



New Zealand

ASPARAGUS COUNCIL

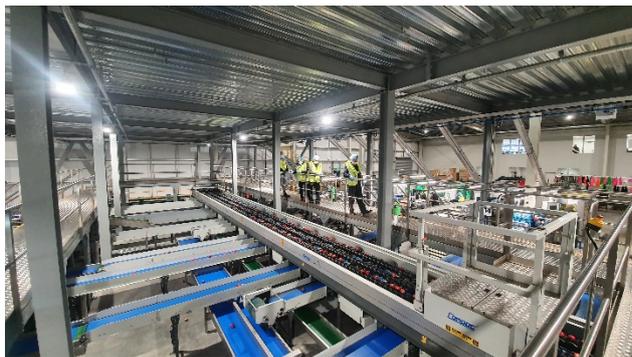
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July 2021 Update

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NZAC 2021 AGM & Conference wrap up



There was a great turnout at the Hawke’s Bay NZAC visits, presentations and AGM on 9th July. We’re very grateful to Rokit, Plant & Food Research and Dan Bloomer for the time they spent with us and the very fruitful discussions that were had.

The afternoon presentations included an update on agrichemical trials, with Kath Lee-Jones from Fruitfed providing a summary of

the results from the trial of [Chateau](#) last season, which showed unacceptable damage on spears. Building on these learnings it is planned that this season replicated trials are undertaken of [Stomp](#), [Frontier](#) and [Sencor](#) for potential off-label use.

Sam Rainey also provided an update on the variety trials that were planted last season based on the varieties that the seed companies provided. The varieties planted are Summit, Magnus, Eclipse, and Spartacus, with P2000 as the control. The seedlings were planted at two separate trial sites, Rangitikei and Waikato. Further work on the criteria for assessment is needed and there will be engagement on this in due course.



A key part of the day was a presentation and discussion on the robotic harvester project which NZAC have named ‘Asparagus Future’ project. Steve Saunders from Robotics Plus and Geoff Lewis from Tendertips presented, with everyone providing input in the plans for the project.

Both the project budget and the parts that make up the four-year project were discussed, noting that growers had committed during district association meetings earlier this year to supporting this project. From the discussion it was agreed that a financial stage gate is included in the agreement between growers (via NZAC) and Robotics Plus, along with clarity on licensing supply and rights of grower investors to secure initial supply.

A short article on the day will be published in August's NZ Grower magazine.

Commodity levy and subscription

At the AGM growers voted in favour of the following motions:

- That the levy rate for 2021/2022 is increased to \$200 per hectare of planted asparagus (excluding GST).
- That under clause 6(a) of the NZAC constitution that all members shall pay an annual subscription of \$100 per hectare of planted asparagus for a maximum of four years.
- Waikato asparagus growers association (WAGA) will support a maximum annual grower levy and subscription of \$300/ha per hectare of planted asparagus for a maximum of four years.

What this means for growers is this season a \$200 levy and \$100 subscription, totaling \$300 per planted hectare, will be payable to NZAC. This will be used towards the operating costs of NZAC, as per the budget, and for investment in the asparagus future project which includes development of a unique selling proposition for NZ asparagus, building of a brand story, and trial work, along with direct support of the robotic harvester development.

A letter and buyer-created invoice will be provided by Karen as usual in September for payment by 30th November 2020. If you have any questions on this please contact a member of the NZAC executive, or Karen.

The science of asparagus growing

Dr Peter Falloon kindly led a zoom session on Thursday 29th July on "The invisible science of growing asparagus". This informative session was well attended and we'd like to thank Peter for providing this to the industry.

If you would like to view the recording of this session please [contact Karen](#).

Farm Environment Plans – final zoom session 12th August 8-9am

Following zoom sessions held in April & May for growers who are doing their farm environment plan through NZGAP's environment management system (EMS), a further zoom session will be provided by NZAC with Andrew Barber 8-9am on Thursday 12th August.

The zoom link will be provided to everyone who has registered for the EMS. If you'd like more details on this please [contact Karen](#).

New Vegetated Buffer Strips guidance

Vegetable Research & Innovation (VR&I) has released a new Code of Practice for Vegetated Buffer strips and a supporting report on the benefits of implementing buffer strips, and why growers should use them.

