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Labour has been the one common issue at our AGMs

Most product groups and related horticulture businesses have recently had their Annual General Meetings (AGMs), with Horticulture New Zealand having had its AGM on 21 September 2022 in Nelson.

Barry O'Neil : HortNZ president

Without the annual Horticulture Conference this year, some product groups found it challenging to get their AGMs organised. Next year, we will have the Horticulture Conference again, and I would like to encourage all product groups to align with the conference, for their own technical programmes and in order to streamline AGMs, with growers already present for the conference so we get more engagement, and so quorums are not such a challenge.

AGMs are an important part of organisations, as they give members and shareholders the opportunity to see inside an organisation. They are also to hold directors to account regarding the work and activities of the organisation.

I am pleased to say HortNZ staff have put in a huge year - well beyond expectations - to deliver value for our members in what has been one of the most difficult years for growers and the organisation. Government policy changes have been coming thick and fast, and not always aligned with or supportive of business, along with the ongoing implications of Covid-19.

“

I am pleased to say HortNZ staff have put in a huge year - well beyond expectations - to deliver value for our members in what has been one of the most difficult years for growers and the organisation

One issue that stood out at all the AGMs I attended was the frustration of growers with the labour shortage. At all the AGMs, growers raised concerns and expressed despair about the serious labour situation, and the need

for additional migrant labour. And the discussion was not related to future growth, which many of us have talked about previously, but to our very survival.



Who would have ever imagined just under three years ago that a pandemic would race around the world, and result in Covid border shutdowns keeping out much needed migrant and working holiday visa workers?

It is not an issue unique to horticulture. All primary, retail, hospitality, aged care and other industries are very much struggling as well. But arguably the issue has the biggest impact on horticulture, due to our seasonal labour needs, with shortages estimated to be up to 10,000 in our sector.

Plus, it's not just New Zealand. Every country around the world is in the same boat including the United Kingdom, Europe and the United States.

What is exceptionally frustrating is that after working like crazy to get our crops planted and grown, we have not been able to harvest all of them, and our labour shortage has meant we have sacrificed value and not been able to realise any premium.

Horticulture employs just ten percent of all the food and fibre workforce, with a seasonal peak in March 2019 of 43,000 people. Pleasingly, within that ten percent, our workforce is very different to that of the other primary sectors, including being more diverse.

But our problem is that in horticulture, only 60 percent of our workers are Kiwis, compared to dairy at 90 percent, forestry and 95 percent, and sheep and beef farming at 99 percent.

In horticulture, unlike any other primary sector, 25 percent of our workforce are Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme workers, and another 15 percent are working

holiday visa holders or workers on other visas. So if the borders close or if there are issues in the nine Pacific nations that are part of the scheme, horticulture has a much greater risk of labour shortages than elsewhere in the primary sector.

So within this context, and taking as given that we must and are doing everything we can to employ New Zealanders first, it is very frustrating that our government is continuing to have very restrictive border settings compared to what other countries, including Australia, are doing.

“

Horticulture employs just ten percent of all the food and fibre workforce, with a seasonal peak in March 2019 of 43,000 people

When we talk to New Zealand government Ministers, they usually challenge and deny that our industry has such a significant labour shortage. To add insult to injury, they often say that if we only paid more, we would get the labour we need. That's rubbish on both counts, and there is no recognition of what it takes to run a business.

I attended the RSE *Voices of the Pacific* conference in Wellington in late July. It was a great event and the Pacific voice was loud and clear. I came away from this conference feeling we were making real progress in understanding what was needed to improve the scheme even more, including increasing RSE numbers, while fully considering and addressing the issues presented by the workers, Pacific nations, the New Zealand government and employers. Well was I wrong!

I was devastated by newspaper, radio and TV reports only two weeks later suggesting major non-compliance with RSE accommodation standards and casting doubt on how workers are treated.



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National MP for Waikato, Tim van de Molen, spoke at the HortNZ AGM

We have absolutely zero tolerance for non-compliance with the requirements of the scheme, and fully support government sanctions against the very small minority who are putting the programme at risk for everyone. But it is a very small minority and everyone seems to forget that the World Bank has endorsed the programme as one of the best migrant labour schemes in the world. In the world! Good for the workers, good for the Pacific nations, and good for New Zealand horticulture; plus we are committed to working in true partnership with our Pacific neighbours to make it even better.

We will keep fighting for the RSE scheme and for increasing the cap to what we believe is the currently required minimum of 20,000. There is also some light at the end of the tunnel regarding working holiday visas. I understand more than 35,000 have been issued. However, there are only 3,000 workers in the country on

these visas, so we need to be doing a lot more to attract people, including adding some more carrots, if we are going to get anywhere near the number of seasonal workers we need in the sector.

“ We have absolutely zero tolerance for non-compliance with the requirements of the scheme ”

Horticulture businesses, and many other primary and New Zealand businesses, are in desperate need of immigration policies that attract migrant labour, or we will lose out to the other countries that are proactively offering incentives to overseas workers.

We need a government that works with us to resolve our labour issues.

Kia kaha. ●

A man with a mustache and sunglasses on his head, wearing a black polo shirt, is pointing at a tree branch. A woman with long brown hair in a ponytail, wearing a blue and white checkered shirt and a dark vest, is looking at the branch. They are in an orchard with many green trees in the background.

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Everything must line up for horticulture's continued success

September saw the Government finally unveil its National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land.

Nadine Tunley : HortNZ chief executive

HortNZ, like other members of the horticulture industry, has cautiously welcomed the direction to local government that the policy provides, saying that for our industry's continued success, everything needs to line up.

That is, growers also need access to water and other inputs like fertiliser; affordable, skilful and reliable labour; fit for purpose compliance; freight infrastructure and market access if the horticulture industry is to again prosper and reach its potential.

There is nothing more devastating for a grower to put their heart and soul into growing a crop only for it to be left to go to waste because there are not enough people to harvest it. That has been the reality for several growers, especially since Covid struck in early 2020, with its ensuing erosion of investment confidence and wellbeing.



In September, we also negotiated with the Government about the cap for the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme for 2022-2023. In the end, we got a very positive outcome for the sector – a cap increase to 19,000, which provides certainty to enable growers to continue to invest in accommodation facilities.

Further discussions about the future of the scheme will start early in 2023. Our industry would like to see the Pacific as well as the Government's tripartite group of industry, unions and the Government come together in good faith, mapping out a future for the scheme that is great for everybody involved.

Our industry's diversity – while a strength from some perspectives – can also be a weakness when it comes to advocacy in Wellington. That is why the Aotearoa



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Horticulture Action Plan – discussed at the Horticulture Industry Forum in late September – is so important. This plan will provide us with a platform on which to line up all our advocacy and gain cut through with governments over the next few, particularly vital years.

It is now obvious to all that growing in New Zealand will have changed markedly by the time we get to 2035. By then, it is planned that we will have doubled the value of commercial vegetable and fruit growing and more importantly, improved farmgate margins. We will also have responded to all the things that have to line up for horticulture to continue to be successful.

“
Our industry would like to see the Pacific as well as the Government’s tripartite group of industry, unions and the Government come together in good faith, mapping out a future for the scheme that is great for everybody involved

Much like what we said around highly productive land for several years – ‘with good planning, we can have vegetables and fruit, as well as houses’ – horticulture’s future success needs to be well planned and deliver to a vision.

That vision is not hard to describe. It is about maintaining if not enhancing our reputation with New Zealand and international customers. This is not solely about the quality of our produce but also about how it is grown, picked, packed, transported and sold. If one of these things is not up to scratch, we will lose our competition advantage, as quickly as overnight. Social media will see to that and no, it will not be an objective response. It will be purely subjective.

That is why Horticulture New Zealand is focusing continually on our industry’s social licence. If we lose that, we will have lost our ability to advocate for all the variables that have an impact on horticulture’s sustainability to be lined up.

As growers, you understand first-hand how the variables that affect the practice of growing have to align for you to be successful. It is very similar in the policy and compliance space. That is the message we are conveying with the Aotearoa Horticulture Action Plan, so that successive governments can understand how everything needs to relate for our industry to be prosperous. ●

A POSITIVE OUTCOME FROM NEGOTIATIONS WITH GOVERNMENT



Cap increased to 19,000
Recognised Seasonal Employees



This provides certainty to enable growers to continue to invest in accommodation facilities



Further discussions about the future of the RSE scheme will start early in 2023



Horticulture New Zealand
Board Associate Director

Horticulture New Zealand is seeking an Associate Director to serve and gain experience on its Board.

The appointment commencing in January 2023 would allow the successful appointee to gain experience in governance, leadership and strategy. This position will suit an applicant who has active involvement in a horticultural enterprise giving an understanding of the issues and challenges that horticulture and growers face.

This is a great development opportunity for a future leader with a genuine interest in governance. The Associate Director will have the opportunity to be mentored by an industry leader and receive governance training. In making the selection, HortNZ’s diversity policy will be taken into account.

The job description can be found at hortnz.co.nz/about-us/work-for-us. If you are interested in this role, please send your CV and a cover letter to Kerry Norman at kerry.norman@hortnz.co.nz. Applications will close at **5pm, Thursday 3 November 2022**, with the successful candidate undergoing induction in January 2023 and attending their first Board meeting around February 2023.

YOUR LEVY AT WORK

INDUSTRY WIDE ISSUES FOR INDUSTRY GOOD

Young Growers

Page 12



Natural resources and environment

Sarah Cameron : HortNZ senior environmental policy advisor

National Policy Statement Highly Productive Land – Gazetted

The National Policy Statement for highly productive land (NPS-HPL) has been released. Horticulture New Zealand (HortNZ) has been involved in advocating for greater recognition of the importance of managing highly productive land, so it can be used for food production for the many years to come.

“

The new NPS-HPL requires regional councils to map highly productive land within their Regional Policy Statements within the next three years

The objective of the policy is to protect highly productive land for use in primary production – both now and for future generations. The NPS-HPL includes policies that prioritise and support primary production on highly productive land and manage reverse sensitivity risks. It does not prevent all development on highly productive land from occurring, but directs development away from highly productive land in most circumstances unless certain criteria are met.

The new NPS-HPL requires regional councils to map highly productive land within their Regional Policy Statements within the next three years. Territorial authorities must give effect to the policy immediately, and have two years after the maps are included within the Regional Policy Statements to implement the objectives, policies and rules within their district plans.

Tūtaekurī, Ahuriri, Ngaruroro, Karamū Catchment (TANK) Regional Plan – Decision notified

The independent hearing panel has made their decision on Proposed Plan Change 9: Regional Resource Management Plan – *Tūtaekurī, Ahuriri, Ngaruroro, Karamū Catchment* (TANK). The decision was notified on 9 September 2022.

The TANK plan manages freshwater abstractions and discharges. HortNZ sought policies that recognise and support climate mitigation and adaptation, water storage and water transfer, highly productive land, rootstock survival water, a multi-contaminant approach to managing discharges, and the need for crop rotation as well as the need for recognition of industry assurance programmes such as NZGAP to support farm planning. Many, but not all, of HortNZ’s submission points were accepted or accepted in part.

“

The TANK plan manages freshwater abstractions and discharges

HortNZ is reviewing the decision and will discuss it with product groups, grower associations and growers.

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HortNZ has advocated for greater recognition of the importance of managing highly productive land so it can continue to be used for food production in future

Waitaki District Plan

HortNZ has provided a submission on the draft Waitaki District Plan. The Waitaki district is known for its highly productive land that supports primary production. Over time, more traditional crops such as peas and carrots have phased out, and now a wide variety of high-quality fruit and vegetable crops are grown, including some using organic production systems.

“

There will be more opportunities to engage with council once the proposed district plan is released for consultation in 2023

The draft district plan provisions generally support horticulture production, however, HortNZ has suggested amendments to strengthen rules in the rural zones – including provisions for seasonal accommodation, artificial crop protection structures, ancillary earthworks and buildings – and to protect against reverse sensitivity effects from newly established activities by having appropriate setbacks from rural zone boundaries.

There will be more opportunities to engage with council once the proposed district plan is released for consultation in 2023.

Central Otago District Plan Change 19

Central Otago District Council submissions on the proposed Plan Change 19 closed on 2 September 2022.

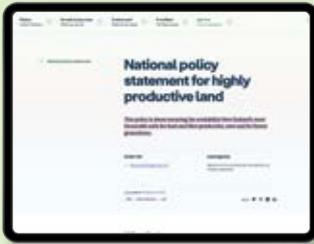
Plan Change 19 (PC-19) is driven by the directions set out in Central Otago District Council’s Vincent and Cromwell spatial plans. PC-19 seeks to respond to the anticipated increase in demand for residential land and housing affordability over the next 30 years and proposes to rezone new land for residential use, identify future growth areas and align existing residential zoning with the proposed zones. PC-19 sets to increase density in urban areas and intensify areas where there is lifestyle or larger lots of residential housing.

“

PC-19 seeks to respond to the anticipated increase in demand for residential land and housing affordability over the next 30 years

HortNZ sought input from growers and product groups to form a submission outlining the need for primary production to be enabled in rural areas and for reverse sensitivities to be effectively managed. Our submission advocated for the preservation of highly productive land to be maintained as a resource for the future. ●

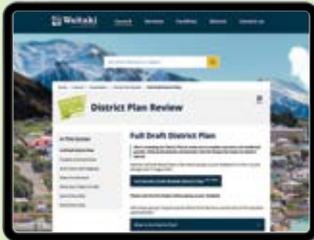
READ MORE AT:



National Policy Statement Highly Productive Land – Gazetted
www.environment.govt.nz/acts-and-regulations/national-policy-statements/national-policy-statement-highly-productive-land



Tūtaekurī, Ahuriri, Ngaruroro, Karamū Catchment (TANK) Regional Plan – Decision notified
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Waitaki District Plan
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Central Otago District Plan Change 19
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The 2022 Young Grower of the Year finalists (left to right): Sarah Dobson, Maninder Singh, Maatu Akonga, Meryn Whitehead, Jacob Coombridge and Laura Schultz

Meryn Whitehead wins 2022 Young Grower of the Year

Meryn Whitehead, a 28-year-old supervisor at Vailima Orchard, has won the national title of 2022 Young Grower of the Year, held in Nelson.

"It is a real privilege to be named the winner of this year's competition, especially given the impressive talent on display," says Meryn.

Meryn was one of six contestants that vied for the grand title in a series of practical and theoretical horticulture modules on 21 and 22 September. The competition encourages young people to take up a career in horticulture as well



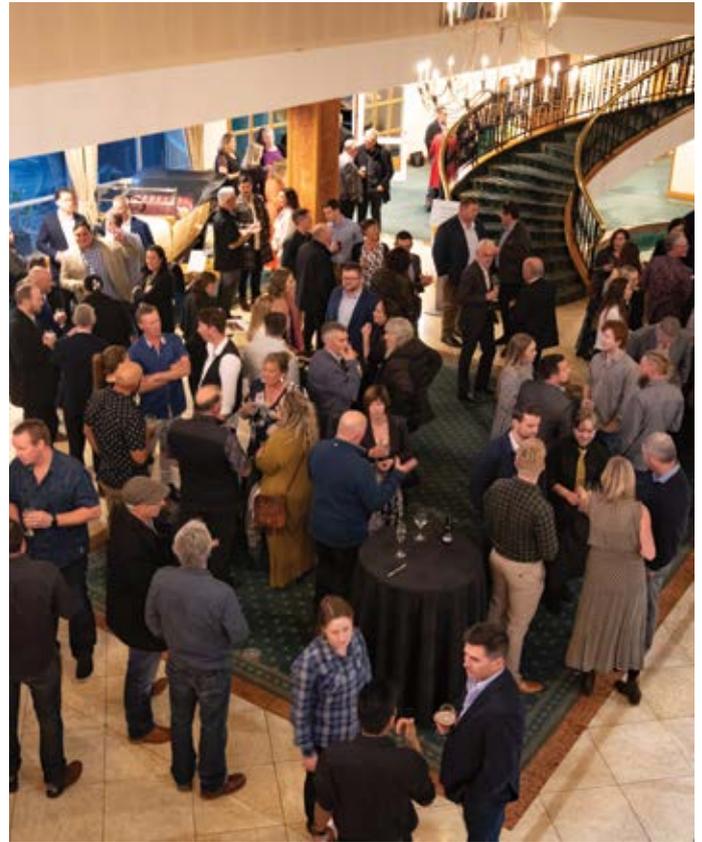
as celebrating their success in the industry.

