



August 2019 Update

Contents

NZAC AGM and Dinner.....	1
Robotic Asparagus Harvester.....	2
DRAP	2
Promotion	2
Aspire Asparagus App	3
Tracability Study.....	4
New Zealand Asparagus Council Executive Members	4

NZAC AGM and Dinner

Over fifty growers, past and present, along with industry associates and colleagues came together in Hamilton on 31st July 2019 to honour Dr Peter Falloon with a Lifetime Achievement Award. The NZAC put on a special dinner for the award presentation, during which we heard from many of Peter’s previous colleagues, growers and friends. The turnout of so many at the event is testament to the impact Peter has had on so many during his thirty years in the asparagus industry and shows the strength of the relationships he has fostered.



Prior to the dinner, attendees heard presentations from Dr Adrian Hunt, Plant & Food Research Crop Scientist, on Nitrogen balance in asparagus production. This was followed by Professor Mike Duke and Dr Shen Hin Lim from Waikato University presenting on their asparagus harvester proof of concept developed in collaboration with RoboticsPlus, Callaghan Innovation and Tendertips. If you are interested in a copy of the presentations please contact [Karen](#).

The NZAC AGM followed this up and the full report including budget and financials can be [downloaded here](#).

Thanks to Geoff Lewis for MC'ing the evening and in doing so providing many laughs with his vast array of anecdotes both about Peter and the industry. Thanks also to our sponsors whose support helped to make the evening a success: Countdown, Freshmax, Fruitfed, MG Marketing, and the AgriChain Centre. Thank you!

An article on the dinner will be published in September NZ Grower magazine.

Robotic Asparagus Harvester

Following a presentation by Prof Mike Duke and Dr Shen Hin Lim at the NZAC (New Zealand Asparagus Council) AGM, growers present endorsed the University of Waikato automated asparagus harvest project and voted to support their funding application with government.

A small team has been formed to scope the project in order for the University to compile and submit an application for funding to progress the project to its next stage towards commercialisation. This is a very exciting project and we will update you on it as it progresses.

DRAP

During the AGM growers and exporters welcomed the news delivered verbally that day by MPI that the Dichlorvos Residue Assurance Programme (DRAP) put in place over thirteen years ago for export of asparagus to Japan will be removed. We have now received confirmation in writing from MPI as follows:

“As discussed, I am writing to confirm that the Dichlorvos Residue Assurance Programme has ended.

On 29 July 2019, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) notified MPI of the cancellation of the inspection order under the Food Sanitation Act Article 26, paragraph (3) for NZ green asparagus and its processed products regarding Dichlorvos and Naled.

MHLW notified quarantine stations in Japan by a letter dated 29 July 2019 about this change. Producers should continue to ensure appropriate food safety measures are in place during production in order to ensure no foods imported into Japan will violate the Food Act. “

Promotion

Members of the NZAC executive have recently supported a new asparagus promotions campaign this season, with a comprehensive plan to be lead by Antony Young of [the digital café](#). He will run a campaign from mid-late Sept to early Dec setting up an NZ asparagus Facebook, Instagram, & you tube sites along with some traditional media activity.

This will be combined with vegetables.co.nz and 5+A Day asparagus promotions to maximise our asparagus presence during the season, especially in the peak periods.

At the end of the season we will run a review of the campaign to measure outcomes in terms of engagement and effect on sales to determine any future plans.

We're looking forward to having a revived focus on asparagus this season with an aim to increasing sales, and will share with you links to content as it's developed so you can help spread the word.

Meantime please like and follow 5+A Day's social media using these links:



And vegetables.co.nz on these links:

<https://www.facebook.com/newzealandvegetables/>

<https://www.instagram.com/vegetables.co.nz/>

Aspire Asparagus App

Please note the Aspire Lite phone app (an asparagus root carbohydrate monitoring system that was developed by Plant & Food Research along with industry some years back) is still available. If you'd like more information on this please [contact Karen](#).

Domestic Fresh Produce Traceability Project

United Fresh was awarded a Sustainable Farming Fund Domestic Fresh Produce Traceability Project to increase the knowledge and understanding of the barriers that compromise effective traceability along the supply chain.

Recent food safety issues are highlighting the need for effective, robust traceability from consumer all the way back to the grower. The current Food Act 2014 requires 'one up one down' traceability, meaning that records only need to be kept one step upstream and one step downstream, not along the entire supply chain. This can create challenges in fast moving and complex fresh produce supply chains.

Traceability within a supply chain point appears to be working well. It is understanding and strengthening the Traceability between supply chain links that could be enhanced in the event of a recall process.

United Fresh is encouraging you to give 10 minutes of your time to support the industry wider traceability project by responding to our survey in order to understand current Traceability practices and how these can contribute to long term outcomes. Here is the link to the survey:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/HB7X3LZ>

For further information on this industry good project, please refer to the United Fresh webpage:

<https://www.unitedfresh.co.nz/technical-advisory-group/sff>

Upcoming meetings

Next NZAC executive committee meeting will be in early 2020.

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