



New Zealand

ASPARAGUS COUNCIL

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

September 2020 Update

Contents

Season update	1
Automated harvester project	2
Promotion	2
HortNZ AGM.....	2
Covid & food safety.....	2
Women in Hort.....	3
Biosecurity.....	3
News.....	3
New Zealand Asparagus Council Executive Member contacts	4

Season update

Waikato: very early start; not huge volumes but steady; picking every 3 days. Cooler temperatures and quite dry. Market price holding up ok and supply of labour more than adequate at this stage.

Hawkes Bay: with the warm weather we have been experiencing the season has kicked off a good 10 days earlier than last year and at this stage things are looking very promising. So far labour hasn't been an issue as most other crops in the region currently have very low labour requirements, however this will be a situation to watch as labour requirements increase in other sectors. A bit disappointing to see some very average looking product has made its way into one supermarket that I am aware of. Hopefully this is a situation that will right itself as supply increases over the next few weeks and hasn't put too many people off purchasing for too long. The weather forecast going forwards is looking very promising in the short/medium term at least and things should ramp up quite quickly from now. Wishing everyone a safe and productive growing season.

Mangaweka: Still early for us, expect October start. Optimistic demand for asparagus will be stronger this season following other fresh produce trends since Covid. Providing we keep quality and freshness/coolchain standards outlook is positive.

Horowhenua: production has started a little earlier than normal but is currently stuck in first gear with some cold southerly weather that has been blowing through in early September, bringing frosts and some very cold winds. Don't expect to really get going until the end of September based on the current forecast.

Canterbury: still not harvesting yet in the South Island; could begin end of the month. Ground conditions good with little to no rain in the forecast meaning good quality expected, free from slug damage and purple spot.

Asparagus harvester project

Trials of the harvester version 1.5 are planned shortly in Waikato to check the visioning and cutting system as discussed at the NZAC AGM. We'll keep you updated on this project as Hin & the team progress.

Promotion

During September, 5+ A Day are doing back of bus and online advertising in Auckland with a beautiful asparagus and strawberry salad to remind people it's spring!

Please follow them on @5daynz and share their posts. You can also download the recipe featured to use with friends by clicking on this link:

<https://www.5aday.co.nz/recipes/asparagus-strawberry-and-rocket-salad/>



NZAC's paid asparagus promotion which is being managed by Digital Café (who managed last season's asparagus campaign). Key paid media focus time this season is mid-October to mid-December and this will predominately be on social media where we got good uptake last season, especially on Instagram.

We will update on promotions as the season progresses. You can download our promotions plan by [clicking here](#). Meantime please like and follow our social media pages:

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

https://www.instagram.com/nz_asparagus/

Horticulture New Zealand AGM

The Annual General Meetings (AGM) for Horticulture New Zealand is now being held by Zoom webinar at 1pm on Friday 25 September 2020. Unfortunately, due to the Covid-19 alert levels it was necessary to move the AGM to zoom only rather than having the physical meeting in Pukekohe as earlier planned. If you are interested in joining the AGM to hear more about HortNZ's activities please use this link: <https://zoom.us/j/95208014745>.

Covid-19 and food safety

The International Commission on Microbiological Specifications for Foods (ICMSF) released an opinion on Covid 19 and its relationship to food safety last week. Given growing confusion and misinformation around the possibility of food and food packaging being a transmission route for Covid 19 the Commission was asked by several governments to provide a definitive opinion on whether or not there is a food safety concern. The report states:

- COVID-19 is primarily a respiratory disease, transmitted from person-to-person over close distances via droplets/aerosols from the nose and/or mouth;
- Measures must be implemented in food businesses to minimise entry of the virus to the workplace and transmission between workers;
- It is highly unlikely that the ingestion of SARS-CoV-2 will result in illness;

- It is very unlikely that food, food packaging or food handling is a significant source and/or vehicle for transmission of SARS-CoV-2 and would result in infection;
- While the indirect spread of the virus via cross-contamination of surfaces is less likely, it is prudent to emphasise to food producers, manufacturers and handlers the importance of using good food hygiene practices to minimise any possibility of food or food contact surfaces as a vector for SARS-CoV-2;
- As SARS-CoV-2 does not pose a food safety risk, systematic sampling and testing for the virus on food end-product or the environment is of no added value for food safety purposes.