Despite being Meryn's second year entering the competition, she says the experience was nonetheless valuable.

"It has been an amazing experience that has boosted my confidence, provided networking opportunities and developed my horticulture skills," Meryn says. "Taking part in this event and meeting other passionate growers has



Winner of the 2022 Young Grower of the Year national title, Meryn Whitehead



Hundreds of delegates attended the awards dinner in support of the young growers

reaffirmed my passion for this career and my love of growing.

"Horticulture is such a rewarding industry to be involved in, with so much potential and opportunities for all. I can't wait for what the next chapter in this industry brings."

“

These young people ... will be the generation who lead our industry through the next phase of its development

Horticulture New Zealand president, Barry O'Neil, says the calibre of this year's contestants was exceptional.

"It's great to see such multi-talented young people



"Taking part in this event and meeting other passionate growers has reaffirmed my passion for this career and my love of growing"

emerging as the horticulture industry's future leaders," Barry says. "Horticulture has had more than its fair share of challenges over the past couple of years, especially with labour supply, adverse climate events, shipping disruptions, and the increasing cost and complexity of growing.

"These young people are well aware of these challenges and will be the generation who lead our industry through the next phase of its development.

"They see the potential of our industry to nourish a local and international consumer base that is more conscious of how its food is grown and gets to the table. These young growers are also excited by the career opportunities the New Zealand horticulture industry offers them." ●

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL THIS YEAR'S AWARD RECIPIENTS:

🏆 2022 Young Grower of the Year winner:
Meryn Whitehead

🏆 2022 Young Grower of the Year runner up:
Sarah Dobson

🏆 2022 Young Fruit Grower of the Year: Meryn Whitehead

🏆 2022 Young Vegetable Grower of the Year:
Sarah Dobson

🏆 Best Practical: Meryn Whitehead

🏆 Best Business: Sarah Dobson

🏆 Best Innovation: Sarah Dobson

🏆 Best Speech: Maatu Akonga

🏆 Outstanding Leadership: Laura Schultz and
Jacob Coombridge.



1 Contestants were tasked with making a frost fan out of produce as part of the Hortisports challenge 2 The 2022 awards dinner
3 The Ballance leadership panel 4 Maatu Akonga delivered an impressive speech, earning him the Best Speech award 5 Sarah Dobson showcasing her tractor driving skills 6 Laura Schultz exercising her depth of knowledge on horticulture pests and diseases

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Young Grower[™] of the year

2022 Young Grower of the Year national final a success

Congratulations to all six finalists who took part in the 2022 Young Grower of the Year national final in Nelson this September.

THE AWARD RECIPIENTS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

2022 Young Grower of the Year winner:

Meryn Whitehead

2022 Young Grower of the Year runner up: Sarah Dobson

2022 Young Fruit Grower of the Year: Meryn Whitehead

2022 Young Vegetable Grower of the Year: Sarah Dobson

Best Practical: Meryn Whitehead

Best Business: Sarah Dobson

Best Innovation: Sarah Dobson

Best Speech: Maatu Akonga

Outstanding Leadership: Laura Schultz and Jacob Coombridge



**NATIONAL
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Further HortNZ award winners for 2022 announced

Two more Horticulture New Zealand award winners for 2022 have been announced, completing this year's award round.

Horticulture industry stalwart, Mick (Michael) Ahern, has won the Horticulture New Zealand Industry Service Award for 2022.

"Mick has contributed to the development of New Zealand's horticulture industry for more than 40 years," says HortNZ President, Barry O'Neil.

"Mick is known for his common sense and ability - after everyone else has exhausted themselves with talking - to sum up the situation and provide wise counsel, while pointing to the best if not only way forward."

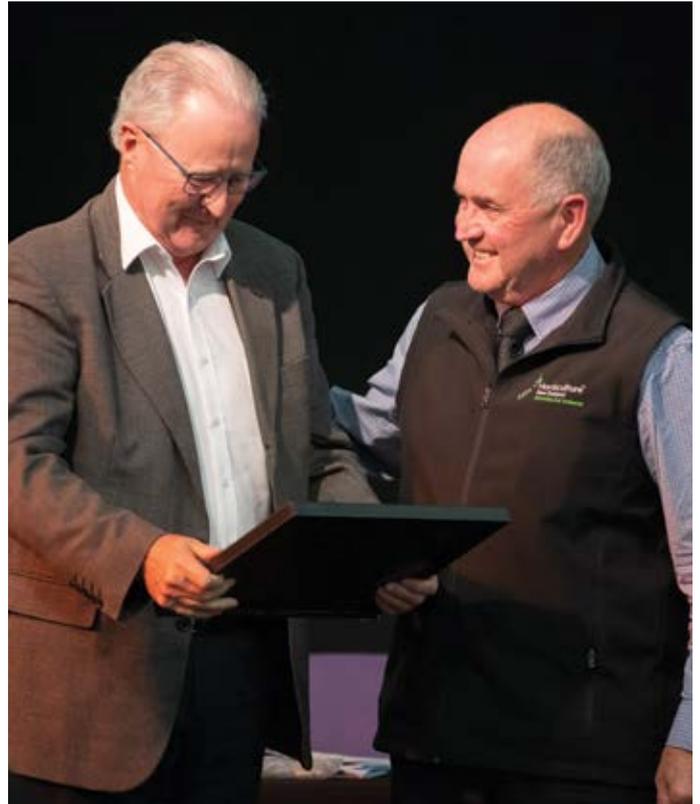
Mick started out in the 1970s as a university student writing a case study on the kiwifruit industry's development. That led to roles in the then fledgeling kiwifruit export industry.

“

Mick is known for his common sense and ability - after everyone else has exhausted themselves with talking - to sum up the situation and provide wise counsel, while pointing to the best if not only way forward

"He then went on to further develop his career in the export onion industry, which in turn led to a position exporting a wide range of horticulture products," says Barry.

"Next, Mick turned his attention to consulting, with an emphasis on export businesses and industry good organisations. That is certainly where he has focused in the past ten years, with undisputed success in the onions and strawberry areas, leaving behind fit-for-purpose organisations with a focus on the future."



Mick Ahern receives his Horticulture New Zealand Industry Service Award from Barry

Barry says most recently, Mick has been the driving force behind getting market access for strawberries in Vietnam.

"With the challenge of Covid-19, Mick has used his contacts and charm to secure the funding, data and documentation to support this request."

Mick says today's horticulture industry leaders "have one hell of a job."

"That is why they need the industry's support to deal with the volume and complexity of challenge and change that the industry faces."

Mick says he supports industry service awards as they highlight how young people can have a career in horticulture, "even if growing is not their thing."

“

Mick has contributed to the development of New Zealand's horticulture industry for more than 40 years

"The horticulture industry seems very grower oriented but there are many, many worthwhile careers in other important areas of the industry." ●



HortNZ president, Barry O'Neil, presents Miriana Stephens with the President's Trophy for 2022

PRESIDENT'S TROPHY

Horticulture industry leader, Miriana Stephens has won the Horticulture New Zealand President's Trophy for 2022.

"Miriana is shaping the future of the horticulture industry by example," says HortNZ President, Barry O'Neil.

"She is a director of Wakatū Incorporation, which grows apples, kiwifruit and pears in its Motueka Orchards under the business, Kono.

"To Miriana, business is not just commercial - it involves being a kaitiaki of the whenua and moana,

as well as being commercially responsible."

Miriana comes from a family of growers who today, are involved in land trusts that own and manage an extensive collection of businesses.

She is also involved in several governance groups and was a founding member of the Primary Sector Council. In 2016, Miriana was awarded the Aotearoa New Zealand Māori Woman Business Leader award.

Miriana says she loves the horticulture sector as well as Aotearoa.

"However, it is tough out there at the moment. That is why we must work together as a sector to realise our potential.

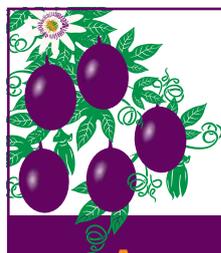
"I look forward to the future and what we can achieve together, despite our challenges."

The HortNZ President's Trophy recognises people with a passion for working on behalf of the horticulture industry, as well as a commitment to developing as a business leader and successful grower. ●



COMPLETE LIST OF 2022 AWARD WINNERS

-  Bledisloe Cup: Danny Bearsley
-  Environment Awards: Robin Oakley of Oakley's Premium Fresh; and MG - Market Gardeners Ltd Auckland
-  Industry Service Award: Mick Ahern
-  President's Trophy: Miriana Stephens



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and Online (MS Teams), Gisborne (Venue TBC)

All commercial growers of passionfruit are invited to attend the on-line meeting or the in-person meeting. Membership to the NZPGA is not required to attend, but is required to vote. Meeting details, venue and on-line meeting link will be included in the AGM Pack.

For an AGM pack, please email:
Christine Herbert, secretary@passionfruit.org.nz

love the goodness taste the goodness

YOUR INDUSTRY

ACROSS THE SECTOR — ACROSS THE COUNTRY

Peachy lifestyle

Page 24





Roger Matthews is passionate about his feijoa plantation

Feijoa fever: A love of growing despite challenging times

For most people, their sixties are the time to start thinking about retirement. But not Roger Matthews. With an orchard full of feijoas and other fruit to keep him busy, he scoffs at the idea. GEOFF LEWIS speaks to the Morrinsville resident on the art and challenges of feijoa growing.

Roger, 64, has spent most of his working life in local government all over the North Island often in senior management roles. He spent three years in business development at Unitech looking at ways to commercialise research.

That was until about six years ago when he bought a flat eight-hectare maize block not far from Morrinsville to convert into a commercial orchard.



"We couldn't move on until the maize was cropped and what was left was basically bare earth," Roger says.

Inside the gate of Pounamu Orchard are 150 macadamia trees planted in 2018, with gaps filled by chestnuts. The property has no bore and relies on rainwater. Three droughts knocked out some of the young trees, while others have struggled and haven't got much further than their original planted size.



Roger's Black Doris plum trees in blossom

Further in is a small citrus planting that Roger has established "for fun," featuring lemons, limes, mandarins and kaffir limes which are sold to local supermarkets.

A small mix of apples, both eating apples and for cider-making, are also planted on the property. A hybrid of Japanese and European chestnuts, figs, plums and avocados complete the eclectic orchard line-up.

“

A feature of Roger's feijoa plantation is that it is espaliered - that is, the branches of the feijoa trees are trained horizontally along wires

Feijoas are Roger's largest planting. Four years ago, he planted 1100 trees in three half-hectare blocks including the Kakariki, Anatoki, Wiki Tu, White Goose, Opal Star and Golden Goose feijoa varieties. White Goose is often used for making feijoa wine in New Zealand,

whereas the thinner-skinned Golden Goose variety can be eaten whole - skin and all.

As feijoas are pollinated by birds, each row of trees has a bird-box on its leading post to facilitate pollination. Varieties are alternated to maximise pollination.



A feature of Roger's feijoa plantation is that it is espaliered - that is, the branches of the feijoa trees are trained horizontally along wires. This style not only saves space but improves flowering and increases the ease of harvest. With a nod to health and safety it means that no ladders are required.

"The aim is to shape the branches to get the right pattern and allow for plenty of air movement," Roger says.

Roger completes the pruning himself - two days in each row with a fearsome pair of battery-powered secateurs which will bisect Feijoa stems, No. 8 wire and fingers with equal ease - "the most dangerous thing in the orchard", Roger says.

Annual production has risen to about 1.5 tonnes over three years, with the fruit going to market through MG Marketing.



The cuttings from each tree are left to be mowed in as mulch

"It's a \$100,000 investment," Roger says. "We hope to break even in five years."

Growing feijoas is not without its challenges though, with orchardists facing numerous hurdles of late.

Frans de Jong, from Southern Belle Orchard near Matamata which also grows feijoa, has been assisting Roger in developing solutions for the orchard to overcome issues such as a volatile shipping and operating environment.

“
We did a trial to Singapore by sea, but timing is imperative. Even with the help of Southern Belle, it is difficult to get the quantity needed to fill a shipping container

"He's Dutch, a scientist and very precise," Roger says. "I have confidence in the way Frans does things like touch picking - touch picking for export gives extended shelf life."

Airfreighting the fruit has all but come to an end, with costs five to six times greater due to disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.



Most feijoa growers are in the warmer parts of the country with the largest around Gisborne



NZ Feijoa Growers Association's AGM & Field Day

The 2022 AGM & Field Day is being held at the Rutherford Hotel in Nelson on Friday 4th and Saturday 5th November 2022.

The AGM is being held on the evening of the 4th, with the field day on Saturday. Our Conference dinner will be on Saturday night.

If you would like further information, please email info@feijoa.org.nz or visit the Association's website www.feijoa.org.nz. The programme and registration are available from our website.

We look forward to seeing you there!

www.feijoa.org.nz



Roger on his quad bike with his collection of pruning tools

“There’s very little hope we will get back into airfreight,” Roger says. “We did a trial to Singapore by sea, but timing is imperative. Even with the help of Southern Belle, it is difficult to get the quantity needed to fill a shipping container.”

“

**It’s a \$100,000 investment ...
We hope to break even in five years**

To add to the complexities, Roger, who is also president of the New Zealand Feijoa Growers Association (NZFGA), says despite a free-trade agreement with China, feijoas aren’t on the list of produce covered by the agreement.

Getting on the list will cost \$2m to \$2.5m to go through the process to allow export.

Understandably, most of Roger’s feijoa production now goes into the domestic market.

“We try to get into the fresh fruit market early in the season where we can get \$4 a kg. If the fruit goes to [a] processor it’s only \$1.10 to \$1.20 a kg.”

Most feijoa growers are in the warmer parts of the country with the largest around Gisborne. Northland growers have been struggling with guava moth for nearly 20 years, with the pest slowly moving south. It is now found in the Coromandel, but not yet the Waikato.

Similarly, the anthracnose fungal disease has devastated

ROGER’S FEIJOA VARIETIES



Kakariki



Wiki Tu



Anatoki



White
Goose



Opal Star



Golden
Goose



Anatoki feijoa variety, espaliered and pruned

crops in Kerikeri, but hopefully this won't travel south and infect fruit beyond the Kerikeri area.

“
We try to get into the fresh fruit market early in the season where we can get \$4 a kg

The NZFGA, in conjunction with Plant & Food Research and other partners, is taking part in two \$300,000 research projects aimed at guava moth and anthracnose fungus. The projects are funded by the government's Sustainable Farming Fund. ●



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Alan surrounded by this year's peach blossom

Peachy lifestyle remains on 120-year-old orchard

A flurry of pink peach blossom on Umukuri Orchards near Motueka stands out in a landscape dominated by apple and hop crops. The region is not renowned for its stonefruit crops, but Alan and Jill François spend their summers harvesting plums and then peaches for the local market. ANNE HARDIE reports.

The François family have been tending crops on their land for nearly 120 years - from hops to apples and tobacco, then kiwifruit, more apples and a few peaches and plums thrown into the mix.

Alan grew up on the 14-hectare family orchard, but the year before he stepped in to take over the reins, a fire destroyed the tobacco kiln and hail wiped out the bulk of the apple crop. Alan and Jill have experienced two more massive hailstorms over the years that decimated their apples, but Alan says horticulture is in his blood and he has never wanted to do anything else.

A couple of decades ago when apple prices were low, the Françoises opted to remove some of their Braeburn trees and replace them with peach trees. Peaches were an enjoyable change and as grandkids came along, they scaled their business back by leasing out the apple orchard and focusing

on the peaches. Today, their 700 peach trees produce between 15 and 20 tonnes of peaches a year, and the orchards also yield smaller quantities of plums and apples.

