



New Zealand

**ASPARAGUS COUNCIL**

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## October 2020 Update

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### Season update

**Waikato:** issues with the changeable weather but report of production better than last year and quality good at the moment

**Manawatu/Horowhenua:** The frosts in the weekend have caused a lot of damage however warm week ahead will see good supply. Picking costs up with new staff this year.

Cold and challenging September so behind on production vs expected. October looking better at this stage. Very unseasonal. Quality ok now.

**Hawkes Bay:** so far this has very much been a season of two halves in HB. Two weeks of unseasonal hot weather through late September and early October were giving yields 2-3x what was being picked at the same time last year - this was then cut off by some cooler weather that did fortunately bring with it some of the rain we have been missing. Frosts have also made for some long nights. Still not too many issues with labour that I am aware of locally. Quality seems to be hanging in although there is still a little less than optimal product finding its way onto the shelf at the local supermarket.

**Canterbury:** Weather has been outstanding in terms of quality and also achieving expected crop yields. Labour has also been manageable with great attendance and commitment mainly from working holiday visa holders. Product has been well received in the market with good volumes being sold. Poor quality product no longer seems to be in stores. Great to see the promotional work being done.

## Asparagus harvester project

The team at Waikato Uni are working on trials of version 1.5 of the harvester in Waikato. They hope to get it to the stage that they can run a demonstration for interested growers to see it in action later in November. We'll keep you posted on this.

## Promotion

Auckland's traffic congestion is presenting a great advertising opportunity to showcase beautiful New Zealand-grown fresh fruit and vegetables. 5+ A Day have three buses assigned to wider Auckland during the final part of 2020 featuring potatoes, strawberries, asparagus, mushrooms and fresh herbs.



The team at Digital Café have developed some great asparagus social media posts this season. If you're not following them please do so. If you have any content suggestions please let [Karen](#) know.

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

[https://www.instagram.com/nz\\_asparagus/](https://www.instagram.com/nz_asparagus/)

NZAC did a start of season media release in September which you can [download here](#).

Asparagus features on the cover of October NZ Grower magazine, with articles on asparagus growers' uptake on farm environment plans published on pages 22 – 24.

If you don't currently receive this monthly magazine and would like a copy please get in touch with [Karen](#).



Hawke's Bay District representative, Iain Trotter, was featured in Pick of Hawke's Bay published in late September:

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Pick of Hawke's Bay

## Awesome asparagus grown right here in Hawke's Bay

Iain Trotter is something of an asparagus guru but then he should be as he's the third generation Trotter who has cultivated asparagus in Twyford, on the outskirts of Hastings. "Grandad, John R. Trotter, started off



Iain on 8 September with the first harvest for 2020.

with a plot down the road," and farmed it for about 50 years, Iain says.

Iain and his family, wife Stacey and two teenage children Lexi and Quinn, live close by and so do Iain's parents John S. Trotter and Pam. Together father and son are partners in the green and purple asparagus business. They also grow grapes and sweet corn which work well together as once the asparagus season finishes they go onto tending the vines and harvesting the corn.

Their 6ha block, one of several, was planted with 156,000 crowns by hand in 2013 with spacing at 23 cm. Normally, but not always, it takes three years from seed before a first harvest. John used to grow asparagus crowns but now they source the crowns from Peter Falloon of Aspara Pacific Ltd.

Iain is the Hawke's Bay representative on the New Zealand Asparagus Council and is very keen on promoting asparagus. He says it's the only form of edible lily and originated from Peru. It loves hot weather and is very salt tolerant. All in all, it's easy to grow and the only pests are slugs and weeds.

Asparagus is perennial and can last for 15-20 years. They are harvested at 100-110 days and are picked from mid-September to Mid-December. When the ground warms up, and in the right conditions, they can grow up to 10cm a day.

This year the first hand picking of the green asparagus took place on 8 September with a second pick later that week which was double the first pick. RSE workers are contracted to do

the picking which is very tough work and can involve each picker walking nine-10kms a day. The purple asparagus, a much smaller block, is picked by the family in the evening.

Most of the Trotter's asparagus is supplied to Gourmet Blueberries but they also sell to market gardens locally in Meeanee and Clive.

