spoke about the Government's work to support viable vegetable production across New Zealand. Her presence underscored the significance of the work being done by growers and researchers alike.

ROADSHOW LOCATIONS

1	Dargaville	6	Oamaru
2	Pukekohe	7	Invercargill
3	Ohakune	8	Gisborne
4	Palmerston North	9	Havelock North
5	Ashburton	10	Richmond

At the Dargaville roadshow Lincoln University's Ella Purvis (standing) and Sandy Hammond presented their research in person

Havelock North saw a big increase in vegetable growers attending this year's roadshow event

Another was the presentation by Leo Farrell, a summer student with the Te Ahikawariki programme, who spoke at the Palmerston North event. Despite being in the midst of his Master's research at Massey University, Leo took time to share his experiences from the Pukekohe Research & Demonstration Farm, offering fresh perspectives and highlighting the importance of attracting new talent into the industry.

> **The roadshow created a platform for sector-wide issues that affect all growers**

The Dargaville event also stood out, not only for its strong turnout but for the level of engagement from kūmara growers. Having Ella Purvis and Sandy Hammond from Lincoln University present their research in person sparked valuable conversations and showed the real benefit of researchers meeting growers where they are.

Every location had its own flavour, but a common thread across all events was the high level of engagement. Growers came with questions, shared insights, and took part in open discussions. This is exactly what the roadshow set out to achieve – putting knowledge into the hands of growers, and bringing the sector together to talk about what's working, what's changing, and what needs attention.

Attendance grew by five percent this year, with over 350 people taking part. That's a fantastic result, especially given that last year's numbers were buoyed by attendance linked to the commodity levy vote. In 2025 it was the content itself, backed by relevance and quality, that drew people in. Regions like Dargaville, Palmerston North, Ashburton and Havelock North saw particularly strong growth in numbers.

Feedback from attendees has been overwhelmingly positive. Over 90 percent of respondents rated the event four or five out of five. Among the most valued topics were the wide range of research currently underway in the vegetable sector, the MPI-led sessions on off-label use, new thinking around on-farm biodiversity, updates on managing Stemphylium resistance, and insights into the work of Te Ahikawariki.

None of this would be possible without the generous support of our sponsors. A sincere thank you to our National Sponsor, Corteva Agriscience, for your ongoing support and commitment to grower-facing research. We would also like to acknowledge our Networking Sponsors – Nufarm, Fruitfed Supplies, Terranova Seeds, Rabobank, A Lighter Touch, and Te Ahikawariki – whose backing made it possible to bring the roadshow to so many different corners of the country.

As we reflect on the successes of 2025, planning is already underway for the next season. The roadshow is becoming an anticipated fixture in the calendar for growers, researchers and advisors alike. We are looking forward to building on this year's achievements and continuing to connect research with practice in 2026. Watch this space.

Export Quality Capsicum, resistant to TSWV & ToBRFV.

RED BLOCKY:

MATHIEU (Commercial Intro)

- HR: Tm:0-3 • IR: TSWV:0 • AFW 200-220 grams
- Stable high quality, high yield. Consistent large fruit size, excellent shelf life, med to tall plant. Easy setting, rapid colouring.

MEDAKAI (Commercial)

- HR: Tm:0-2 • IR: TSWV:0/Lt • AFW 180-200 grams
- Very uniform fruit size and shape. Very long shelf life. High yield, strong vs blossom end rot. Mildew resistance (Lt).

YELLOW BLOCKY:

LEVENTE (Commercial)

- HR: Tm:0-2, IR: • TSWV:0 • AFW 210-220 grams
- Very high yield, consistent quality and size. Compact plant, bright yellow fruit from light green.

PIRATE (E20B.0575) (Commercial Intro)

- HR: Tm:0-3 • IR: TSWV:0 • AFW 200-210 grams
- Exceptional fruit quality, long shelf life. Consistent production, high yield. Blocky golden yellow, paler green, easy to balance.

ORANGE BLOCKY:

E20B.0638 (Research)

- HR: Tm:0-3 • IR: TSWV:0 • AFW 200 grams
- Excellent shelf life and fruit quality. High production, very easy setting, strong, short plant, shiny fruit.

E20B.0639 (Research)

- HR: Tm:0-2 • IR: TSWV:0 • AFW 220 grams
- Larger blocky fruit size with excellent quality. Long shelf life, flexible and adaptable plant, high yield, easy setting.

ROOTSTOCK:

SCARFACE (Commercial)

- HR: Tm:0 • IR: MaMiMj
- Trusted root disease resistance. Increases yield and quality in difficult growing conditions. Nematode resistance.

HAMLIN (Commercial Intro)

- HR: Tm:0 • IR: MaMiMj
- Reduces root disease. Generative rootstock equals compact plants, for vegetative varieties and conditions.

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