Summers are spent harvesting, packing and delivering their fruit to a few selected outlets in the region, with weekends at local markets, including the thriving Nelson Market. Dealing directly with their customers was a new experience and enabled them to get direct feedback on their peaches. They have been setting up their stall at the Nelson Market for 12 years now and Alan says they know their regular customers and have watched their children grow up in that time.

Their Coconut Ice peach variety is a firm favourite with customers, who "go bonkers" over its taste. This pink-skinned variety has white flesh with a coconut-honey flavour.

"We had one customer who used to buy five or six bags from the market every week and her daughter would eat

five or six peaches a day," Alan says. "She even took a suitcase of them to a wedding in Singapore."

Coconut Ice is ready from the beginning of February and follows Scarlett O'Hara which is a firm, crunchy and white-fleshed peach. A late-harvest variety, Yumyeong, continues the season toward the end of February. On the outside it has a burnished red look over cream, and inside is a crisp, white flesh with a tropical taste. Yumyeong achieves high yields and is their highest-producing variety.

Older varieties including Wiggins, Red Haven and of course, Golden Queen, are still in the orchard mix, though they tend to have a softer texture. Due to their vulnerability, they are sold at a roadside stall packed into cardboard tubs, rather than transporting them to markets where the other varieties are packed into paper bags. The bags are triple the cost of the plastic bags of old, but as well as the environmental benefits, customers don't handle a paper bag full of peaches in the same way they used to handle plastic bags to check fruit, so the fruit is treated better.

Despite the soft appearance of peaches, Alan says the crisper varieties are actually quite tough to handle and pick well.

"They're brilliant; they don't bruise."

Alan and Jill leave the fruit on the trees to ripen and gain the full flavour that customers expect, although he says it is a fine line between ripening the fruit and leaving it on the tree too long.

The crisper varieties remain crisp even when they are fully ripe, and Alan says they often need to tell customers to eat the fruit crisp because many assume they are only ready to eat when they become soft. He says those varieties tend to go mealy rather than soft if they are left too long.

Engaging with their customers at the markets has been an enjoyable part of the business and they see families return year after year for their peaches. They sell 1.2kg bags for about \$6 a bag and though they could perhaps charge more, Alan says it is also about making their peaches affordable to a variety of customers and balancing the price of the fruit with their customer base.

Once harvest is behind them, the next big job is pruning.

Traditionally, peaches are vase-shaped trees, but Alan opts for a single leader in their trees, enabling light to reach the lower branches which otherwise tend to die with insufficient light. A single leader also makes the trees more accessible for ladders.

Umukuri Orchards uses a hydra ladder for pruning and thinning, but a normal ladder for harvest because they can work a ladder around the tree easily and "it keeps me fitter," says Alan.

From mid-November, Alan and Jill begin thinning the peach crop on the trees, and that takes them about a month. By then they are beginning to harvest the first of the plums.

In the past, the Purple King was one of their key plum varieties, whereas today the main variety and customer favourite is Omega with its juicy, red flesh. Duff's Early Jewel and Wilsons are good early crops ready for Christmas, while the variety Louisa is later in mid-February. The old favourites, greengage plums and blood-red satsuma, remain. Plums only comprise a small part of Umukuri Orchards' business though, so are sold at their roadside stall.

The busiest period is through harvest and it is usually just Alan and Jill up the ladders picking fruit each day. This past season, they were joined by half a dozen Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme workers

to get the crop off the trees fast. Heavy rain was forecast at the peak of the harvest in February - the event that flooded Westport - which would have destroyed much of their peach crop. Fortunately, they were able to borrow workers from the leased apple orchard to harvest the peaches. Alan says it was fantastic to have them in the orchard to get fruit off the trees so quickly and they could never have managed it by themselves before the heavy rain set in.

Despite the challenges of the weather over the years, Alan wouldn't want to be doing anything else, and the peaches have proven to be an enjoyable crop.

"I've always enjoyed orcharding," he says. "I love it. It's a good lifestyle and I like getting out and doing the pruning, shaping the trees and getting ready for the next season." ●



700 peach trees produce between 15 and 20 tonnes of peaches a year



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Pride in keeping family orchard running

For 60 years Boric Orchards has been supplying Kumeu and the wider Auckland area with a range of produce. HELENA O'NEILL speaks to third-generation orchardist, Michael Boric, about the family business.

COVER
STORY

Boric Orchards has always constituted a large part of Michael Boric's life.

"Growing up I've always worked there. I went to university and did a property degree, but in 2008 there was a recession so there wasn't much happening in the property market and I ended up back on the orchard," Michael says.

In 1942, Frank and Zorka Boric purchased an 11-hectare Henderson orchard, shifting to their 32-ha Kumeu property in 1962. With the help of their sons Milenko and Barry, they planted it with fruit trees that enabled the business to export its produce until the late 1990s. Those trees are still producing today. The sons' wives, Sonja and Maria, later joined in on the operation, managing a produce shop under the trading name of Boric Orchards up until 2012.

Then third-generation growers and brothers, Franco and Stefan Boric (Michael's cousins), went on to create Boric Food Market by expanding the sheds to house a speciality food market and deli.

Michael Boric junior, the son of Milenko and Sonja, now manages the orchard. Today, half the property remains an orchard while the other half is leased to a market garden operation.

Most of the trees are apples, with a mix of old and new varieties across about five hectares.

"We've got about 15 varieties of apple; the biggest variety would be Royal Gala. We still have Braeburn, Granny Smith, and some older ones like Splendour and Ballarat cooking apples. There's still a demand for cooking apples

and we tend to fill a hole up here because a lot of apples come from Hawke's Bay, Nelson, and Otago."

The remainder of the orchard is planted with about 2ha of pears, 1.5ha plums, 0.5ha peaches, 1.5ha navel oranges, with 0.5ha in lemons, mandarins, and grapefruit. There are also a few fig and quince trees.

"There's a bit of a niche market for fig and quince. We have some older trees that have been there for a while."

Some of the Granny Smith blocks are more than 40 years old and still produce fruit.

"We've planted some younger blocks in the past couple of years. We haven't got to full intensive planting yet, but I might try some trees on fences and wires like they do further south. It's quite a bit of cost upfront and we don't need to irrigate as much here. While the past few years there have been droughts, we tend to get rain at the right time, a good downpour a couple of times a month which is enough for our established trees."

“

There's a bit of a niche market for fig and quince. We have some older trees that have been there for a while

Fruit is left to ripen on the tree before being picked straight into crates and sold. Some crops like mandarins,

oranges and grapefruit solely supply Boric Food Market, while the bulk of stonefruit is sold through markets like Turners & Growers and MG Marketing.



Boric Orchards manager, Michael Boric, is a third-generation grower

For pipfruit, if the price is good Michael will send more to the markets, otherwise he would look at trying to sell more through Boric Food Market, and can keep them in the orchard coolstore until mid-spring, if need be, he says.

"Once you get one crop off the tree then it's time for the next crop. There's not too much picking pressure."

Michael works full-time in the orchard alongside between one to three full-time staff, supplemented by more pickers when the heavier crops are harvested.

"Pipfruit prices have been pretty static over the past ten to 20 years. Good for the consumers I guess, but growers probably struggle a bit more. It depends on the variety. With cooking apples, you can get probably \$2 to \$3 a kilogram during the season which is pretty good."

Some of the older apple varieties are firm favourites at Boric Food Market, particularly with older customers who prefer a softer apple like a traditional Gala instead of a Royal Gala or Envy apple.

Dry summers over the past few years have been better for the stonefruit crops, with fewer brown rot infections in the orchard.

"It's been pretty much no brown rot, which is pretty rare not to have that. Once it gets in then it's hard to control. We're starting to get a bit of guava moth here now. I've noticed it in the lemons and one or two of the peaches."



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Mandarins ripening on the tree at Boric Orchards at Kumeu near Auckland

Along with the emergence of the guava moth in the wider Auckland and Northland regions, Covid-19 also provided the orchard with some additional challenges.

"Initially, the government said all fruit and vegetable stores had to close, which affected the orchard because the markets weren't taking any fruit. We were lucky because we could store a bit more in the coolstore and then send it in when they were open again."

“

It's a nice thing to keep going. We've still got the land here to use... we're not huge scale but we've got those niche varieties that we can still find a market for

Having the family-owned food market nearby helped the orchard get through the first lockdown in 2020 as it provided a ready outlet for the orchard's produce.

"Boric Food Market was lucky because it was able to stay open the whole time because it's quite a big store now and they met enough of the criteria to stay open. They sold a lot more of our produce there during the lockdown.

"We had some smaller apples that we sell in bags. Normally a bin of those would sell one bin every couple of weeks, or one or two a month. They were selling one every week or two weeks, so it was pretty hectic. It was a



Michael's grandparents Frank and Zorka Boric pick Splendour apples at their own orchard

shame that many other fruit and vegetable shops weren't allowed to stay open."

Michael takes pride in the orchard and hopes to keep the family plantation running as long as the economics stack up.

"It's a nice thing to keep going. We've still got the land here to use... we're not huge scale but we've got those niche varieties that we can still find a market for. While the orchard is still going okay then it's worth pursuing. We're replanting some blocks now and those trees won't fruit for four or five years." ●



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The Marriotts sort lemons while harvesting citrus at their Coromandel property. Photo: Hyundai Country Calendar

Citrus venture boosts zest for life

When Caroline Marriott decided to take up a physiotherapy job in New Zealand, she and her husband Simon had no idea they would be establishing their own orchard and producing a range of citrus products. HELENA O'NEILL talks to the Marriotts about their slice of Coromandel paradise and their plans for the future.

Simon and Caroline Marriott moved to New Zealand in 1999 after living in Kenya for four years, where they worked on a 24,000-hectare wildlife game reserve. A trained physiotherapist, Caroline was recruited to work at Thames Hospital.

"We had a choice between Thames and Taumarunui, and as we had been living on the Equator, we thought we would go as far north as possible. It was just luck that we ended up here," Simon says of their 12ha orchard in the Omahu Valley.

"I worked at Thames Hospital for 11 years and then the orchard was calling for more assistance and the children were at the stage of all heading off to university. So I stopped working there and really set the business up

making the products. The Coromandel has turned out to be the perfect place for this as we're at the epicentre of Auckland, Hamilton, and Tauranga which has been great for sales," Caroline adds.

Simon meanwhile had returned to his military career, sharing his skills and experience with the New Zealand Army.

"I began in the British Army and spent 24 years with five of those years seconded to the Sultan of Oman's armed forces. When we came here, I joined the Territorial Force [now Army Reserve Forces] and served with them for 15 years in Hamilton."

Simon retired from the Army Reserves with the rank of major in 2015, but still serves as the president of the

Waikato Mounted Rifles Regimental Association.

Establishing an orchard at the same time as planting a shelterbelt was tricky, Simon says.

“Where the orchard is now was just a paddock and we used it for sheep. We live in a valley and are subject to some quite strong winds. Initially there was an awful lot of propping up trees. Once we overcame that then it was fine,” he says.

They began the orchard in 2004 with lemons and limes, planting about 450 of each, adding more limes in 2006. The initial plan was to grow citrus for the commercial market.

“**We live in a valley and are subject to some quite strong winds. Initially there was an awful lot of propping up trees**

“We realised quite early on that as a grower, the dollar value coming back to us was very minimal. I started experimenting with making marmalades and things in 2010. After a lot of trial and error, we eventually got a product that was selling quite well at the Thames Farmers’ Market,” Caroline says. Simon suggested they enter a jar of marmalade in the 2014 World’s Original Marmalade Competition back in England, which they did - and won a silver award.

“That really set the business going. We could then approach shops confidently knowing that we had a product that was winning international awards. The business has grown hugely since then,” Caroline says.

To widen their product lines, they added both Seville and navel oranges and planted grapefruit. “We were experimenting all the time” Simon adds. “We now have an amazing mixture of citrus.”

The couple grow tangelos, citron, grapefruit, mandarins, oranges, lemons, limes, lemonades and Buddha’s hand (fingered citron).



Simon harvests ripe citrus

“It really is a mixture of everything: chutneys, cordials, vinaigrettes, mustard and marmalades. We have 23 different products now which we sell at specialist, high-end delicatessen-type stores,” Caroline says.

“Maintaining the highest quality product goes further than just brewing the perfect batch of marmalade. For us, it means undertaking every step of the process ourselves, from tree to jar.

“It’s literally the fruit straight from the trees, just sugar added to make it set. Everything is made in small batches, 2kgs of fruit with 16 jars of marmalade from that. It’s very much labour intensive but keeps that quality up.”

All the recipes have been developed by Caroline after robust taste-testing by Simon and the children.

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Simon and Caroline Marriott grow citrus and produce their own range of preserves under their Omaha Valley Citrus brand. Photo: Hyundai Country Calendar



Citrus simmers on the stove as Caroline makes her marmalades

"Then we would take them down to the Thames Farmers' Market and the locals were a great tasting panel too."

When the Covid-19 reached New Zealand, the business became even busier than usual, Caroline says.

"We found that because everyone was working from home, they all had time for breakfast. We found marmalade sales went up during lockdown and our online sales were really, really good. Because we are lucky enough to have a good courier which comes straight to our door, and sales increased over that time for many of our products. We were running around here like mad things.

"Online sales are still very regular, and we still get other shops approaching us wanting to stock our products."

"We found that because everyone was working from home, they all had time for breakfast. We found marmalade sales went up during lockdown and our online sales were really, really good"

For ten years, the couple sold their products at the Thames Farmers' Market, but last year opted to stop running their stall in favour of having their weekends back again.

"Following the national lockdown, I realised what a whole weekend was," Caroline explains.

When *The Orchardist* first talked to the Marriotts in August, the couple were reflecting on the future of their business.

"Hopefully we can find some young, keen person to carry on the business"

"We've reached our capacity, because it is just the two of us running the business. There is heaps of room for expansion because we don't do any social media promotion at all as we're a little bit frightened about taking on more than we can cope with. We've had requests to sell our products overseas, and we've had supermarkets asking for our products. We just can't do that."

In mid-September, Simon and Caroline made the difficult decision to put their orchard and business up for sale.

"It's a very emotional decision. We know every corner of this property and every tree. It's also where we brought up our four children. Hopefully we can find some young, keen person to carry on the business."

While the couple is stepping away from their 22-year labour of love, they are firm in their plan to remain in New Zealand.

"We are definitely staying in New Zealand. It's home for all our family." ●



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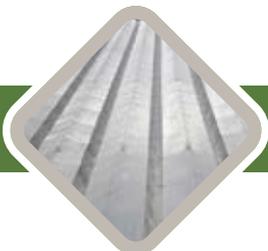
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Less than six months to go until World Avocado Congress NZ 2023



Brad Siebert : NZ Avocado deputy chief executive

As one of the first global trade events to be hosted in New Zealand since our country reopened its borders, the World Avocado Congress NZ 2023 is shaping up to be an event not to be missed.

Interest in the World Avocado Congress continues to grow with more than 500 delegates registered from 14 countries to date; including Mexico, America, Israel and Australia.

TOMRA Food and Maf Roda Agrobotic recently joined the congress as global gold sponsors. They join Mission Produce, the first global platinum sponsor and New Zealand sponsors including Darling Group, Avoco, Radfords Software and Seeka. Event partners include Plant & Food Research Ltd (PFR), Auckland Unlimited, Tourism New Zealand and Horticulture New Zealand.

The first cohort of keynote speakers has now been confirmed, these include:

- Professor Andrew Robson, director of the University of New England's Applied Agricultural Remote Sensing Centre in Australia
- PFR principal scientist, Brent Clothier
- Volcani Center (Israel), Department of Postharvest Science, lead scientist professor Dov Prusky
- New Zealand Trade and Enterprise head of sustainability, Florence Van Dyke
- GAMA (Chile) partner, Francisco Mena Völker
- Former Zespri International chief executive and co-chair of Te Puna Whakaaronui, Lain Jager
- Massey University director of the New Zealand Life Cycle Management Centre, professor Sarah McLaren
- NZ Avocado chief executive and president of the World Avocado Congress Committee, Jen Scoular.

The scientific and marketing committees have developed programme outlines and are now seeking abstracts from researchers, innovators, movers and shakers.