The Asparagus Council is hoping to promote asparagus to young people who

are unsure of the best methods of cooking it to get best results. How does Iain enjoy his asparagus? "Picked fresh in the field and eaten raw." Stacey suggests trimming the bottoms, rinsing, wrapping in tin foil with a knob of butter, a squeeze of lemon, salt and pepper and sitting it on the BBQ top rack for 5-10 minutes.



### Farm environment plans

A reminder to growers who attended the farm environment plans to take photos, for example of plantings, buffer zones, water flow when wet, etc. It was noted at the workshop that before & after photos are a powerful tool with auditors. A zoom meeting will be scheduled with participants in regional groups from late January to follow up on the plans, progress sections and work towards an audited in April-May 2020. NZAC will facilitate this to help growers with their plans.

We're also going to update the asparagus quality chart originally done about twenty years ago with fresh images so please take photo's of any asparagus issues you come across and send the high resolution images to [Karen](#).

### United Fresh Members' Meeting 29th October 2020

NZAC are members of the pan-produce industry organisation, United Fresh. They are holding a members' update online on **Thursday 29th October at 1.30-2.30pm**.

They have a line up of short presentations covering horticultures Covid-19 recovery plans, an update on the retail landscape, and new research on fruit & veg purchasing. The webinar will run for about an hour and there will be time for questions at the end of the presentations. The full agenda and registration details are available on:

<https://www.unitedfresh.co.nz/news-events/events/register/united-fresh-members-meeting-29th-october-2020>

## **RMA and FEP webinar on Thursday 22 October**

HortNZ is running a webinar on Resource Management Act (RMA) planning and consents, and Farm Environment Plans (FEPs) using the NZGAP Environmental Management System (EMS).

When: 12-1pm, Thursday 22 October 2020

Who: Lucy Deverall (HortNZ Environmental Policy Advisor – North Island) will cover the RMA and Andrew Barber (Agrilink) will cover FEPs

### **Zoom link:**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84645473253?pwd=VzIYUDcrNXFhNGNjRzBNdTRTYXR3Zz09>

Passcode: 275051

## **New RSE videos**

Horticulture New Zealand has been working on short videos to show how the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme benefits the Pacific and New Zealand. Geoff Lewis is shown in these, along with other employers and employees. You can view the first of these videos by clicking on the links below.

- [RSE scheme's positive impact in New Zealand](#)
- [How the RSE scheme works](#)
- <https://youtu.be/JVg-ICs8NVM>

## **Update on employing SSE visa holders**

MBIE has provided a further update on the Supplementary Seasonal Employer (SSE) visa, which allows people in New Zealand with expiring working holiday visas to stay in the country to fill short-term horticulture and viticulture roles.

SSE visa holders can be employed by either:

- an employer with an approved SSE Approval in Principle (AIP)
- an RSE employer with an approved Agreement to Recruit (ATR), where places haven't been filled by RSE workers, or
- are filling a role in an MSD region that's specified by MSD

Click [here](#) for more information on this.

## **Daily Climate Maps**

NIWA publishes daily climate maps, which show levels of soil moisture, rainfall, sunshine and temperature. The maps also offer comparative views to see how current levels compare with previous time periods. View them here: <https://niwa.co.nz/climate/daily-climate-maps>

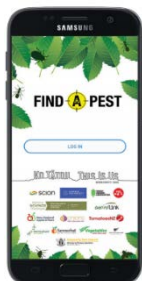
## Find-a-pest

The Find-a-pest app is now live!

### How to use the app



**Downloading the app.**  
Download from the Apple App Store or Google Play Store by searching for Find-A-Pest or use the QR code.



**Login.** Login using your existing iNaturalist NZ ID or create one by using the login button.

This tool is designed to make users into the eyes and ears of the industry to identify any potential biosecurity threats. On the app, you will find the top 40 risk pests to the New Zealand Vegetable industry, along with some information about how to identify these pests and a reporting function if you think you have seen it.

This tool allows trained entomologists/pathologists to review submission by users to identify any potentially risky pests. This App was developed as a part of a joint SFF project funded by MPI, SCION, Fruit groups, and vegetable groups.

To learn more about the app and how to download it please [click here.](#)

## News

Sam Rainey spoke to Radio NZ's midday report in early October on labour supply and RSE workers: <https://www.rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/ruralnews/audio/2018766618/midday-rural-news-for-2-october-2020>

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