



New Zealand

ASPARAGUS COUNCIL

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May 2021 Update

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NZAC 2021 AGM & Conference – Friday 9th July

NZAC is holding its AGM at 4.30pm at the Hawke’s Bay Club, Cnr Marine Parade and Browning Street, Napier on Friday 9th July 2021.

The day will begin with a field trip focusing on the use of automation and technology in horticulture in the morning (commencing at 10.30am in Hastings). This will be followed by presentations on current NZAC projects and activities including the robotic asparagus harvester project, farm environment plans, herbicide management, variety trials, promotions and other updates in the afternoon at the Hawke’s Bay Club.

Drinks & dinner are also planned for after the AGM at the Hawke’s Bay Club. A full programme for the day will be provided soon, and all paid-up growers have been sent information about the AGM. If you have not received this please contact Karen on karen.orr@hortnz.co.nz or call 04-494 9984.

Following positive discussions on the asparagus robotic harvester project with growers, we will be discussing further the future levy requirements and conducting a vote to increase the current levy rate at the AGM. The remits for voting, will be sent out with the AGM notice of business and papers after 5pm on 18 June 2021 (when grower remits close).

Autonomous asparagus harvester project

Grower meetings have now been held in all grower regions with levy paying growers invited to learn more about the autonomous asparagus harvester project which is being led by Robotics Plus, with funding support from Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI).

Sam Rainey and Geoff Lewis spoke at the meetings about the opportunity this project brings for the asparagus industry to address labour challenges and rebuild competitiveness in the international market. To proceed, this opportunity requires NZ asparagus growers support by contributing towards the funding of the four-year project.

Funding was discussed at the meetings, and it was proposed that the current annual levy rate of \$120/ha is increased to \$300/ha to cover the grower contribution requirement of \$400,000 cash over four years. Feedback was sought on this and at each of the four meetings held (Canterbury, Hastings, Cambridge and Bulls) growers in attendance confirmed they were in support of the project at the \$300/ha levy rate and managed by way of NZAC levy.

Further consultation with growers will take place at the AGM to ensure all growers have the opportunity to address any matters or concerns outstanding. Growers will be asked to vote on increasing the levy rate to the maximum allowed rate under the existing levy order of \$200/ha to cover the 2021/22 levy year initial cash requirements of the project. NZAC will also seek mandate at the AGM to proceed with a grower referendum for increasing the levy beyond the current maximum rate allowed under the Commodity Levies (asparagus) Order 2018. To do this requires the establishment of a new levy order. If mandate at AGM is gained then in the weeks following there will be a grower referendum to increase the levy to \$300/ha or the equivalent of. The process for a new order can take 6 months from lodging the levy application with MPI. If the application is successful we would aim for this to come into effect 1st July 2022.

We also have the opportunity as an industry to discuss the levy collection method as part of a new levy application – i.e., do we change from the current grower declaration \$/planted ha annual charge or move to a percentage of the sales value collected at first point of sale (as your current HortNZ levy is collected). This will be discussed at the AGM to seek grower feedback.

If you have not attended any of the meetings and would like to know more about the project please contact Sam Rainey or a member of the NZAC executive.

Other conferences - RSE Conference 30 June and 1 July, Rutherford Hotel, Nelson - A post Covid future.

If you are an RSE employer, or looking to become one, please register for the RSE Conference 30 June and 1 July at the Rutherford Hotel in Nelson.

This is an important conference for RSE employers to enable planning for the future, with Government well represented at the conference. To register as an individual please click here <https://confer.eventsair.com/rse-2021/reg>

The Rutherford Hotel is offering rooms to delegates at **\$195 p/n**. To make a booking, please email the hotel directly and state you are with the RSE conference: **Georgia Dickson,** Reservations@rutherfordhotel.co.nz.

Horticulture conference – Resilience & Recovery, 5-6th August

The Horticulture conference this year will be held 5-6th August at Mystery Creek, Hamilton. The conference runs over two days and this year the theme is “**Resilience and Recovery**”, focusing on the future in a Covid world that has changed and will continue to change.

Main conference speakers include; Lord Deben and Rod Carr on climate change, resilience and mental fitness speakers Jimi Hunt and Lance Burdett, economist Cameron Bagrie, and politicians Hon David Parker and Damien O’Connor. The **Gala Dinner and Awards** is on Thursday night at Mystery Creek.

To register and view the programme details, go to <https://conferences.co.nz/hortnz2021/>

Register by 25 June 2021 to get the early registration rate.



Farm environment plans

During April & early May we provided two follow up NZAC funded sessions, held using zoom meetings, to help growers progress their farm plans to be ready for audit. The main areas covered in the two sessions were a better understanding on adding your farm details and features to the digital maps and working through soil types.

We had a good attendance at the morning sessions; less at the evening sessions but overall good learnings. NZAC executive will assess whether further assistance is needed for growers to complete farm plans so these can begin being audited and farm plan certification.

Horticulture New Zealand new Chief Executive

Nadine Tunley has been announced as Horticulture New Zealand’s new Chief Executive. Nadine starts in her position on Monday 14 June, replacing Mike Chapman’s who is retiring. Mike is staying on until Friday 25 June to assist with the handover.

Nadine says she is also looking forward to having the opportunity to work collaboratively with the industry bodies, product groups and district associations that make up the horticulture sector. Read the full media release [here](#).

Pathways into Primary Industries

Pathways into Primary Industries is an opportunity to bring people into the food and fibre sector to provide them with a choice of pathways to dynamic and rewarding careers. You can read more [here](#).

The Primary ITO are in the second phase of this TEC funded project (through the WDC/Transitional ITO COVID-19 Response Projects Fund), and as part of their research are carrying out a large survey of perceptions and experiences of working in the primary industries. Their survey can be found [here](#).

They are keen for growers and associate members to complete the survey which will help inform their work in developing pathways for careers in the food and fibre sector.

They have also launched a [facebook page](#) where they will be promoting the project as well as the survey. Please support career development by completing the survey by 20 June 2021 and following this page.

News

Recent articles on asparagus include the following:

<https://www.freshplaza.com/article/9316638/overview-global-asparagus-market/>

<https://www.hortidaily.com/article/9321542/late-freeze-in-michigan-takes-first-flushes-of-asparagus-out/>

<https://www.eurofresh-distribution.com/asparagus-world/asparagus-world-3>

<https://www.freshplaza.com/article/9322578/asparagus-export-value-increased-by-an-average-of-20-5-for-all-exporting-countries-in-2019/>

New Zealand Asparagus Council Executive Members 2020/21

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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