More information can be found online:
www.wacnz2023.com/abstracts/call-for-abstracts

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With less than six months to go, we're counting down and cannot wait to host this incredible event!

The online exhibition portal is now open on the congress website. Prospective exhibitors can find out more here:
wacnz2023.com/sponsors/exhibition

Suntory Beverage & Food Asia Pacific marketing transformation lead, Tania Bui; and Tourism New Zealand general manager New Zealand and business events, Bjoern Spreitzer join Dave Flett and Jen Scoular from NZ Avocado on the board of World Avocado Congress NZ Ltd.

With less than six months to go, we're counting down and cannot wait to host this incredible event!



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SUMMERFRUIT UPDATE

Planning for the coming season



Kate Hellstrom : Summerfruit NZ chief executive

Now that spring is well and truly making its presence felt, summerfruit growers are preparing for the coming season.

The chief concern remains labour and rightfully so. While New Zealand's borders are more open than they were at this time last year, the whole world is in the market for labour. That's why I think it is a very positive move for the government - via Opportunity Grows Here - to be expanding its promotion of opportunities in horticulture, for people travelling to New Zealand in the coming months.

Please remember that both Opportunity Grows Here and Handpicked Crew direct all job seeker traffic to Pick NZ so get your ads up on Pick NZ now!

Handpicked Crew activity is also well underway. Social media pages will continue to promote seasonal jobs within the regions. If you have a social media page, head along to Handpicked Crew and follow us. Please also send tracey.mansfield@summerfruitnz.co.nz any posts you have created on your platforms, so that we can share them on our page.

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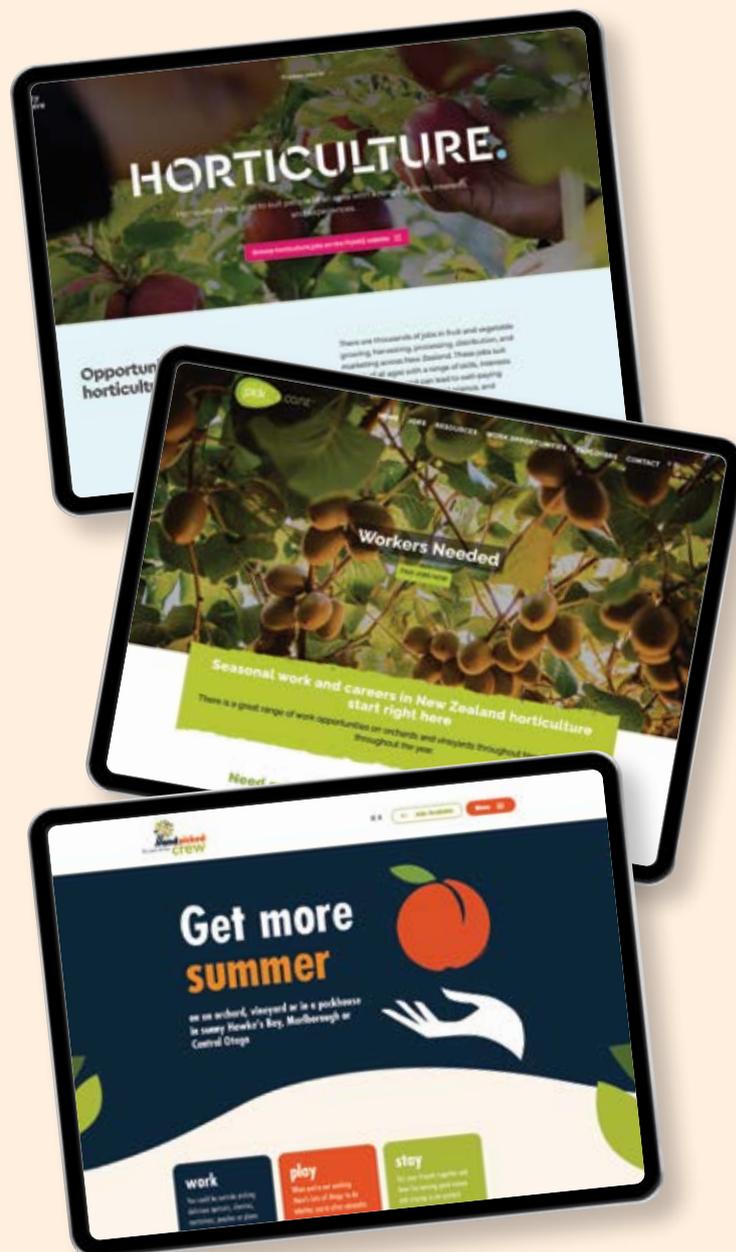
The government's substantive review of the RSE scheme is scheduled for 2023. At the moment, the focus is on the cap for the coming season

Dialogue with the government continues around the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme. We are keen to see the scheme expanded, because it benefits the Pacific particularly in the post-Covid-19 environment, and because of how the scheme has enabled our industry to grow and provide thousands of New Zealanders with permanent roles.

The government's substantive review of the RSE scheme is scheduled for 2023. At the moment, the focus is on the cap for the coming season. However, that said, the short-term and long-term futures of the scheme are interlinked.

Date for diaries

Please ensure you have in your diaries Summerfruit NZ's pre-season meeting, which will be held in Alexandra on Wednesday 3 November 2022. Please keep an eye on our *Prunings* newsletter for more details. ●





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Having a small packhouse at their Waimarae Orchards means Bruce and Marg Grey (rear) can get both their cherimoyas, and those grown by their daughter Erin (front) to market in a timely manner

Greys bring century of history to growing

More than a century after his grandfather planted the country's first avocados, Bruce Grey is conducting his own trials around how to get the most out of the unique – and sometimes challenging – cherimoya. KRISTINE WALSH reports.

There is an art to getting delicate cherimoya fruit to market in good condition and it's one Bruce and Marg (Margaret) Grey have mastered.

The cherimoya is a member of the custard apple family, *Annonaceae*, which includes other tropical fruits such as paw paw, soursop and more. A large, aromatic fruit weighing up to a kilogram or more, cherimoya have a green skin, white creamy flesh and a wonderful flavour somewhere between that of a banana and a pineapple. Despite being native

to Peru and Ecuador where conditions are mild, they are now grown successfully in warm, temperate areas of New Zealand.

The Greys say the key is to get the cherimoyas picked, packed and on the road in one day. And because consumers in Auckland buy them all within a day or two, they are getting fruit in premium condition.

With a small packhouse on their orchard at Ormond, just inland from Gisborne, Bruce and Marg have everything they need right at their fingertips.

It also means they can handle the cherimoyas that their daughter, Erin Grey, grows at her own property just half a kilometre down the road.

Together, all fruit is marketed under the Greys' property name, Waimarae Orchards, one that is steeped in history.

It is located on the site of the original orchard of the same name where, in the 1920s, Bruce's grandfather, Charles Grey, germinated and planted the country's first avocados.

After World War II, three hectares were bought by the Land Settlement



A large, aromatic fruit weighing up to a kilogram or more, chirimoya have a green skin, white creamy flesh and a wonderful flavour somewhere between that of a banana and a pineapple

Board for a returned serviceman while Charles, and later his son Len, used the rest of the property to continue their pioneering avocado operation.

That was a tradition continued in the late 1960s by Bruce and his older brother David, who planted avocados on their own property at Bushmere, just seven kilometres up the road.

"Bruce sold his share to David so we could go into partnership with their parents, Len and Dorothy. In 1982 we were able to buy back the land that had been sold, to again make one big orchard," Marg explains.

By the time Len Grey died in 1993 - followed by Dorothy 11 years later - Waimarae had become a 25-hectare orchard with a substantial packhouse operation. During this time, the Greys had seen their share of trouble.

"Because we are right on the Waipaoa River, Cyclone Bola (1988) was just about the end of us... none of the avocados survived, and kiwifruit in what we call the 'Ormond dip' completely disappeared under the water," says Bruce. "We had to decide whether to treat it as a

challenge, or just walk off the land and in the end, it was a challenge we were up for."

The Greys rebuilt with a range of products from tamarillos - which did well until struck down by psyllid and a virus - to their main crop, feijoas.

In the early 2000s, Bruce and Marg purchased a two-hectare property just a couple of minutes away, pulling out the existing grapes. Meanwhile, their daughter Erin bought another two hectares just next door.

As time passed, they wanted to cut down on their workload, so they retained the two hectares they have up the road and downsized the original property to just over a hectare - complete with a small packhouse.

Bruce and Marg now have the perk of living in the home built for the returned serviceman back in the 1940s... renovated for modern living, of course.

"Between our total of three hectares and Erin's two, we have quite a production of feijoas, lemons, limes, lemonades and chirimoya," says Marg. "And Erin has been in there,



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Veteran grower Bruce Grey (right) has shared with his daughter Erin (left) his approach to pruning sometimes brittle cherimoya trees, which is to take them back hard both for stability and to encourage new growth



5 ha

With a total of 5 hectares between them, the family grows a range of feijoas, lemons, limes, lemonades and cherimoya



4000 kg

This year Waimarae Orchards has shipped more than 4000 kilograms of cherimoya, mostly to Auckland

boots and all, in terms of working hard and being willing to grow everything from the cherimoya to blood oranges and finger limes. She's a Grey and they just can't help themselves."

Marg says she too, is willing to muck in, whereas Bruce is more the driver behind innovation on the orchard.

"He never stops working and is so clever in working out new ways of doing things and thinking of new varieties to grow."

The Greys' current plantings of cherimoya aren't their first. They originally worked with the trees Len had planted in the 1950s and 1960s, all lost to Cyclone Bola.

"Our growing of the new trees has been a lifetime project, a bit like Len with his avocados and David with the green-skin varieties he developed," says Bruce.

Bruce has come up with his own cherimoya variety, Solo, which is planted alongside existing varieties including Reretai and Bayes.

The couple say that, even today, there is an element of experimentation with their hundreds of trees.

"We're continually trialling at all stages from rootstock and seedlings to pollination, fruit production and pruning," Bruce says. "But we're glad we gave them another go."

“

Our growing of the new trees has been a lifetime project, a bit like Len with his avocados and David with the green-skin varieties he developed

With their harvest starting in July and generally ending around October, this year Waimarae Orchards has shipped more than 4000 kilograms of cherimoya, mostly to Auckland, where Asian consumers in particular snap them up.

"They can be challenging, you certainly don't want them held up in a coolstore for a week," Bruce says. "But they are in high demand so it's great to grow something people really love." ●



Bruce Grey says growing his now four-year-old cherimoya trees has been a lifetime project, much like his father Len had with his avocados, and brother David with the green-skin avocado varieties he developed over the years



The cherimoya is a member of the custard apple family, *Annonaceae*



Cherimoya have a green skin and white creamy flesh



The flavour of cherimoya is somewhere between that of a banana and a pineapple



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Tony Anscombe (right) and his friend Teresa Daley are living the good life and share the home and orchard at Nuhaka where they are experimenting with growing cherimoya trees

Cherimoya – a great alternative for the market

There is a wondrous place on the East Coast of the North Island where, they say, ice cream grows on trees.

Kristine Walsh

At his Nuhaka property Tony Anscombe grows these ice cream-like delights - cherimoyas - which are described as having the taste and mouthfeel of ice cream, with a flavour reminiscent of bubblegum, banana and pineapple.

Tony is building a special test kitchen where he can experiment with cherimoya recipes, making everything from smoothies to sorbets to ice cream and cocktails.

He says that way he gets to enjoy growing the sub-tropical fruit in the microclimate of Nuhaka, while avoiding some of the problems that can come with storing and transporting them.

“Having a big commercial operation was never our intention, but I’ve always wanted to grow cherimoyas,”

Tony says. “I first tried the fruit about 15 years ago and just fell in love with it. I will never forget that taste... it’s just totally exotic.”

That was at the front of Tony’s mind when, six years ago, he and good friend Teresa Daley bought a property with a home at Nuhaka, then added to it by buying the bare land next door.

The pair first put in pittosporum cultivators to establish protective hedges - now well over two metres tall - along with ornamentals to bring in the bees.

They then set to work developing an orchard dominated by cherimoya trees, which are flanked by citrus, feijoas, avocados, and colder weather trees that, in season, are loaded with pipfruit and stonefruit.





Tony Anscombe shows off one of his green, thin-skinned cherimoya which, when ready to eat, will soften and develop a coppery hue

“Everything just goes nuts here,” Tony says. “That’s largely due to the mild climate along with the soil, which is topsoil over around 800 millimetres of pumice for free-draining and a base of clay so we don’t lose all the moisture.”

Infrastructure was an important consideration in establishing the orchard too. Tony has taken his water capacity to 75,000 litres by adding to the original concrete tank with two plastic versions and is building a combined produce room, test kitchen, office and ablution facility between the house and orchard.

But it is experimentation with the cherimoya trees that has taken up most of his headspace.

Focusing only on grafted trees to do away with the need to hand-pollinate, Tony has planted varieties including Large

White, Burton’s Favourite, Rex, the hybrid Atemoya and the closely related Rollinia so he could see what thrived.

“

I first tried the fruit about 15 years ago and just fell in love with it. I will never forget that taste... it’s just totally exotic

As well as making sure his precious trees were protected from wind, sea salt and extreme cold, Tony created planting mounds to ensure they didn’t get wet feet.

Though he says they don’t need a lot of fertiliser, he gave

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At just four years old, Tony Ancombe's cherimoya trees are thriving in the microclimate of Nuhaka, just inland from Mahia on the East Coast

them a good start by digging in "lots of goodies," including paunch (digested grass) from the local freezing works, which he tops up each year with additional lucerne or pea straw.

Just four years in, he is seeing a main crop ready to harvest from late June, including some whopper fruit "nearly as big as your head," followed by a crop of smaller fruit produced until early November.

"The main thing I have learned is that, with their soft, brittle branches, the trees need heavy pruning right from the start or you are going to get a lot of breakage," says Tony. "The pruning can cut down on the crop a bit, but we're looking forward to getting 80 good fruit off every tree."

“

The cherimoya has a great texture and a truly unique flavour and I see it as being a great food alternative for the market

Many of those fruit will be headed straight for the test kitchen where Tony will work his magic.

"There is so much you can do with it," he says. "Just blending in a bit of avocado makes a really creamy dessert.

"The cherimoya has a great texture and a truly unique flavour and I see it as being a great food alternative for the market." ●

15

Tony first tried cherimoya about 15 years ago

6

Six years ago, he and good friend Teresa Daley bought land at Nuhaka

4

Four years in, he is seeing a main crop ready to harvest from late June



Tony sees the cherimoya as being a great food alternative for the market

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Do you want the chance to upskill within your horticultural workplace? Are you seeking a flexible learning option that fits around your mahi? The Fruition Diploma in Horticulture Production Level 6 is for individuals working within the industry, who want to study for a Level 6 horticultural qualification without attending university. The NZQA-approved course has been developed and is delivered by Fruition Horticulture(BOP) Ltd, based in Tauranga.

Fruition owners and directors Ruth Underwood and Sandy Scarrow say they are excited to continue offering the course at this level. Learners can participate online, or in a classroom, and a field trip series that introduce the range of horticultural production systems in New Zealand. "The idea of the field trips are to take learners out of their own industries to experience other aspects and opportunities in horticulture." The next paper starts in January 2023 and is one of six papers being offered. The paper can be undertaken as a one-off, or those keen can continue studying to obtain their Diploma by completing a further 5 papers over the next two years.

Those currently enrolled in the programme have positive feedback on their experience. "The course has changed me a lot, I think completely differently now. It's really good to see the bigger picture" states a fourth-generation vegetable grower from Pukekohe.

Reflecting on their experience, another student said "My workplace has valued my input a lot more since starting with Fruition. I think the whole Fruition team do an absolutely fabulous job at delivering course material that is understandable and going the extra mile to support students. I find this course challenging but very rewarding!"

The programme is designed to develop the skills and knowledge of those employed within horticulture production, enabling them to contribute at an advanced technical or managerial level. It focuses on the specialist requirements to meet domestic and international market requirements and emerging opportunities for horticultural products. Learners who complete the programme will be awarded the New Zealand Diploma in Horticulture Production Level 6.