Download the [article here](#); the opinion is published on the ICMSF website:
<http://www.icmsf.org/publications/papers/>

Women in Hort

In late August, the Women in Hort group did a media release highlighting a lack of female leadership in the NZ Horticulture Industry. You can read the media release by [clicking here](#).

They have also launched a new website: <https://women-in-hort.co.nz/>

New priorities identified by the group from a strategy session in early August include:

- Exploring piloting tailored professional and personal development courses specifically for women in the horticulture sector, through existing platforms;
- Investigating strategic partnerships, and developing a pitch document for co-funding.

If you would like to join the Women in Hort membership database please contact: info@women-in-hort.co.nz. They group welcomes both women and men within the NZ horticulture industry who are interested in this exciting initiative.

Biosecurity update

Dr Anna Rathe, Biosecurity Manager at Horticulture New Zealand, has provided an update on current biosecurity activities which can be downloaded by [clicking here](#).

Highlights include:

- Biosecurity microcredential – one day course being offered in three locations in October (Kerikeri, Tauranga and Hastings).
- Find-a-pest app – asparagus pests and pathogens have been added to this app which has been developed to help identify exotic (not present in NZ) pests & diseases. To find it search ‘find-a-pest’ on your smart phone or via this website: <http://www.findapest.nz/>. More information on this will be released during October.
- On-farm biosecurity guidance – booklets are available if you would like copies for your farm.



ES

More about the Biosecurity short course: Primary ITO with the Horticulture Capability Group have developed a biosecurity micro-credential to enhance industry capability. The programme is designed to give business owners and managers the skills to develop, implement and improve workplace biosecurity strategies and practices on their property. At the end of the qualification, your people will be equipped with the skills and knowledge to identify, evaluate and prioritise biosecurity risks in the primary sector workplace; develop a plan to manage biosecurity risks for a primary industry workplace; implement and monitor the biosecurity plan, and review and update the biosecurity plan.

This Level 5 NZQA qualification is **free** under the Targeted Training and Apprenticeship Fund (TTAF) and is being delivered by UCOL on behalf of Primary ITO. In 2020, courses are being held:

Tauranga -13 October

Hastings -19 October

Contact Primary ITO on 0800 20 80 20 find out more, and to enrol.

News

Amisfield restaurant in Queenstown is interested in working directly with asparagus growers for supply this season. If you are interested in talking with them please contact Tony Stewart, on 021 282 148 or email: tony@amisfield.co.nz

NIWA Seasonal Outlook September – November 2020. To download the latest Seasonal Climate Outlook from NIWA issued 27 August [click here](#).

Check out this nifty electric kart for assisting with harvesting:

<https://www.freshplaza.com/article/9249942/that-s-easy-asparagus-harvesting/?edition=5>

And take a look at the support this North Queensland grower is getting from supermarket giant Coles:

<https://www.queenslandcountrylife.com.au/story/6902487/asparagus-spears-up-in-nq/?cs=4698>

And here's a couple of interesting podcasts to round things off:

"LandWISE: Promoting Sustainable Crop Production" a podcast series - to find out more please head to the Landwise website: <http://www.landwise.org.nz/landwise-online-podcast/>

FAR "Cut the Crop" Podcast series

Foundation for Arable Research has a new podcast series "cut the crop". The most recent episode called "Regenerative arable - soil and profit" and other episodes can be found here: <https://www.cutthecrop.co.nz/podcast>

New Zealand Asparagus Council Executive Members 2020/21

Waikato

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

Hawkes Bay

Iain Trotter
2 Nicoll Road
RD 5, Hastings
P: 021 081 96849
E: asparagushb@gmail.com

South West North Island

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

South Island

Mike Arnold
416 Chertsey Road
RD 2
Ashburton
P: 03 302 2897
E: mike@lbsi.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

Domestic Market Representative

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

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