



New Zealand

**ASPARAGUS COUNCIL**

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

## February-March 2020 Update

---

### Contents

Word from the Executive.....	1
COVID-19.....	2
Promotion.....	2
Asparagus in the media.....	3
Farm Environment Plans.....	3
Asparagus Commodity Levy.....	4
Fair Trading Act survey request.....	4
Upcoming meetings .....	5
New Zealand Asparagus Council Executive Members 2019/20.....	6

### Word from the Executive

The NZ executive board had a full day meeting in late February. On the table for discussion were:

- Business plan update
- Export market opportunities
- Promotions campaign review
- Update on Horticulture NZ activities which included the farm environment plans, RSE review, current government policies including water and climate change, and the vocational education review
- Update on the automated asparagus harvester project
- Industry development

The executive had a robust discussion on current challenges facing the industry and how NZAC can best support growers. It was decided NZAC will look into running national variety trials for a minimum of five years to provide growers with information about new varieties. The aim is to increase yield and provide growers with reassurance on varieties that work here.

Other work to be undertaken includes looking at grower information charts for agrichemical use and quality management, supporting the automated harvester project, and funding a further asparagus promotion campaign for the domestic market for the 2020 season.

You'll all be aware that export of asparagus has been declining over the last 10 years due to competition, in particular from countries with lower labour costs such as Peru and Mexico. During the meeting the executive heard from Steve Trickett on his experiences setting up the avocado industry collaborative exporting group, AVOCO, and brand AVANZA. Following hearing from Steve

and also Simon Hegarty from the Horticulture Export Authority, it was agreed that a separate meeting is arranged to discuss and explore potential collaboration with interested parties. Date for this meeting will likely be in April-May.

The group also had an update from Dr Shen Hin Lim (Hin) of Waikato University on the automated asparagus harvester project. Hin and his team are currently working on version 1.5 of the robotic harvester to improve the spear cutting and at the time of his presentation they had field trials planned for later in April/May in Los Banos. It is then planned to demonstrate the harvester at Forbes 2020 Agtech Summit in Salinas 24-25 June in partnership with AgriTech New Zealand (nb: if this event goes ahead).

## **COVID-19**

Yesterday the government announced a \$12.1 billion COVID-19 support package for New Zealand businesses. Over \$5 billion has been made available for wage subsidies and the COVID-19 leave payment scheme will also provide support (through employers/to sole traders and the self-employed) for those people unable to work because they are in self-isolation, are sick with COVID-19 or caring for dependents who are in either of these situations.

We note there will be more to come, with further work on support to be announced in the coming days and weeks. You can read more on the Wage Subsidy and Leave Support Payment Scheme through Work and Income's website, [click here](#). To apply online, fill out the following forms:

[Employer application](#)

[Self Employed/Contractor](#)

## **Promotion**

A full review of the 2019 season asparagus promotional campaign was presented at the February NZAC executive meeting. In summarising the social media performance, the Facebook and Instagram pages set up for 'In Season, NZ Grown Asparagus' reached 556,541 people on average 5.65 times throughout the campaign. Native advertising was also done on Stuff.co.nz linking to an article on 8 reasons to eat asparagus, and resulted in 148,822 impressions (i.e., content delivered to someone's feed) and had an average click through rate (people who clicked on the ad) of 0.67% - the industry average for click through rate is between 0.30-0.50%.



Asparagus featured in newspapers, radio, magazines and excellent television coverage was gained through the campaigns run by Countdown and Foodstuffs.

If you would like a copy of the marketing report summarising activities please [contact Karen](#).

**Health claims:** NZAC have recently commissioned a report to update on nutritional claims that can be used on New Zealand grown fresh asparagus, with this research done by Dr Carolyn Lister from Plant & Food Research. To request a copy of the report please [contact Karen](#).

## Asparagus in the media

Tune in to the upcoming Rural Delivery program on asparagus to be screened on TV1 on April 18 at 7.00am to support our industry.

### Other news:

- NIWA Seasonal Climate Outlook for March-May 2020 is available for download by [clicking here](#).
- <https://www.thepacker.com/article/california-asparagus-acreage-plummets>

## Farm Environment Plan workshops – Pukekohe and Canterbury

A second Farm Environment Plan (FEP) workshop planned by Hort NZ and NZGAP in Pukekohe has been rescheduled to 25<sup>th</sup> March at 5.30-8.00pm. This workshop will focus on mapping, and erosion and sediment control. It will step you through requirements under the New Zealand Good Agricultural Practice (NZGAP) Environmental Management System (EMS). Further information on this is available by clicking on [this link](#).

There are also two workshops on Farm Environment Plans (FEPs) in three locations across Canterbury, mid to late March 2020. The workshops are open to all commercial vegetable and fruit growers.

- Workshop 1 will cover farm mapping and erosion and sediment control.
- Workshop 2 will cover nutrient and water management, biodiversity and mahinga kai.