Fruition has a long tradition of offering education and training for people employed at all levels in the industry. "One of the pillars of our business, and something we are very passionate about, is the need to support the ongoing professional development of people within the horticultural industry and we do that, and have done so for many years, by offering training and professional development. It's gratifying to see people who have gone through our programmes, now in senior management positions within the industry."

Fruition also offers New Zealand Certificates in Primary Industry Skills, the Vakameasina Programme, the Lincoln Diploma and other short industry-based courses. To find out more about the Fruition Diploma in Horticulture Production, Level 6, or other training opportunities visit the website: www.fruition.ac.nz

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The horticulture industry has opened a new career pathway for 27-year-old Jan Buter

Unexpected horticulture career full of promise

When a young Canterbury man graduated from Lincoln University it was with an eye for the agriculture industry. But a preference to work with people saw him pursue a career in horticulture instead. HELENA O'NEILL talks to Jan Buter about how horticulture has opened new career paths.

Jan Buter is no stranger to the primary industries. He spent his early years working for the family business, a seed production company at West Melton in Canterbury. Arika Seed has been producing hybrid vegetable seed and stock seed since 1997 and is run by Jan's father, Arjen.

"Dad is in seed multiplication, which is the horticultural end of arable farming," Jan says. "It's not quite the same... but it has the same mentality and the same levels of risk. The agronomy side of things has definitely carried through."

After finishing his Bachelor of Agricultural Science - which included placements at a range of farming operations - Jan realised he wanted to work in a role that offered more interaction with people.

"I discovered that dairy farms, sheep and beef farms, often have small teams and you often work quite isolated

from each other," he says. "You will see each other in the morning and then go off to the other ends of the farm to do your task for the day. I'm not really that keen on that."

"I said 'horticulture has got people; I'll go work in horticulture'. The job at T&G was one of two graduate roles I applied for and it was as much thought as that."

It's been four years since the 27-year-old shifted from Canterbury to the sunny Hawke's Bay to take up a graduate role with T&G Global.

Jan started out in the orchard, gaining practical experience and learning a range of new skills from picking to pruning.

"It was a lot more practical than I was expecting," Jan says. "It was a bit of a rude awakening after thinking quite academically at university, before ignoring that and doing the same activity day after day."

Jan worked in orchards for 12 to 18 months before moving into his current role as a supply and continuous improvement technician.

"It was quite a learning experience for me. It helped me understand and connect with the workforce that horticulture employs. Coming from the South Island, I hadn't had the opportunity to work with Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme workers before. It was very helpful to get to know other cultures who work in the orchard."

Having hands-on experience in the orchard also helps Jan understand all the processes involved with growing apples - which is invaluable when seeking to improve productivity.

Jan has two immediate bosses, technical and quality manager, Ben Rimmer, and supply and services manager, Maurice Windle.

"I report to Ben and my mentor was Maurice," says Jan. "In terms of my workload, it's split between the two of them - we're a close-knit team that helps each other out."

Having a mentor like Maurice has nurtured a love of the horticulture industry and opened an excellent career path, he says.

"My boss at T&G has steered my ambition and made sure that I have key skills in different areas... I've learned so much and it's really been on the back of his keenness to grow me and develop me. It's been awesome."

He says employers offering career pathways have helped foster opportunities for young people in the horticulture industry.

"It's giving people the six-month, 12-month view of where they can learn and grow, and I think that helps settle young people who have a lot of ambition and want to learn quickly," says Jan. "Horticulture can move quite slowly; it only rolls around every 12 months, so you have only one

shot at doing some tasks and that's it. Your chance is gone.

"Historically the industry tended to rely on you being present for quite a few years just so you have seen the circle, the 12-month cycle plenty of times. I think the industry has seen that it needs to be more proactive, if employers want to hold on to ambitious people, then they need to give them a bit more responsibility sooner and steer that."

“My boss at T&G has steered my ambition ... I've learned so much and it's really been on the back of his keenness to grow me and develop me

Jan says his job is a varied role that can be hard to define.

"It's predominantly to do with data collection and management of staff in orchards, and with that data we can see if we are trending behind or ahead of schedule or budget. Then we can problem solve and see how we can do it better if we have fallen behind, or if something has gone wrong.

"I'm also involved with some software development along with research and development projects on the orchards, and some of the capital purchases and doing the due diligence behind those."

With such a diverse role comes a wealth of opportunity.

"I get to be involved in so many parts of the business and exposed to so many areas of horticulture. In terms of future development, I'm on this exponential growth curve of learning. As soon as I learn another skill they go 'awesome, now that you know that go do this, because it makes my life easier'. It's really cool." ●

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Bridget Wilton, agronomist and grape grower, enjoys the fruits of her labour in the form of some great wines. Photo: Ash Mertens

Enjoying the fruits of her labour

Bridget Wilton wanted to become a winemaker when she was at college. Instead, today she grows grapes for vintners throughout the country.

Elaine Fisher

"I planned to become a winemaker, but first went to Massey University to study horticulture," says Bridget, who with her partner Miles Leicester, operates Greatvine Services in the Hawke's Bay.

It was Upper Hutt College horticultural teacher, Keith Deverill, who helped inspire Bridget's career choice, as did her love of the outdoors and growing plants.

After graduating from Massey, Bridget worked on a Wairarapa vineyard before joining Montana Wines in Gisborne.

"Working for Montana was one of my early goals and after a couple of years I transferred with the company to Hawke's Bay," says Bridget, who is also a member of Women in Horticulture.

Bridget returned to work three months after the birth of

her first child, but when baby number two arrived, she decided to work part-time running a landscape design business.

Later she took a grower liaison role with wine company Constellation Brands and from there was shoulder tapped to join the team at Skeltons (later to become Farmlands) then onto Horticulture as a technical advisor.

"That role was easier to manage around a young family and I loved working with customers, troubleshooting especially, to help them get the best out of their properties," she says.

Bridget worked with growers of a diverse range of crops including grapes, table grapes, citrus, avocados and berry fruits.

By this time, Bridget realised her interest didn't lie in becoming a vintner - she much preferred to grow plants,

including top quality grapes, and enjoy the wines they produced - made by someone else.

With this in mind, she leased a vineyard.

"Leasing one vineyard quickly grew into leasing lots of vineyards, and in January this year it reached a tipping point where I could no longer work full-time for someone else and run my own business."

Today, Bridget and Miles lease and manage a number of vineyards, growing a variety of grapes for winemakers all around the country.

"We have great relationships with a lot of boutique wineries and funky natural winemakers in the Hawke's Bay," she says.

For two days a week, Bridget keeps her hand in with other crops by providing agronomy services through The Fresh Berry Co to New Zealand Berry Farms' growers of raspberries, strawberries, blackberries and blueberries - all of which are grown under cover in the Hawke's Bay.

This, combined with family, makes for a demanding and full-on lifestyle which despite the challenges of adverse weather and lack of staff, Bridget still enjoys.

"I'm always learning and problem solving," she says.

"Horticulture can be stressful but there is certainly never a dull moment.

"While you do basically the same things every season, each season is different. People and the weather are our biggest challenges. Anyone working in horticulture needs to be flexible and willing to change and tweak their plans on the spot; make timely decisions and back themselves.

"Once you make a decision, stick with it. You also need drive, motivation and a willingness to get your hands dirty."

Which is exactly what Bridget does.

"Some people think Miles and I are nuts because we are often out in the paddock working at night with headlamps on. Due to labour shortages it's just what we have had to do to keep on top of things. Our four teenage boys are awesome, either helping in the vineyard or keeping things running at home.

"Covid-19 has made it hard to get staff and many of our casual seasonal staff have now found full-time employment."

Work, family and caring for their lifestyle block currently absorbs most of Bridget's time, but she is looking forward to being able to once again enjoy hiking and travel.

Despite the hard work and challenges, she says she would recommend horticulture as a career for young women planning their future - "if you have a passion for it and don't mind hard work."

"It's passion which gets you over the line at the end of the season," she says. "You've got to be cut out for it and have the drive to carry on when things are tough.

"However, you also get to enjoy the fruits of what you have grown, either as a good bottle of wine or great tasting fruits, especially berries." ●



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The apple orchards of Riwaka viewed from the Takaka Hill road

Labour outlook ‘promising’ for coming harvest

For the first time since 2020, many backpackers are likely to be picking and packing fruit alongside Kiwis and Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme workers this coming season, thanks to changes in Covid-19 restrictions.

Elaine Fisher

Borders opening and an end to the traffic light Covid conditions have given Nelson orchardists confidence they will have enough staff to harvest all their fruit, easing what has been a major headache for them during the past two years.

“The outlook is promising with the borders opening and the recent announcement getting rid of the traffic light system. So long as there is no outbreak of a new variant and people in the (Pacific) Islands stay Covid-free there should be no issues and we will have a normal year for labour supply,” Evan Heywood of Heywood Orchards Riwaka says.

“By all accounts the backpackers are starting to come back and the RSE programme is looking solid.”

Julian Raine, director of Wai-West Horticulture Ltd and

former president of Horticulture New Zealand agrees finding workers this season should be easier. “However, horticulture competes with hospitality and tourism for labour coming through the border. Making coffee or beds and cleaning are skills required seven days a week, 12 months of the year, while the apple picking window is 10 to 11 weeks and for kiwifruit it’s a shorter timeframe.

“Orchard work is also restricted to specific regions – Central Otago, Nelson, Hawke’s Bay, Bay of Plenty and parts of Northland – while tourism and hospitality is spread from one end of the country to the other.”

The Covid-19 pandemic and the restrictions imposed to manage it demonstrated clearly that New Zealand does not have enough people for all the jobs which need doing.

“When the borders closed tens of thousands of people here on working visas left New Zealand, including professionals like doctors and nurses through to labourers and horticultural workers. We lost the lot, which is why we are now so desperately short of people across so many fields of employment.”

Richard Clarkson of Birdhurst Orchards, Motueka is also optimistic the company will have the staff it needs for this season’s harvest.

“

Assuming nothing changes and no other pandemic arises, it should be easier to get staff when we need to and get them home again

“We harvested all our fruit last season. We were lucky to bring staff in when we wanted them to get the fruit off trees and kiwifruit vines on time.”

Like many in the horticultural industry, Birdhurst Orchards has Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) and Agreement to Recruit (ATR) status. ATR allows RSE registered companies to hire overseas workers for a single seasonal period.

“We had our ATR workers flown in based on the pattern of our work programme and asked staff to come here early. They all came on charter flights. Moving forward we should see a return to some normality with commercial flights resuming. Assuming nothing changes and no other pandemic arises, it should be easier to get staff when we need to and get them home again.”

Richard says while the preference is to employ Kiwis, there are not enough New Zealanders willing or able to do the seasonal work.

“Kiwi workers are hard to find because of the current low unemployment rate, people not being ready to be employed and lack of accommodation. It’s an issue getting people to our region because renting is expensive and there is a shortage of houses.”

Birdhurst has accommodation for staff but that is taken up by RSE and ATR workers. “We are able to provide some accommodation in the shoulders of the season, but in the busy peak time all beds are taken.”

While Richard believes Birdhurst will have enough staff for the harvest, there is still a question around whether or not there will be an increase in the number of RSE workers allowed into the country.

“All growers would like more RSE staff to help with the growth in the industry from new plantings. We are happy with the numbers we have now but need more for future growth.” ●

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The Burro autonomous platforms are an example of robots working with humans to fill the gaps where there are not enough people to carry out the tasks. Photo: Western Growers

The robots are coming – but not fast enough

Robotic harvesters are coming, but not fast enough for the worldwide horticultural industry struggling to find people to harvest its crops. ELAINE FISHER reports.

“Horticulture will need humans for some time yet. Designing robots to harvest fruit and vegetables is the hardest challenge the robotics industry faces,” says Walt Duflock vice-president of innovation at Western Growers of Monterey County, who was keynote speaker at the New Zealand Apples & Pears conference in Nelson in August.

“Developing efficient, economically viable harvesters is the hardest challenge to pull off. It’s also hard to get the \$20 to \$30 million in capital required, and development takes a long time.”

In his role at Western Growers (WG), Walt is focused on accelerating commercialisation and helping agtech start-ups to scale their businesses faster,

particularly in the areas of harvest automation, food safety and grower trials.



Walt is optimistic that robotics capable of harvesting fruit and vegetables will eventually become available, and he is also optimistic that robotics and automation will more quickly have big impacts on other aspects of food production and food safety. “Solutions are nearly ready in the biological space which will help horticulture continue to reduce the use of pesticides, herbicides and fertilisers while maintaining or increasing production.”

Many of those solutions will come from start-up companies, and collaboration is key to speeding up global agtech innovation. WG through its Western

Growers Global Harvest Automation Initiative is working with start-ups and growers worldwide.

Tauranga-based company Robotics Plus Ltd (RPL), which has commercialised the Robotic Apple Packer which packs 120 apples a minute and replaces the cost of up to three people per machine, is part of the initiative. Walt describes Steve Saunders, chief executive, founder and board chairman of RPL as a “legend” in the international world of robotics. The company has also developed a prototype robotic kiwifruit harvester.

For developers and investors, robotics can be either very lucrative or financially disastrous. “What I tell all start-ups is to, as early in the development as possible, talk to growers to find out what problems they need solving and at what economic cost.”

Abundant Robotics of California, which spent six years developing a robot to pick apples, closed its business in mid-2021. “The company was spun out of SRI International and had \$19 million in funding from significant investors including Google Ventures, but needed a further \$25 million to take the robotic picker to the next level. They failed to raise the funding because they couldn’t convince investors they could get the cost of harvest down from \$10 to \$20 per apple to 2 cents, which is what it costs to employ people to pick apples.”

Walt’s advice to New Zealand agtech start-up businesses is to target international investors and partners to help launch their products faster. He goes further in suggesting that significant advantages would arise from New Zealand and Australian agriculture businesses presenting their combined growing regions as a single significant market for agtech start-ups to enter.

“

What I tell all start-ups is to, as early in the development as possible, talk to growers to find out what problems they need solving and at what economic cost

“Together the Australian and New Zealand growing regions probably represent the number two player worldwide, and the advantages for agtech companies are that both countries have very similar growing systems, and their growers speak the same language. It’s much harder to break into the European or Latin American markets where there are multiple countries and multiple languages. The advantage of being a strong worldwide player is getting earlier access to agtech because it takes a while to enter each market, and the higher priority your region is the sooner the agtech arrives.”

Among the ways WG also helps start-ups gain traction and



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A Western Growers field day in an orchard using a V-trellis growing system suitable for human or robotic harvesting. Photo: Western Growers

funding is through its 'AgSharks' competition, held as part of the company's annual meeting.

"It's like the tv programme *Shark Tank* but it's for agtech companies. It's an opportunity for start-ups to get in front of investors and pitch for investment, but more than that, it's a 15-minute presentation before 500 WG members, many of them representing billion-dollar businesses."

Among the companies to win investment through AgShark is Burro which makes robots that do not harvest but help increase the efficiency of the labour crew by moving the harvested product from the crew back to the truck for transport. The Burro platforms use computer vision, high precision global positioning systems (GPS), and artificial intelligence (AI) to follow people and navigate autonomously while carrying payloads.

"I can't say enough about the way Charlie Andersen, chief executive of Burro has built that company. It's been five years of hard slog day after day, fundraising and building a team. He hasn't won yet, but has a clear path towards winning."

The Burros are an example of robots working with humans to fill the gaps where there are not enough people to carry out the tasks, and Walt says this will be the role of robotics into the future.

Other innovations which will open the pathway to further automation include training fruit trees on systems which make harvesting by robots possible, and easier for humans now.

"When I visited New Zealand in August, I saw orchards growing apples using the 2D system. Then three weeks later I visited Yakima County in Washington, where I saw apples growing on V-trellis and wall trellis systems and higher density seven-foot (2.1336m) trees which enabled pickers to use low three-level working platforms, reducing a lot of the vertical risk of harvesting. And yet, because of improved farm practices and trial and error, yields in the seven-foot orchard with higher tree density were equivalent to or better than the wall or V-trellis architecture in other orchards."

