



New Zealand

ASPARAGUS COUNCIL

PO Box 10232
The Terrace,
Wellington 6143
Ph: 04 494 9984
karen.orr@hortnz.co.nz

December 2019 Update

Contents

Season update.....	1
North Island grower visits.....	2
Promotion.....	2
Asparagus in the media.....	3
Farm Environment Plans.....	4
Upcoming meetings	5
New Zealand Asparagus Council Executive Members 2019/20.....	6

Season update

Domestic Supply - From an Auckland market perspective, it was a slow start to the season and the window of oversupply was later and shorter than usual. Demand has been reasonably strong for most of the season. December quality has been quite seedy; we haven't seen this effect the demand.

Overall - sales across the country have continued to be reasonably buoyant with volumes still relatively tight. All advertised promos have now finished for the season. Quality has continued to be good with a lot more thinner spears appearing. Retail has slowed down in the last week on most products.

Waikato: Demand a little flat this week. Production still steady with the warm days/nights. Weed pressure growing. Pickers getting tired. Aiming for a solid finish before Christmas. Growers starting to think of closing and going on holiday.

South West North Island: Mangaweka - Hot/dry couple of weeks has seen a slowdown in production as expected for this time of year. Rain last couple of days and due in coming week will mean important fungicide programme is up to date on fern on young blocks. At this stage will finish picking most blocks by Christmas as per normal.

Levin – plants in amazing health, expect to pick until Christmas. December market has been a real challenge with very low demand.

Hawkes Bay: several blocks have either closed up or looking to do so soon, with picking tailing off for the season.

South Island: has been productive with good quality. This however has been hampered by two weather events, both of which caused loss of production to some of the areas for 5-10 days. The first was the hail event that was wide spread from Timaru to North Canterbury. This, of course, causing damage to spears rendering them un-marketable. This was followed closely by extreme windy conditions for days on end, in some cases not suitable to work in i.e. causing harvesting delays and again a loss of crop from bent, misshapen spears.

Currently the crops are back on track and quality is looking excellent with little to no seeding and good size spears. It is anticipated the crop will continue to yield for the duration of the season.

Have seen some Tag 2 grade in stores (of course getting left behind by customers).

Seasonal Labour has been sound and committed but moving south now to summer fruit crops, i.e. cherries and stone fruit.

North Island grower visits



Mike Arnold (NZAC Chair) and Karen Orr (Business Manager) visited growers in North Island growing regions during November. Thanks to all those growers who were able to attend; we greatly appreciated the time you took to meet with us.

The meetings provided a good opportunity to catch up with growers on their challenges and discuss opportunities for NZAC to prioritise.

Key feedback included:

- Looking at education opportunities for asparagus with supermarket and produce managers prior to the start of the season, including looking together at how we can add value through the chain and discussing the future of the industry. This may include development of an agreed industry quality standard.
- Updating asparagus health claims.
- Improving leverage from any promotions work with influencers, food writers and chefs to maximise the exposure of asparagus to consumers. Suggestions included reaching out to media such as radio stations; country calendar type television programs to tell grower stories; using recognised chefs to demonstrate best asparagus recipes along with produce and recipe giveaways.
- Consider options for the asparagus levy being valued on sales rather than planted hectare prior to the levy renewal in 2024.
- Look at a closed social media group for growers to share information in a secure forum which is kept between growers and helps them to stay up to date and in touch.
- Chemical registrations of herbicides for weed control.
- Looking at ways to tackle labour issues and ensure fair pay.
- Improving grower returns long term and making the industry sustainable through successful management of volume throughout the season.



Asparagus in the media

December's **NZ Grower** magazine featured a review on Waikato which included Boyd's Asparagus. Congratulations to the team at Boyd's for receiving Countdown's '**Produce Supplier of the Year**' award!

If you don't currently receive the magazine and would like to receive the monthly publication please contact [Karen](#) to arrange it.

Other stories:

<https://www.ruralnewsgroup.co.nz/rural-news/rural-general-news/on-farm-technology-impresses-teachers>

<https://www.freshplaza.com/article/9171307/mexico-leads-global-asparagus-exports/>

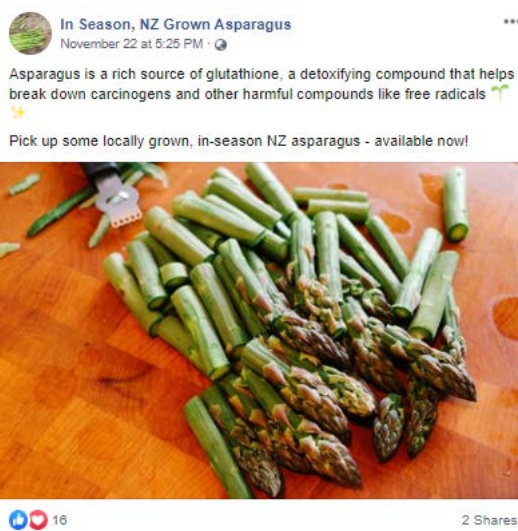
<https://www.freshplaza.com/article/9166465/australian-green-asparagus-export-to-china-entering-peak-season/>

<https://www.freshplaza.com/article/9170531/higher-level-of-automation-leads-to-better-asparagus-product-quality/>

Promotion

We've been enjoying the promotion both **Countdown** and **New World** have done this season on asparagus which has included tv and print coverage, along with billboard displays putting asparagus and growers in the limelight.