Vegetated buffer strips, also known as riparian buffers, filter strips, field borders and conservation buffers, are defined as: “small areas or strips of land in permanent vegetation, designed to intercept pollutants and manage other environmental concerns”.

You can view and download these resources here:

[Vegetated Buffer Strips: Code of Practice](#)

[Vegetated Buffer Strips: Background Material and Literature Review](#)

The 2021 Horticulture Conference: Resilience and Recovery – 5-6 August

This two-day conference, set to be held on 5 and 6 August at Mystery Creek, will be a fantastic future-focused event that all growers and industry participants can benefit from. A diverse range of industry, government and stakeholder speakers will be presenting, providing stimulating discussions and insight on all corners of the industry.

To see the program and register go here: <https://www.hortnz.co.nz/news-events-and-media/events/>



Competition law and cartel behaviour

The law criminalising cartels came into effect on 8 April 2021, following an amendment to the Commerce Act. A cartel is where two or more businesses agree not to compete with each other and conduct can be in many forms. Penalties can be imposed on individuals or the business for cartel behaviour including up to 7 years imprisonment and up to \$500,000 in fines for individuals, and up to \$10m or 10% of group turnover or 3 times the commercial gain (whichever is greatest) for companies.

The Commerce Act prohibits:

- Cartel arrangements – fixing prices, restricting supply/output or allocating customers or regions
- Restrictive arrangements – that lessen competition in the market
- Misuse of market power – using market power to anti-competitive purposes
- Anticompetitive mergers – mergers that substantially lessen competition

Legal firm Russel McVeagh provided an information session on this legislation for industry boards and growers in May. If you like to get the presentation and view the recording please [contact Karen](#).

Resurgence of COVID-19 overseas - need for continued vigilance – message from MPI

We appreciate the way in which New Zealand's food and fibre sector has responded to date in keeping its workers safe during the various Alert Levels of the COVID-19 pandemic. The recent resurgence of COVID-19 overseas has shown the need for continued vigilance particularly given the emergence of the Delta variant.

Regardless of the COVID-19 Alert Level, all businesses involved in the processing, storage and transporting of food need to continue to pay particular attention to actively monitoring and keeping daily records on the health of all employees.

Detecting sick employees early and keeping them away from the workplace will prevent transmission and any negative impacts an outbreak will have on the health of your employees, your business, and the reputation of New Zealand's wider food sector.

Stringent attention should be paid to personal hygiene at all times throughout the food handling, storage and transport process. Our advice remains the same: staff should practice regular handwashing for a minimum of 20 seconds as this is proven to help minimise virus transmission, or sanitising hands.

The guidance for primary industries provided previously was prepared with an abundance of caution therefore, ongoing attention to practices such as use of personal protective equipment and physical distancing in the food processing environment will guard against the Delta variant and other SARS-CoV-2 coronaviruses. <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/covid-19-information-and-advice/primary-sector-businesses-services-and-support-services/primary-sector-businesses-in-alert-level-2/>

We are all responsible for playing our part in not just keeping New Zealand safe but also maintaining the high level of public confidence in the food we produce and sell. Together, we have proven that we can effectively manage transmission of COVID-19. I would like to thank you for your ongoing efforts.

News

Recent new articles include the following:

The Commerce Commission has released their draft report on the retail grocery sector. This media release includes a link to the executive summary, full report and an infographic on the draft findings: <https://comcom.govt.nz/news-and-media/media-releases/2021/commission-releases-draft-report-on-competition-in-the-retail-grocery-sector>

NZGAP quarterly update for members and stakeholders- [click here to download](#).

<https://www.hortidaily.com/article/9336002/new-zealand-orchards-seek-labor-bubble-with-covid-free-islands/>

Asparagus World #2 newsletter: https://www.reussir.fr/fruits-legumes/sites/fruits-legumes/files/2021-07/newsletter_asparagus_eng_0.pdf

New Zealand Asparagus Council Executive Members 2021/22

If you have any feedback or would like to contact either your District Representative, Chair or Business Manager, please find our contact details below:

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