“

I think genetics will have a big part to play in the move to robotic harvesting, as seen in the seven-foot apple trees

All these growing systems will be suitable for robotic harvesters when they are commercially available, but in the meantime, are producing significant increases in crop production. "One Washington orchard using V-trellis training yielded almost double the standard orchard production."

"I think genetics will have a big part to play in the move to robotic harvesting, as seen in the seven-foot apple trees and in the High Rise™ broccoli by Seminis Vegetable Seeds."

High Rise varieties grow tall and have a strong, clean stem with visible crowns and few large leaves. Available in New Zealand, the taller broccoli will be more suitable for robotic harvesting than other varieties.

Automation is also affecting the task of crop weeding. Carbon Robotics' laser weeding robot has sophisticated artificial intelligence technology which enables the robot to move through crops, instantly identifying, targeting and eliminating weeds using thermal energy.

“

In countries which have a choice to innovate or regulate, I say incentivise growers and farmers to innovate

Other technology now widely available includes the kind of comprehensive 'dashboards' from big brands like John Deere which enable growers to track where tractors are and what they are doing. There are also field sensors collecting data around soil health and water.

Technology can also track the output of a harvest crew, down to the performance of each worker. "With that information, received in real time, rather than at the end of each day, a farmer can assess the true value of each of his fields or blocks by measuring the income against the costs of inputs, equipment and labour."

While not all the technology horticulture and farming needs is available right now, Walt believes advances are coming fast which will solve many of the issues around greenhouse gases, water quality, the environment and global warming, and at the same time help increase food production.

"In countries which have a choice to innovate or regulate, I say incentivise growers and farmers to innovate.

"Many sectors in agriculture and horticulture worldwide are already using 95 percent less inputs while producing three to four times the food, depending on the commodity involved. The way industries have done that is through the use of more efficient genetics to produce more, while using fewer inputs."

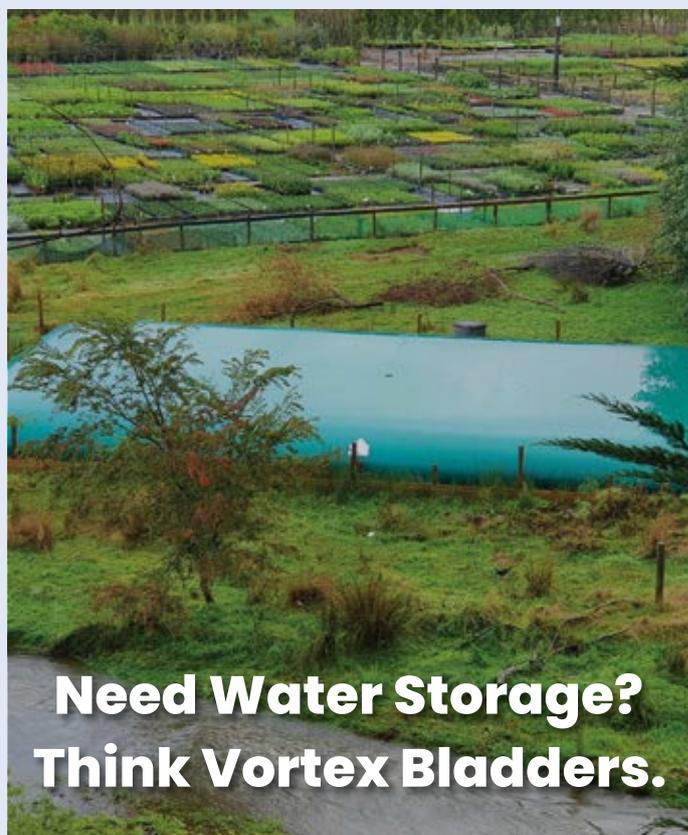
Walt warns that over-regulation can result in severe consequences, citing what happened in Sri Lanka in 2021 when the then president, Gotabaya Rajapaksa, banned synthetic fertiliser and pesticide imports practically overnight, forcing Sri Lanka's millions of farmers to go organic.

"Many other factors were at play, but that decision helped lead to an horrific series of events which resulted in the overthrow of the government. There were not enough workers to manually control pests so food production dropped, and then there were not enough people to harvest what was grown, which resulted in food shortages and people going hungry." ●



Many agriculture and horticulture sectors around the world are already using 95 percent less inputs while producing three to four times the food

The Burro platforms use computer vision, high precision GPS, and AI to follow people and navigate autonomously while carrying payloads



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Apple trees are being trained now for future robotic harvesting

Automated solution to labour problems 'long way off'

Technology is increasing efficiencies on orchards, but robots and automation to replace workers is a long way off.

ELAINE FISHER speaks to growers on the types of technology in development.

Richard Clarkson of Birdhurst Orchards, Motueka says while there are some promising prototypes under development "there is a long way to go until digital technology and robotics make a difference to labour requirements."

It will be at least another ten years before the horticultural industry sees robotics which will reduce staff numbers, he believes.

"Automation and robotics are costly, and it will take a long time to become viable for orchardists. Autonomous tractors and sprayers will still need someone to operate them, and that person will

require the technical skills to do so, so there will still be labour costs."



When it comes to fruit harvesting, Richard says the robotic kiwifruit harvester developed by Robotics Plus of Tauranga is probably a lot closer to commercial release than apple pickers.

"The New Zealand horticultural industry is small, and every product group is unique, from avocados to kiwifruit, apples, pears, cherries and berryfruit so you can't create one piece of equipment to use across the whole industry.



“A worldwide solution to pick apples well with robotics would make worthwhile the significant investment needed to develop the technology at a commercial scale big enough for growers to afford.”

Artificial intelligence (AI) which helps with orchard management will also have a role to play in future.

“

The New Zealand horticultural industry is small, and every product group is unique, from avocados to kiwifruit, apples, pears, cherries and berryfruit so you can't create one piece of equipment to use across the whole industry

“AI which delivers a lot more data to growers' fingertips, for example looking at plant and soil health, will help in making the right decisions then and there. The problem is there are currently a lot of products which do one thing really well but what we don't want is 20 apps on our phones to run our business.

“The companies producing these apps need to work together so growers can have one platform for all the information they need.”

Evan Heywood of Heywood Orchards, Riwaka says apple growers are preparing now for future automation by training their trees in a 2D configuration to allow for robotic pruning and picking.

(2D is the name of a specific growing system where fruiting branches are trained onto a horizontal wire trellis).

“

The problem is there are currently a lot of products which do one thing really well but what we don't want is 20 apps on our phones to run our business

“Changes to the way orchards are planted and structured is about future-proofing them for the technology which is coming. There are immediate benefits now from this system which improves the quality and production of apples because it increases light interception and also makes picking easier.”

Picking platforms are an innovation which while not reducing labour numbers, extends the pool of people able to pick fruit.

“Harvest platforms are useful because they make picking easier for less able people, who do not have to climb

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Drones can aid orchard management

ladders or carry picking bags, giving you more labour options. They may not be cheaper to operate but they do take some of the risk out of a situation where there is a labour shortage."

Really useful technology now, in Evan's opinion, would be drones to aid in orchard management.

"Drones which could look at various things in the orchard including wet spots or irrigation which is not working would be great, as would technology to accurately estimate crop loading.

"Currently we depend on counting a lot of fruit at thinning, but that is not always accurate enough. The whole post-harvest and shipping operation would be a lot easier if we had an earlier insight into the size and volume of crop to be harvested. Then we could align that with fulfilling customer requirements."

Julian Raine, director of Wai-West Horticulture Ltd and former president of Horticulture New Zealand says many in the apple industry have been preparing for the arrival of robotics for 15 to 20 years.

"Robotics has a huge role to play in future. We are designing orchards now ahead of technology, some of which is not yet capable of doing what we need. However, by talking with developers and seeing prototypes, growers have a feel for what is coming."

Designing orchards now is part of future-proofing the industry and saving costs. "It probably costs around a quarter of a million dollars a hectare to establish a new apple orchard, and for kiwifruit it's a lot more. If you are planting with a gold kiwifruit licence, it's an eye-watering amount."

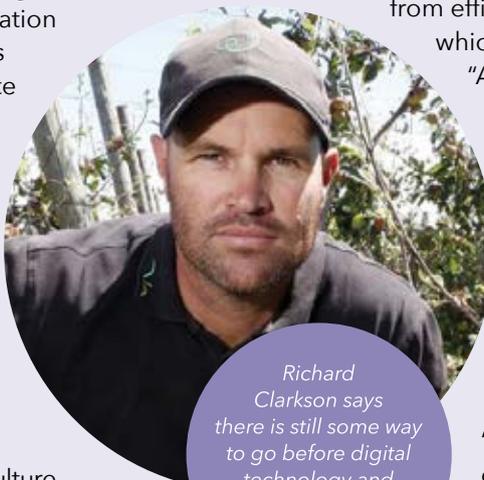
While waiting for the robots, growers are benefiting now from efficiencies in the new growing systems which make harvesting easier for humans.

"At some point in the future I see robots picking fruit 24/7, not stopping because of adverse weather, or at night."

A significant labour force, says Julian, will still be required for at least the next 10 to 15 years. In the meantime, technology, including picking platforms, is increasing the pool of people, in particular women, available to harvest fruit.

"That's important because a percentage of males can't pick apples at the right shade of red because they are colour blind.

"No disrespect to the guys, but when I think back over the years, my best pickers have been women because they are more careful at picking fruit correctly, not bruising it and getting apples off in no worse condition than when they were growing on the tree. Women are not any slower at picking than men, but many do find



Richard Clarkson says there is still some way to go before digital technology and robotics shift labour requirements

it tough physically. Picking platforms make it easier for women and for older pickers.”

According to Colour Blindness New Zealand, colour blindness (colour vision deficiency, or CVD) affects approximately one in 12 men (8 percent) and one in 260 women. This means that in New Zealand there are approximately 200,000 colour vision deficient people (about 4.5 percent of the entire population), most of whom are male. (Source: <https://colourblind.co.nz>)

Julian says while horticulture faces challenges including from labour supply, climate change and increasing regulation, these should not deter people from becoming involved in the industry.

“

Robotics has a huge role to play in future. We are designing orchards now ahead of technology, some of which is not yet capable of doing what we need



“Horticulture is an exciting industry offering a lot of potential. It will always need people - from scientists developing new varieties to studying the life cycles of pest and diseases, to growers and those working on orchards, in post-harvest and coolstores, to logistics managers and marketers.

“There will be in future, a whole range of people we don't currently employ including technicians, robotic engineers and operators and drone pilots. There are jobs for everyone.” ●

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE



Many in the apple industry have been preparing for the arrival of robotics for 15 to 20 years



At some point, robots could be picking fruit 24/7



A significant labour force will be required for at least the next 10 to 15 years



New jobs in the future will include technicians, robotic engineers and operators and drone pilots

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Hans Doevendans' outstanding contributions to the pipfruit industry were recognised at the NZAPI conference this August

Hans Doevendans receives NZ Apples & Pears Inc industry award for Outstanding Contribution

At the national pipfruit industry conference held in Nelson in August, Hans Doevendans received the prestigious Outstanding Contribution award.

Supplied

The award, now in its ninth year, recognises a person who has displayed leadership, actively promoted or raised the profile and enhanced the reputation of the New Zealand pipfruit industry. The award winner is selected by the board directors of industry representative organisation New Zealand Apples & Pears (NZAPI).



Past recipients of the award include researchers, scientists, advisors, industry advocates, growers and officials.

"Hans has never been afraid to remind us what our role is," says NZAPI market access manager Danielle Adsett. "A stickler for requiring what is right, he has always gone into battle over what is right and fair. He is

strongly principled, passionate, caring and has made an immense contribution to our industry."

“

Hans has the ability to communicate quite challenging and complex material in a clear and concise way

Hans' impact in the industry has come through his work for over 20 years as a practitioner in Quality, Lean and Ministry Approved Organisation (MAO) systems. He wrote the industry manual on GLOBALG.A.P, rewrote the USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) market access workplan, was part of a working group that brought together the first and subsequent versions of the Market Declaration System - which all industry relies upon to access export markets. He is an industry expert in quality systems including MAO, GLOBALG.A.P and BRCGS (Brand Reputation Compliance Global Standards).

"Hans has the ability to communicate quite challenging and complex material in a clear and concise way," says Danielle.

Hans is the current chair of the industry's Market Access advisory group and recently stepped in as temporary cover for NZAPI's market access manager.

Crasborn Fresh Harvest's James Joe says that in the two decades he has worked for Hans, he has made "immeasurable impact" on both the company and the wider apple and pear industry.

“

Hans has a deep theoretical and practical knowledge of the New Zealand pipfruit industry and has made a measurable impact on its success over many years

"Hans is a passionate advocate for orchards, packers and exporters through his skills in systems including Quality, market access, phytosanitary, production and Lean for horticulture. There are very few managers who through their leadership, enable and support their workers giving them the opportunity to develop and grow like Hans does," says James.

"Hans has a deep theoretical and practical knowledge of the New Zealand pipfruit industry and has made a measurable impact on its success over many years", says NZAPI chief executive Terry Meikle. "He is a hard-working and passionate advocate for the industry and a very deserving recipient of this award." ●



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Working together as family is as much a part of history as the precious stand of natives on the Woodlands property, say Geordie (right) and Henry Witters

Forefather's foresight still bearing fruit

More than a century after their farm was established, and 50 years since its first citrus was planted, a Gisborne family continues to build on the past, while looking to the future. KRISTINE WALSH reports.

Developing a farm and orchard steeped in more than a century of family history comes with a sense of responsibility, but one Gisborne grower says that's no reason to live in the past.

In working his Woodlands property just minutes away from Gisborne's city centre, Geordie Witters has focused on the four cornerstones: looking after people; growing sustainably; diversifying; and adding value.

"But there's more than that," he says. "It's easy to forget that there is something unique about us all, and we all have a story to be told."

Geordie's own story goes back to his paternal grandfather George - after whom he was named -

who was born just inland from Gisborne, in Makauri in 1876.

Determined to have his own farm, George Snr was just 25 when, in 1901, he bought the 12.5-hectare Kaiaponi block at Waerenga-ā-Hika, a few miles north of Gisborne.



On this piece of fertile plain, he began his lifelong business of cropping. And after his 1904 marriage to draper's assistant Jane (Jeannie) Adair, he set about acquiring more land, including the 65-hectare Woodlands where the couple raised their ten children - of which eight grew to adulthood.

An ill-fated investment into the Poverty Bay Farmers' Meat Company caused George to lose much of

his land after the company foundered in 1923.

However, he was able to recover Kaiaponi in the name of his eldest son Hunter (father of Cedenco founders Dean and Cedric Witters), and retain Woodlands for Geordie's father Donnie.

“

My father was always keen to try new ideas and different ways of doing things

Described as an “early conservationist,” George Snr planted thousands of trees: quick-growing willows in the paddocks for stock shelter, and natives on every property he owned.

His special concern was the last stand of kahikatea and puriri on the Poverty Bay plains, Gray's Bush, originally part of the home of the Rhythm and Vines (R&V) festival, Waiohika Estate, which was at the time owned by Charles Gray.

George Snr helped ensure its preservation by writing to the government, which gazetted it a public domain in 1926.

He also established on his own property the substantial stand of kahikatea and other natives that gives Woodlands its name.

To this day Geordie fiercely guards that three-hectare stand of native trees, but even it earns its keep as a retreat for gaggles of R&V attendees, who every year descend on the property to camp away from the madding crowds just up the road.

In the years after George Snr died in 1934 it was Donnie who had to make a viable farm out of Woodlands, where he and his wife Patricia raised their own family – Geordie and his sisters Robyn and Shelley.

The hillier areas of the property were suitable for the stock Geordie runs to this day, and Donnie started using the more gentle slopes to grow crops like tomatoes and sweetcorn.

Knowing he could do more with Gisborne's warm summers and mild winters, in 1973 he planted the first navel orange trees in what has developed into an orchard covering nearly one-third of the Woodlands property.

“My father was always keen to try new ideas and different ways of doing things,” says Geordie, who would help his dad out when he was home for the school holidays.

