



New Zealand

ASPARAGUS COUNCIL

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October 2021 Update

Contents

Season update.....	1
Covid-19 information.....	2
Nitrogen best practice research	2
Find-a-pest app.....	2
Other information & news.....	3
New Zealand Asparagus Council Executive Member contacts	4

Season update

Waikato – unsteady start to season improving now with prices holding up, however labour is a major concern throughout the region.

Hawkes Bay - Hawkes Bay has had a very slow/late start to the season with some very cold wet weather following consecutive frosts. This combination has kept soil temperatures low and yields have stayed the same. Fortunately, it now appears that the weather is getting back to Hawkes Bay normal (mid-teens overnight and mid 20's daytime temps) and with plenty of moisture in the soil the crowns are playing catch-up.

Returns, at this stage, seem to be staying up and labour to date hasn't been too much of an issue. It is unfortunate to see the state of some of the product that has made its way onto the local market with short, skinny and seedy product being observed in a number of shops across the Bay. Hopefully this can be corrected by staff training as most of this should have been field graded out. Hope all have a good, safe, productive season.

Rangitikei - We have had a very late start in Mangaweka, 2 weeks behind last season. Disappointing to hear market is full considering we haven't yet reached peak supply, let's hope retail picks up now. We have some big challenges in front of us as an industry if we want to stay profitable.

Horowhenua – the area has seen more Phytophthora this season than have for a number of years, plus slugs been a major issue, however this is improving as it warms up after a late start to the season.

Domestic market - Season was slow to get going with sporadic volumes till mid Oct. Sales have been slow to get going with Upper North Island being even slower with Covid being used as the excuse. Both supermarkets follow each other's selling prices which has led to prices dropping so they can match the opposition, with everyone having extra supply so chasing sales.

Covid-19 business continuity planning guidance

To assist businesses with planning for Covid, some learnings from businesses that have had a Covid positive case in the workplace have been provided and can be [downloaded here](#).

Nitrate Best Practice Project

Further to last month's newsletter where we advised funding has been secured to support research on nitrate use and best practice in asparagus with project management done by Landwise. This project is starting this season with crop and soil sampling in each growing region, and we would like to thank the growers involved in this research for their time and commitment assisting in this industry good work. We look forward to sharing learnings as this project progresses.

Asparagus Future project update

NZAC is progressing discussions on formalising our role in this project, and some trial work has commenced with Robotics Plus using the prototype machine to gather data in Waikato, with plans for trial work in other regions during this season to gather further information for the harvester development. Again, thank you to the growers involved in helping with these trials.



Promotions

We have a series of easy and tasty asparagus recipes that we will be sharing on the NZ asparagus [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) pages. If you would like to receive the recipes for your own promotional activity, please contact Karen to arrange.

HortNZ scholarships for undergraduate and postgraduate students

Applications are open until 10th December for scholarships for students undertaking fruit or vegetable industry study. For more information on what is available and how to apply use this link:

<https://www.hortnz.co.nz/people-jobs-and-labour/scholarships/>

Find a Pest App

The find-a-pest App has been developed to help industry report suspect exotic pests and pathogens quickly and easily by sending a photo and GPS location using their smart phone. The reports are sent to a community of knowledgeable people from primary industries, iNaturalist NZ (a web-based citizen science platform) and science organisations for identification. Potential new to New Zealand threats are shared with Biosecurity New Zealand for investigation. The app compliments but does not replace the MPI exotic pest and disease hotline. The free app is available to download from the Apple App Store or Google Play store.



Two things that it's important to note:

- If you believe that you've found a pest species that is new to New Zealand, please call Biosecurity New Zealand free at 0800 80 99 66 to report it.
- When you set up your profile in the App please select **other horticulture**. You can also select additional categories, but **other horticulture** should be one of them.

Take a look at the find-a-pest website for handy information about how to get started and use the app: <https://www.findapest.nz/>. The app includes asparagus-specific pest factsheets and a pamphlet on it can be [downloaded here](#).

News

18 Oct: <https://www.freshplaza.com/article/9364878/bumper-asparagus-crop-in-south-island/>

Waikato grower Irene Cummings was on Radio New Zealand midday rural report in early October talking on how growers are managing Waikato alert level restrictions along with managing asparagus picking and packing:

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/ruralnews/audio/2018814945/midday-rural-news-for-4-october-2021>

Mike Arnold talked on RSEs working on the Canterbury asparagus harvest on Newshub on the 14th October evening news - skip to 19:30 to watch: <https://www.threenow.co.nz/shows/newshub-6pm/thursday-14-october-2021/122217/M49953-028>

For the latest Asparagus World e-newsletter – [click here to download](#).

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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