During September to November, **5+ A Day** included asparagus in their fresh produce promotion, conducting a "5 ways with asparagus" campaign. The campaign encouraged consumption by showcasing the versatility, health benefits and convenience of asparagus. You can download their report from the campaign [HERE](#) which provides details about the coverage on the campaign and the fantastic recipes and feedback generated. Or contact [Karen](#) to get a copy of the report.



*** In addition, PR provider The Digital Café, has been running *How to Cook Asparagus* videos with advertisements on social media and google reaching 533,374 foodies, vegetable lovers and household shoppers in NZ an average of 5.53 times. The '**NZ Grown, In Season Asparagus Campaign**' finishes this week and we will share a report on it with growers in the new year.

NZAC are currently getting nutrition claims for New Zealand grown asparagus updated by Plant & Food Research and once this is available will update growers who may wish to use this information.

Asparagus Commodity Levy 2019 /20

Levy invoices for the 2019/20 season were sent out late September. The levy rate is \$120 per planted hectare (excl. GST). Along with the invoice we are asking for information on the production block including age and hectares, and number of people you employ to help with providing aggregated industry information and forecasting. The invoices were due for payment by 30th November 2019. Thanks to those growers who have paid their invoice and provided their information already, and a gentle reminder to those growers who haven't done this yet to please return the information as soon possible along with your levy payment. If you have any queries on the invoice please [contact us](#).

Biosecurity pledge

NZAC have supported a Business Biosecurity Pledge which was launched on 31 October 2019 by MPI.

The pledge is a living document available for any organisation in New Zealand who is willing to take a proactive approach to biosecurity risk management in their business operations to sign up to. The pledge also includes acknowledgement of supporting organisations who facilitate uptake of biosecurity in their sectors. Further information about the pledge can also be found on: <https://www.thisisus.nz/biosecuritybusinesspledge>



Currently a grower biosecurity manual is being developed by the vegetable product groups, including NZAC, and it is planned this will be provided to all growers by March-April 2020.

Upcoming meetings

The NZAC board had a teleconference/video meeting late November which covered the following areas:

- Feedback from grower visits.
- Feedback and update on asparagus promotions.
- Review of the NZAC business plan.
- Farm environment plans.
- Development of material for growers and retailers.
- Export market overview and considerations for export opportunities.

The next NZAC executive committee meeting will be held **25th February 2020** and we're looking at holding the annual AGM and conference in June 2020 in the sunny Hawkes Bay.

If you have any feedback and content suggestions for the newsletter or meetings please contact [Karen](#) or a member of the Executive team.

Merry Christmas

The executive team at NZAC would like to wish everyone all the best for the festive season. We hope you're able to enjoy a well deserved break. We thank you for your support and look forward to updating you on our plans and activities in the new year. Wishing you all the best for 2020!



New Zealand Asparagus Council Executive Members 2019/20

Waikato

Tony Rickman
108 Hautapu Road
Cambridge 3434
M : 0211513914
E : tony@asparagus.co.nz

South West North Island

Sam Rainey
1235 Kawhatau Valley Road
Mangaweka 4797
P: 06 382 5588
E: sam@mangaweka-asparagus.co.nz

Export Market Representative

Currently vacant

Post harvest representative

Andrew Body
MG Marketing
1 Mihaere Drive
Palmerston North 4414
P: 021 717 254
E: abody@mgmarketing.co.nz

Business Manager

Karen Orr
Horticulture New Zealand
P O Box 10232
The Terrace, Wellington 6143
P: 04 494 9984
Mobile: 021 926 890
E: karen.orr@hortnz.co.nz

Hawkes Bay

Lindsay Kay
153 Turamoe Road
RD 11
Hastings
P: 06 878 2347
E: kay.farm@waspnet.co.nz

South Island

Mike Arnold (Chair)
416 Chertsey Road
RD 2
Ashburton
P: 03 302 2897
E: mike@lpsi.co.nz

Domestic Market Representative

Marcus Turner
Fresh Direct Ltd
PO Box 17 470
Auckland 1546
P: 09 573 4100
E: mturner@freshdirect.co.nz

Co-opted Member

Cam Lewis
Lewis Farming Ltd (Tendertips)
747 State Highway 1
Levin 5572
P: 06 368 3957
Mobile: 027 212 1670
E: cam@tendertips.co.nz