Before the 1970s Donnie diversified with different cash crops, but Geordie well remembers the big orange planting push of 1973.

“At the same time Dad put in Müller-Thurgau grapes, which he supplied to Montana,” he says. “The grapes have come



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Geordie Witters says the stand of kahikatea and other natives planted by his grandfather that gives Woodlands its name is the jewel of the property

and gone over the years - we were paid to pull them out in the 1980s in the government Vine Pull - and these days we focus mainly on Chardonnay to supply our own label TW Wines (a partnership with friend and neighbour Paul Tietjen).

"But the citrus has been a real constant and we still have some of the original trees Donnie planted nearly 50 years ago."



It's easy to forget that there is something unique about us all, and we all have a story to be told

Geordie took over the property in the late 1970s - with support from his wife Caroline after the couple's marriage in 1986 - and father and son worked together until 1989 when Donnie died in a fishing accident.

"We were just lucky that he'd had the foresight to set up a farm that would work into the future, as well as during his lifetime."

These days the original farm is divided up with about one-third of hill country for grazing sheep and beef, supplemented by a mix of grapes and citrus including winter and summer mandarins, and navel and Valencia oranges.

And that citrus portion is growing, with plans to plant lemons and limes... a hint as to what son Henry might be planning for the future of his juice business.



Henry Witters says his '73 Citrus canned orange juice is shelf-stable, super-tasty and healthy, "as well as having that carbonation for an extra twist"

Now aged 65, Geordie says it works because he focuses on growing what thrives in the region, and looks after his labour force.

"Both the grapes and citrus are dry-farming, which is hugely important as far as sustainability is concerned, especially as access to water will be more limited in the future."

These days the citrus is sold on both the domestic and export markets, while lower-grade fruit goes to Henry for juicing.

Of Geordie and Caroline's three children - Ella, Henry and Tom - it is Hawke's Bay-based Henry who started selling fresh juice then went on to establish '73 Citrus - named after the orchard's founding year - with its lightly-carbonated, canned, pure orange juice.

"Henry creates great products and as well as adding value to the raw material, the fruit, he is also adding value to the farm," Geordie says.

With '73 Citrus, Henry is building on a story started by George and continued with Donnie and Geordie to connect with people and produce something they actually want, he adds.

"I am hugely proud of what my grandfather and father did, both in developing the farm and in establishing this precious resource of native trees.

"But that is in the past and we must always be aware of who we are, and where we are, and be looking to the future." ●

WOODLANDS STORY CONTINUES WITH INNOVATIVE NEW BUSINESS

If it is true that the orange doesn't fall far from the tree, Henry Witters could not get much closer with the foundations of his citrus juicing business, '73 Citrus.

As his father Geordie did before him, Henry started his journey by taking fruit direct to market on the back of a truck.

While studying at Lincoln University, Henry and his mates realised that Gisborne oranges were seen as golden globes of goodness, so they'd get Geordie to send inter-island shipments direct to their Christchurch student flat.

"We'd get up early on a Saturday morning and head to the market with the fruit, which would sell out every time," Henry says.

Also like Geordie, Henry spent his holidays helping out on the family orchard, and after leaving Christchurch, headed to Australia where he worked on giant cropping farms.

He then returned to work a full year on the orchard before relocating to Hawke's Bay.

Fast-forward half-a-dozen years to October of 2017 when the young entrepreneur launched Henry's Juice, selling pure bottled orange juice and iceblocks.

With the support of Henry's "rock," his girlfriend (now wife) Hannah, the company started by hitting events and markets hard - which it still does - as well as having stockists around the country.

"It was pretty full-on from the word go but because fresh juice has a limited shelf life, we knew it would be difficult to scale the business up," Henry says. "So we decided to think outside the box and work out a way to make the juice last longer."

A game-changer was connecting with - and going into business with - Little Island founder James Crow, who brought a decade of food production innovation to the table.

By April of last year they were ready to introduce "the best of nature and science," '73 Citrus, a pasteurised, gently-carbonated canned pure orange juice with added Vitamin C.

Within a month they were stocked in outlets around the country, had sold their first run of 6000 cans, and moved to increase production.

'73 Citrus gets most of its fruit from Geordie Witters' orchard Woodlands, as well as other growers around the Gisborne region, and Henry says that's a big part of its appeal.

"We knew people would like it... it is shelf-stable, super-tasty and good for you, as well as having that carbonation for an extra twist," Henry says.

"But what they really seem to like is the story behind it... of the history of Woodlands, in the best citrus-growing country you can get, and how that evolved into what they are holding in their hands."

He plans to build on that by developing new products and markets, but says the story will be at the core of it all.

"It is a story of true Gizzy pride, and what my great-grandfather started with his plantings of navel oranges nearly 50 years ago.

"It's one that can travel, and wherever you are, it will never lose any of its power." ●



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TECHNICAL

THE LATEST INNOVATIONS AND IMPROVEMENTS

Soil fertility

Page 67



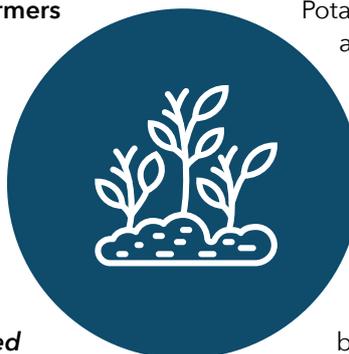


The increasing cost of food production

There has been recent mainstream media attention given to the increasing food prices at the supermarkets, with locally produced fruit and vegetables as well as dairy products coming under the spotlight in particular as having gone up 15 percent over the past 12 months.

Robin Boom : CPAg, Member of the Institute of Professional Soil Scientists

What the general public is not made aware of however, is the increasing costs to the growers and farmers to produce the food they are consuming. An essential input to all land based food production is fertiliser nutrients, and these have recently gone up in price considerably. A soil scientist whose work I have greatly admired over the years, and whose approach to soil fertility I have used as the basis for a lot of my advice is Dr William Albrecht of Missouri State University, who once stated 'food is fabricated soil fertility'.



On 1 September 2022, Ballance lifted its Muriate of Potash price from \$1350/tonne to \$1550/tonne and 12 days later, Ravensdown did the same. This is a huge lift from the \$660/tonne price two years ago. Even the more expensive Sulphate of Potash which is used on crops sensitive to chlorides such as potatoes and kiwifruit, has doubled in this time from \$1000/tonne to \$2000/tonne. However these price increases are not the result of price-gouging by the fertiliser companies, but are driven by international markets and supply. The three main exporters of potassium

Since the beginning of June 2022, the price of standard single superphosphate has increased from \$370/tonne to over \$500/tonne

Specialist compound fertilisers commonly used by vegetable growers and growers of other high value crops have also more than doubled in price over the past two years

If we consider fertiliser price changes alone, one could expect food and produce prices to go considerably higher than 15 percent in the immediate future

YaraMila 21-10-10 which was \$890/tonne in 2020, is now \$1910/tonne. CAN (Calcium Ammonium Nitrate) which is a popular nitrogen fertiliser used in horticulture was \$660/tonne in 2020, but is now \$1487/tonne. All of these price increases are driven by supply and demand offshore, and if we consider fertiliser price changes alone, one could expect food and produce prices to go considerably higher than 15 percent in the immediate future.

“

In recent years, 5 December has been celebrated as 'World Soil Day' by the United Nations, which is an annual campaign promoting the awareness of the fragility of our soils from which 95 percent of our food comes

The question is how much higher can food prices go? People still need food to eat, and possibly the days of cheap food as a percentage of overall living costs are over. Not only have fertiliser costs increased, but other costs such as fuel prices, transport costs, labour costs and the price of other chemical inputs have also escalated, and for farmers and growers to remain profitable, these increased costs must be passed on to the consumer.

have been Belarus, Russia and Canada, but with Belarus having a trade embargo against it for the past couple of years, and now with the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and with sanctions against it, the main supplier to the world is just one source - Canada, hence the price lifts. Potassium is a major element, and any type of harvestable crop removes significant amounts of potassium (K), and if not replaced, the loss of potassium will markedly affect future yields.

“

The question is how much higher can food prices go? People still need food to eat, and possibly the days of cheap food as a percentage of overall living costs are over

Since the beginning of June 2022, the price of standard single superphosphate has increased from \$370/tonne to over \$500/tonne, and specialist compound fertilisers commonly used by vegetable growers and growers of other high value crops have also more than doubled in price over the past two years. YaraMila Actyva S was \$850/tonne two years ago, whereas today it is \$1958/tonne, and



**WORLD SOIL DAY:
5 DECEMBER**

In recent years, 5 December has been celebrated as 'World Soil Day' by the United Nations, which is an annual campaign promoting the awareness of the fragility of our soils from which 95 percent of our food comes. This year's slogan is *Soils: where food begins*. Special attention is being paid this year to soil nutrient loss, which is a major soil degradation process threatening human nutrition. Such nutrient loss is recognised as one of the most critical challenges globally in terms of food security and sustainability. The loss of soil fertility in many third world countries has resulted in vast swathes of lands which were once productive, now producing pittance compared to what they once grew, resulting in crop losses or complete failures. With the current high fertiliser costs internationally, peasant farmers who may have once been able to pay for these inputs, will likely struggle to be able to afford them this year, and crop production losses will inevitably ensue, and continue to drop off unless prices come back closer to where they have historically been.



95 percent of our food comes from soils

Without the production from peasant farmers, the threat of massive food shortages affecting poorer nations could result in famines on a scale not seen for a long time. Fertiliser inputs have been an important factor in how modern day agriculture has significantly lessened the amount of hunger worldwide in recent decades, and the current high prices for these will no doubt have a big impact.

“

The loss of soil fertility in many third world countries has resulted in vast swathes of lands which were once productive, now producing pittance compared to what they once grew

Here in New Zealand, the high fertiliser costs are likely to make farmers and growers review exactly what nutrient inputs they actually need, and only apply those elements which are required, compared to applying what they have normally applied annually as a matter of habit. Media attention is likely to continue to focus on increasing food prices, but to remain profitable these costs must be passed on to the consumer. Fortunately, most of the population here are in a position to pay increasing prices for their food, and nationwide famine within our shores is an extremely unlikely scenario. ●

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Looking forward to spring? Aren't we all...



Georgina Griffiths : Meteorologist, MetService

An extremely wet winter, with frequent snow for the South Island.

MetService long-range forecasters correctly predicted a volatile and active winter period this year, with a higher than normal frequency of Tasman Sea lows. This stormy regime produced an extremely wet winter (June to August period) across most of Aotearoa New Zealand, with winter rainfall records smashed in many regions of the country (Figure 1).

Major flooding in Canterbury led to a State of Emergency being declared in late July, followed by another State of Emergency declaration for the West Coast, Nelson/Tasman and Marlborough in August.

Multiple heavy South Island snowfalls occurred through winter (and even during the first half of September). However, near-constant and abnormally warm northwesterly winds across the North Island meant an abnormal lack of snow for the Central Plateau until early spring, when Mother Nature threw a late snow event in, just for fun.

Overall, it was a challenging winter for farmers and townies alike - and everyone seems to be looking forward to spring. Your trusty MetService forecasting team are also looking forward to quieter weather, because while we're not knee deep in mud (or snow) like you lot, we do work very hard during the severe weather events to give our best possible forecast and help inform the public about impactful weather!

Climate drivers for spring and summer

As expected, a third time lucky **La Niña** has now reared into action in early September, meaning that for the third year running, farmers and growers face a La Niña summer, with a higher than usual frequency of northerly to easterly winds expected here (Figure 2).

Back-to-back La Niña events are not uncommon, occurring in approximately half of all past La Niña events since 1900. However, three in a row is much less common - being seen only three times since 1900: 1954-57, 1973-76, and 1998-2001.

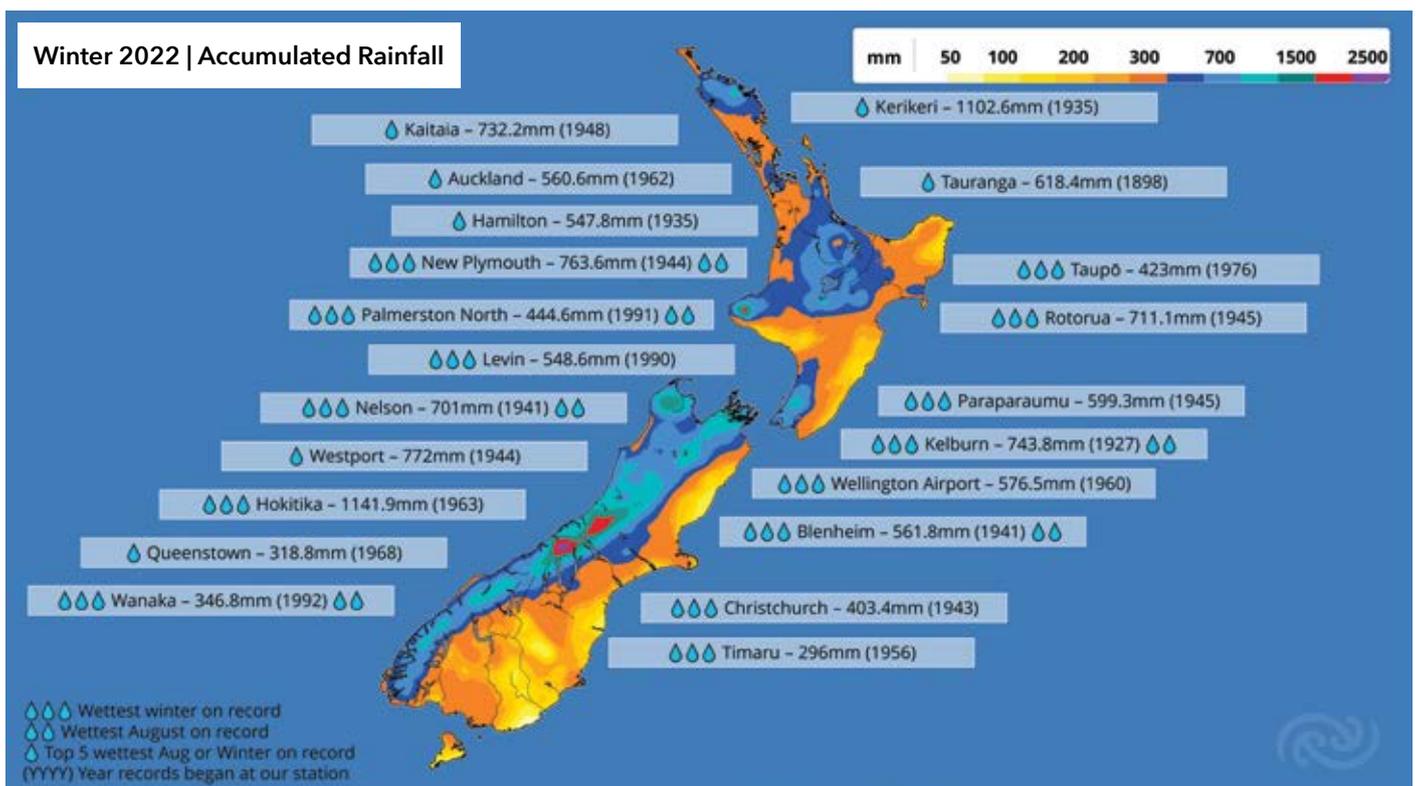


Figure 1: Winter rainfall records were broken across New Zealand during winter 2022

Meanwhile, a **negative Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD)** event continues and is likely to last through most of the spring. The impact of a negative IOD event is to reinforce the typical La Niña spring pattern across New Zealand, i.e., enhancing lows to the north of the North Island and northeasterly winds across the country.