To register for a workshop please [use this link](#). You can register for Workshops 1 and 2 in your area in one transaction and payment. Further information can be [downloaded HERE](#).

The timetable for the workshops is:

### **Workshop 1**

<b>Content</b>	Introduction, farm mapping, erosion and sediment control		
<b>Location</b>	Lincoln (North Canterbury)	Ashburton (Mid Canterbury)	Timaru (South Canterbury)
<b>Venue</b>	Lincoln Events Centre	Hotel Ashburton	Southern Trust Events Centre, Timaru
<b>Date</b>	Tuesday, 17 March	Tuesday, 17 March	Wednesday, 18 March
<b>Time</b>	2-4 pm	6-8 pm	4-6 pm

### **Workshop 2**

<b>Content</b>	Nutrient management, water management, biodiversity and mahinga kai
----------------	---

<b>Location</b>	Lincoln (North Canterbury)	Ashburton (Mid Canterbury)	Timaru (South Canterbury)
<b>Venue</b>	Lincoln Events Centre	Hotel Ashburton	Southern Trust Events Centre, Timaru
<b>Date</b>	30/31 March	30/31 March	30/31 March
<b>Time</b>	TBC	TBC	TBC

### Asparagus Commodity Levy 2019 /20

The final date for levy payment for the 2019 asparagus season under the Commodity Levy order was 28<sup>th</sup> February 2020.

Thanks to all those growers who have paid their levy invoice and provided information - we greatly appreciate this. Growers who have not paid yet are being followed up with individually. If you have any queries on the levy please [contact us](#).

### Fair Trading Act submission

The Government is taking action on unfair commercial practices via an amendment to the Fair Trading Act. HortNZ is preparing a submission on behalf of growers. To ensure their submission reflects your views, please complete a brief survey by Friday 20 March. Here is the link to the survey: [https://horticulturenewzealand.formstack.com/forms/fair\\_trading\\_act\\_survey](https://horticulturenewzealand.formstack.com/forms/fair_trading_act_survey)

Unfair commercial practices include the use of pressure tactics, deception, one-sided contract terms, and practices that generally exploit a consumers' or small businesses' vulnerabilities.

The amendment would:

- Prohibit serious misconduct that goes beyond what is commercially necessary or appropriate – called unconscionable conduct in trade
- Extend the Fair Trading Act's unfair contract terms regime to standard form small trade contracts, between businesses where the business relationship is worth less than \$250,000 each year.

### Labour

The government are currently reviewing the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme and NZAC has been contacted to speak at a briefing on the RSE scheme to the Primary Production Select Committee.

Workers through the RSE scheme support the high requirement for labour involved with harvesting asparagus which has been estimated at 1.5 labour units per hectare over the 100-110 day harvest. As asparagus harvesting is positioned as one of the first horticulture employers for seasonal labour it is important we provide feedback on the scheme to government.

Geoff Lewis from Tendertips was instrumental in setting up the RSE scheme and will be speaking on behalf of the industry about the RSE scheme in its current form and future requirements. If you would like to share information about this review please [contact us](#).

### **Research request on a new labour-saving device**

Prime Research are assisting an Auckland engineering company who has developed a piece of equipment that growers may be interested in. It has been designed to assist with row plantings, weeding, thinning and picking crops such as onions, strawberries and asparagus. It can also be used to assist those working on the lower limbs of fruit trees and those pruning and laying down canes in vineyards.

To help with the development of this piece of equipment, they are looking for input on the practical side of the product – particularly the design and functionality. They will show you pictures, videos and details of the piece of equipment.

If you are in the Upper North Is and are interested or can assist, they would like between 45 and 60 minutes of your time. This can be at any time, on any day. As a small token of their appreciation they are offering \$100 cash (but please note – they advise they are absolutely not trying to sell you anything and are only interested in your thoughts and impressions). To be involved, please email Todd at: [Todd@primeresearch.co.nz](mailto:Todd@primeresearch.co.nz) or give him a call on 021655605.

### **Upcoming meetings**

Timing for next NZAC executive meeting is to be confirmed. At this stage, the NZAC 2020 AGM and Conference is tentatively planned for Friday 7<sup>th</sup> August in Napier. Once details are firmed up we will update all growers and associates.

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

## New Zealand Asparagus Council Executive Members 2019/20

### Waikato

Tony Rickman  
108 Hautapu Road  
Cambridge 3434  
M : 0211513914  
E : [tony@asparagus.co.nz](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:kay.farm@waspnet.co.nz)

### South Island

Mike Arnold (Chair)  
416 Chertsey Road  
RD 2  
Ashburton  
P: 03 302 2897  
E: [mike@lbsi.co.nz](mailto:mike@lbsi.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](mailto: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](mailto:cam@tendertips.co.nz)