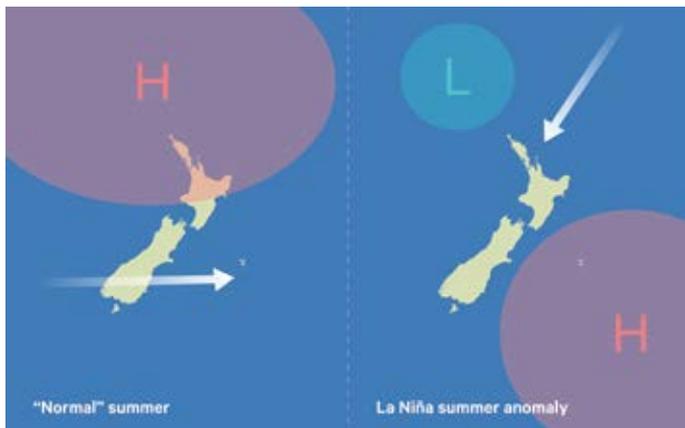


Figure 2: On the left, the average pressure pattern in a 'normal' summer, showing the subtropical ridge over Northland and westerly winds across the rest of New Zealand.

On the right, a typical pressure pattern in 'La Niña' summer, showing more lows than usual north of the North Island, and more persistent highs near the Chatham Islands (and often extending across the South Island).

What is on the long-range horizon for New Zealand for spring and summer?

Long range predictions focus on 'difference from normal' - so it is important to keep this in mind when interpreting a seasonal forecast. If at your place it tends to blow madly from the west and remain fairly cool, wet and changeable during spring, then use this 'climatology' when applying the forecast to your planning.

The latest MetService seasonal forecast, issued in early September, shows a brief pause in the unsettled weather during early spring, with many regions forecast to finally see a drier than usual month or two during September and October (Table 1).

However, a wetter northeasterly regime is then signalled to return as we head towards Christmas, with **northern and eastern areas of both Islands** forecast to see **above normal rainfall totals** from about November (Northland), December (upper North Island) or January (north-eastern South Island). In contrast, the lower South Island (Southland, Otago) is projected to see a longer drier-than-usual spell, extending from spring into early summer.

As always, you should keep up to date with the MetService long-range forecast at <http://metservice.com/rural/Monthly-outlook>, or ask us questions on the MetService Facebook or Twitter feeds. ●

Rainfall (% above/below normal)	Sep-22	Oct-22	Nov-22	Dec-22	Jan-23	Feb-23
Whangarei	+3%	+8%	+23%	+15%	+16%	+15%
Dargaville	-5%	-6%	+12%	+8%	+9%	+8%
Wellsford	0%	+2%	+12%	+13%	+12%	+14%
Taupiri	-8%	-12%	-4%	+6%	+3%	+11%
Paeroa	-4%	-3%	+9%	+12%	+10%	+17%
Morrinsville	-8%	-10%	+1%	+9%	+8%	+19%
Te Awamutu	-8%	-12%	-4%	+2%	+3%	+13%
Putaruru	-9%	-7%	-1%	+5%	+10%	+19%
Otorohanga	-8%	-13%	-7%	-2%	+3%	+8%
Rotorua	-5%	-4%	+8%	+10%	+13%	+16%
Opotiki	-6%	-12%	+7%	+2%	+14%	+23%
Taupo	-13%	-23%	-9%	-1%	+6%	+16%
Stratford	-3%	-6%	-4%	-4%	+1%	-1%
Opunake	-3%	-8%	-5%	-5%	-3%	-2%
Hawera	-4%	-10%	-2%	-3%	+3%	0%
Palmerston North	-11%	-23%	-14%	-6%	+3%	-4%
Dannevirke	-10%	-11%	+1%	+6%	+15%	+6%
Carterton	-7%	-11%	-2%	+6%	+7%	+6%
Nelson	-4%	-11%	-8%	+8%	+8%	+17%
Culverden	-2%	-35%	-6%	+2%	+27%	+33%
Ashburton	-3%	-17%	-23%	0%	+26%	+20%
Waimate	-8%	-10%	-22%	+4%	+24%	+8%
Dunedin	-13%	-14%	-30%	-11%	+7%	+12%
Gore	+1%	-16%	-31%	-20%	+1%	-9%
Invercargill	+7%	-7%	-22%	-13%	0%	-7%

Table 1: MetService seasonal forecast issued 14 September 2022, showing monthly rainfall deviation (percentage anomaly from climatology). Please keep up to date with the latest seasonal advice, because long-range forecasts can, and do, change.

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MetService

Need water storage? Think Vortex Bladders

When you need water, you need water, and that's where Vortex Water Bladders come in. At critical times water is like gold and our bladders provide a very cost effective and easy solution to storing water for when it is really needed.



At certain times of the year water is crucial to the sustainability, health, productivity and growth of plants, and the Vortex Bladder can help provide a very viable and affordable solution to achieving this.

Whether you want to fill the bladder using roof water or from other sources these bladders are easy to connect into your current or future irrigation systems.

Manufactured in France, Vortex bladders are used extensively around the world in the horticultural industry to store water, and are tried and proven in all climates and locations around the world.

What makes the Precise DE Water Bladders ideal for water storage?

- Stored in a bladder, water is not subject to the amount of evaporation caused by the sun and wind as it would be in an open pond or tank.
- Water is fully enclosed in a bladder, which keeps it clean and free from foreign matter, and from interference by birds and animals.
- A bladder is a better option than an open pond from a health and safety point of view, and does not need to be fenced.
- Bladders come in a wide range of sizes to suit your requirements.
- Bladders can be relocated as required.

Vortex Bladders are very easy to install. They can be packed up and stored or moved to another location, which is a big plus if they are not needed all year round. With a low profile they blend into their surroundings on your property, and can be easily landscaped in to minimise their visual impact.

No building permits or consents are required when installing the bladders. All they need is a level 100mm sand base.

Vortex Bladders are made of technical textile coated PVC with anti-UV treatment. They are assembled by high frequency welding which gives them great strength and resistance.

Vortex Bladders come with valves, reinforced corners, overflow fitting, a filling elbow, and an inspection hatch. All of these are pre-assembled in the factory to avoid any risk of leakage. ●

T: Allan 021 909 463 or Angus 027 498 3146
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www.precisede.co.nz

Precise DE 

Innovative Companies Combine to Offer Turnkey Solutions

There is nothing new around the narrative that if you produce a crop, you need the ability to maintain quality, add value and harvest your investment.

What's New is that you now have an extra option available here in New Zealand and across the ditch in Australia.

Inseason Ag Innovations and **Trellex** offer an innovative turnkey solution to crop trellis and crop protection.

Inseason Ag Innovations is a manufacturer and supplier of horticultural films and fabrics. We are dedicated to producing the highest quality products at competitive pricing to help growers produce higher quality fruit. Our knowledge of the manufacturing process coupled with our staff's comprehension of the horticultural industries makes us one of the most specialised suppliers in the field. The Cox brothers were raised in the heart of California's agricultural region and understand the need for innovative ideas, and are dedicated to help overcome the challenges growers face.

We manufacture only the best. - Made with the highest-grade material and the most advanced ultraviolet (UV) inhibitors on the market, we have the ability to manufacture to each grower's specifications. All Inseason's premium products are recyclable.

Inseason Ag offers a full range of products including -

- **Hail netting** - With optimal available light to suit specific crops.
- **ReadySet Woven** - Fully woven reflective fabrics with reflectivity up to 95 percent, supplied with a true hold plastic clip.
- **WeedFree** - Innovative permeable weed mat that allows excellent filtration of water and air across the entire width of the fabric.
- **Drape Net** - Available in multiple options to suit each grower's requirements.
- **RainPro** - Premium rain covers designed around any orchard's requirements with integrated bird netting options.
- **PolyTec** - Premium greenhouse films available with anti-dust, anti-drip and anti-sulphur additives.
- **Wind Screens** - Available in full colour and a range of GSM (gram per square metre) thicknesses, supplied tubed or hem & draw cord.

Jan-Willem van Giessen from Trellex started out producing and supplying metal training stakes for fruit and vegetable production. Then in 2019 he started to produce optimised metal posts for trellis and cover systems for fruit production. The right support is important for every grower but also for the successful harvest of every crop. Trellex has developed steel posts which combine strength and longevity with



stability and flexibility, which are at the same time light and easy to install. The reduced weight also has a positive impact on transport costs. Trellex has developed posts made of strip steel with a Magnelis (corrosion resistant) coating. The best possible strip galvanisation on the market today. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ER0R8K3nLXY>

Research results show that an 8-angled profile with a certain material thickness is the optimum shape for steel support posts. This profile can withstand both lateral forces and pressure from above, such as from hail and high wind speeds. In addition to posts Trellex offers a wide range of accessories for a complete structure system.

Unlike treated timber or concrete posts, Trellex posts will have a sustainable recyclable value.

Trellex - The complete solution with the best price-performance ratio.

Inseason Ag Innovations and Trellex combined can design and supply a complete structure and hail release netting system to meet the requirements of any grower or crop, whether it be single row, three row or V-trellis. ●

Please contact your nearest representative to discuss your requirements:

Bill Evans - **South Island Ph 027 8047610**

Lance Mickleson - **North Island Ph 027 2565730**

A piping hot chip straight out of the oven – there's nothing quite like it!

While much precise planning goes into harvesting that perfect potato, maintaining that field freshness can only be achieved through carefully controlled storage temperature and conditions post-harvest.



Spray foam insulation manufacturer and installer NZFoam provided a South Canterbury farm with a controlled environment for its 3500 tonne annual yield of five varieties of the great Kiwi spud. The crop from Crichel Down Potatoes is produced for processors such as Talley's for their frozen fries.

Low temperatures make potatoes too high in sugars, not great for frying," says Simon Binnie, operations manager for Guy and Jane Slater's Wakanui farm.

"Too hot, and the moisture evaporates causing a wrinkly potato. You need to store them at a constant temperature for the perfect yield."

Three years ago, Simon enlisted NZFoam to insulate the farm's pole shed. After great success, two concrete tilt slab room extensions with a drive-on drying floor were built in January last year. He then called up the team at NZFoam who were on the job the next month.

"They completed it very quickly and were very pleasurable and reliable to work with."

Blending in well with the rural environment, the outside walls and roof were sprayed with 90mm of foam and 50mm on the inside.

"When storing potatoes you don't want any condensation, just a consistently dry environment. The foam really improves that.

Pump warm air in from outside first to dry the potatoes; about 12 degrees warms them up a bit and stops bruising. Then we hold the temperature at a constant 9-10 degrees

for five months of the year, until late September. It could be -1 to 15 degrees outside, but the temperature won't change inside.

I heard really good reports about NZFoam being the best foam insulation, from Nigel Reith who owns The Rakaia Hub produce storage sheds, and also from Talley's where I worked for 15 years.

We also foamed the shed's engine room – our fan room, where the three huge fans make a hell of noise – and the foam stopped any sound from annoying the neighbours!

Once we move out the potatoes, the inside walls are so easy to waterblast down, then we move in 400 tonnes of grass seed, wheat and barley. So the sheds are in use at least 10 months of the year. Fertilisers and the tractor are stored there too."

He says they used to outsource all the potato storage, so now having onsite storage sheds is far more economical.

"The spray foam certainly pays for itself."

In times like these, we're all thinking about ways to make our businesses more secure and looking for ways to cut costs. Creating a cool store on your property might be simpler than you thought. NZ Foam has managed new cool store builds and also created cool stores from existing buildings for growers all around New Zealand. And it works for fruit storage, too! ●

To learn more visit www.convertmyshed.co.nz

UPL's Du-Wett® Super Spreader savings hack

Orchardists seeing adjuvant in a new light.

Du-Wett Super Spreader from UPL NZ Ltd could be the savings hack orchardists need.

David Ligan, UPL NZ adjuvant product manager, says with rising fuel and labour costs, and increased sensitivity around water use, apple growers are re-evaluating adjuvant use.

"Previously, adjuvants were often considered an 'extra'. In fact, correct use of Du-Wett Super Spreader improves spread and efficacy of crop protection products and at a much lower water application volume."

David says spraying is faster, with less refilling and travelling reducing diesel and labour. "For example, if an application volume of 2,000 L/ha is normal, using Du-Wett Super Spreader the same product performance can be achieved with 500-1,000 L/ha depending on tree size and orchard management practices. For an orchard with multiple blocks that can be significant."

"Du-Wett pays for itself. Savings are measurable and can be calculated."

David says rising costs have sharpened growers' focus on expenses. "Previously, for many, costs were just part of doing business. But actually, even water isn't free!"

Further, the attitude that "more water is better" has been challenged. Apple industry research into Du-Wett dates back to 2004 over a few large-scale commercial trials. All showed equivalent or greater efficacy compared to conventional water volumes.

In Du-Wett treated blocks, the Pipfruit NZ (New Zealand Apple & Pears) trial also found residue of dodine, captan, and tebufenozide on fruit at harvest was lower compared to high water volume treatments. Sprays were more evenly spread and distributed across the fruit surface reducing drip points where concentrations of active ingredient can be found.

Russet incidence was also lower in the Du-Wett treated block.

The first input of Du-Wett in the apple crop protection programme can be as early as with dormant oil applications. Oil-Mate® II, an oil adjuvant, is firstly mixed with the oil to enhance its spread and coverage. (Du-Wett spreads the water.) This combination, of an oil spreader (Oil-Mate) and Du-Wett, is the first step to utilising low volume adjuvant spraying technology.



Dodine applications in the lower water volume with Du-Wett can be used as the standard fungicide/adjuvant combination from pink in a normal crop protection programme right up to harvest.

Du-Wett has excellent crop safety and is compatible with most commonly used protection products in the pipfruit spray programme.

The label's use rate was developed to optimise the benefit of Du-Wett and tank mix partner(s). Following these directions will ensure maximum efficacy.

Organic growers can now also benefit from all the features and benefit of Du-Wett with new Du-Wett Organic, a BioGro certified Super Spreader.

If wet weather protection is needed, Bond Xtra, a spreader containing synthetic latex, is recommended. ●

For more advice, ask your technical representative, or for information on saving costs with Du-Wett, contact **David Ligan at UPL, +64 21 804 450**

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19 years supporting New Zealand horticulture

Paccon Safety Ltd has for 19 years been supplying the horticulture industry with PPE (personal protective equipment) and clothing.

It is no accident that Paccon Safety has become the leading specialist in horticulture PPE, as the original owners Karen and Peter Scott were orchardists themselves, and Richard McLean was a horticulture cadet early in his career, progressing through the industry to manage one of the largest 3PL (third party logistics) apple coolstores in the country during the late 1990s. Today Richard continues to drive Paccon Safety forward as the owner and general manager. He is supported by a growing sales team who have a combined 38 years in the industrial safety sector. Their dedicated administration, retail and warehousing teams make the business the success it is today.

Richard's personal and family background in the horticulture industry means he brings to the business an understanding from 30 years of personal experience of what the industry requires.

Today the company specialises in all types of PPE for horticulture, including Paccon Safety custom designs of packhouse uniforms for many of the apple, kiwifruit and avocado exporters and nurseries. They also supply thousands of uniforms needed by the Recognised Seasonal Employment (RSE) scheme teams when they arrive in New Zealand for the thinning and harvest season. Customised garment packs are a specialty for RSE arrivals.

“

We have you covered on all aspects so you can continue to produce & supply quality product worldwide

Under their own Worktuff brand core items manufactured by Paccon Safety include wet weather garments, Hi Vis clothing, packhouse uniforms, freezer clothing and gloves, and also packers' gloves. They have worked with and for industry leaders to provide practical, comfortable and durable products. Paccon Safety also collaborates with the industry in the winter months on new designs and stock for the coming season, building inventory for all of the



seasonal demands, holding extensive stock in New Zealand for the harvest and post-harvest operations.

Paccon Safety is a national supplier from the Far North to the lower South Island, with distribution from Hawke's Bay. They supply fruit thinners and packers, harvest crews, transport companies, nurseries and coolstore operators.

We have you covered on all aspects so you can continue to produce & supply quality product worldwide.

Paccon Safety manufactures and supplies PPE and uniforms for all horticulture uses, from growing to spraying, harvesting, transport, packing and storage.

Thank you for supporting a New Zealand family owned and operated business. We hope you will join our team. ●

Paccon Safety Head Office
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pest control.
Better fruit!*

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Unique, fast acting and systemic control of codling moth, leaf roller caterpillar and bronze beetle in pipfruit.

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- Strong proven activity against all life stages of moths
- Fast cessation of feeding with systemic activity and excellent length of activity
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