



# Growing Together

Information for growers about Horticulture New Zealand and the renewal of the Commodity Levies (Vegetables and Fruit) Order.



# Dear Grower

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## An invitation to have your say

This is a big year for horticulture in New Zealand.

As I write this, so far, we've avoided the extreme weather events that caused so much destruction and heartache last year, but we need to keep working together to increase resilience in a changing climate along with many other areas.

We have a new Government and for the first time a Minister with specific responsibility for horticulture, Hon. Nicola Grigg. We'll continue to advocate on your behalf for sound and sensible policies that create and maintain the conditions for our industry to thrive.

And this year we are required by law to hold a referendum on the Commodity Levy that you pay to fund HortNZ work. Before the vote in May, we want to have a conversation with you about what we at HortNZ are doing, what is going well, and what can be improved and how.


A number of product groups are also seeking to renew their levies this year, so it will be a chance to look at how we can better coordinate and align our work. HortNZ's primary focus is on the pan-sector central and local government issues in the interests of all growers and the horticulture industry as a whole along with coordinating programmes that multiple sectors are keen to be involved and work together on.

All of HortNZ's work on your behalf is guided and heavily influenced by Growing Together, the horticulture sector's five-point action plan to double the farmgate value of horticultural production by 2035.

On the following pages, our chief executive Nadine Tunley provides an update on what we've done, and what's next.

We look forward to hearing from you on what's important to you and where you think we could do more or different things with your levy funding on your behalf.

Please give your feedback in person and on the *Growing Together* feedback form available at the grower meetings and on the HortNZ website.



**Barry O'Neil**  
Board Chair  
Horticulture New Zealand



HortNZ advocates for and represents the interests of New Zealand's 4,200+ commercial fruit and vegetable growers on industry-wide issues. It is funded by a levy of 0.14% (14c per \$100 of sales). Some growers may also pay product group levies relating to specific crops.

Under legislation the levy provides for:

- Research and development
- Market and trade research, development and promotion
- Industry promotion
- Development and implementation of quality assurance
- Education and training, including attracting people to the industry and developing and retaining them
- Information and communication including advocating for and representing growers
- Protection and improvement of the health of plants, including biosecurity activities
- Day-to-day administration of HortNZ including central grower registration systems.

The levy cannot be spent on any trading or commercial activity.

# HortNZ's work on your behalf

## How your levy is working for you

As Chief Executive, my job is to ensure HortNZ provides a united voice on issues affecting all growers at both local and central government level in areas such as environment, compliance, access to land and water.

HortNZ supports growers to make more informed decisions, providing them with tools and services to enhance their productivity and profitability.

We advocate on your behalf to try and achieve sound and sensible policy settings including around climate change and freshwater so growers can provide a reliable and resilient supply of fresh vegetables and fruit and ensure New Zealand's essential food security.

I believe the horticulture sector is certainly stronger by working together. Collective investment by growers provides the size and scale needed to achieve things that no individual grower can achieve alone.

It has been rewarding for the team at HortNZ to have been able to achieve outcomes for growers over the past six years - notably the strong advocacy during the various COVID-19 lockdowns that enabled growers to continue to harvest crops and supply domestic and export markets and quarantine-free travel for RSE workers, leading the cyclone recovery and securing policy gains for the sector.

And the next six years will be an important period for New Zealand's growers.

Providing growers continue their support for us we will be, pushing the case with Government in key areas including water storage, ensuring the reliable supply of healthy locally grown fruit and vegetables, streamlining assurance processes, employment flexibility, removing legislative barriers to businesses and providing certainty for Pacific workers and employers.

The sector is also looking to take advantage of some encouraging tail-winds in our favour.

In December, the Ministry for Primary Industries' Situation and Outlook for Primary Industries report revealed a strong future for New Zealand horticulture with forecast export revenue rising to \$8.19 billion by 2025.

The report showed the horticulture industry overtaking forestry to be the third largest earner of export revenue in the food and fibre sector by 2025.

Increased export prices are forecast over the coming years, supported by strong global demand and constrained global supply. Recovering crop yields in 2024 are expected to offset lower volumes for some crops, largely resulting from the tail end of weather-affected 2023 harvests.

The sector is also looking forward to New Zealand ratifying the free trade agreement with the EU, particularly good news for our onion and kiwifruit growers.

We want New Zealand to prosper by exporting our world-leading fruit and vegetables such as apples, kiwifruit, avocados, cherries, potatoes and many other products to millions of customers all over the world.

We are confident we can double farmgate revenue by 2035 in line with the Aotearoa Horticulture Action Plan.

But we can't do it alone.

We need the Government to recognise and understand the importance of horticulture and create and maintain the conditions for our industry to thrive, and in doing so, lift the overall health, wellbeing and economy of New Zealand.

And we will be doing everything we can to support growers so you can get on with what you do best - producing healthy and sustainable food for our nation and for the world.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nadine".

**Nadine Tunley**  
Chief Executive  
Horticulture New Zealand

# How we work

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HortNZ advocates relentlessly for you no matter the size of your business, the type of growing system or product. HortNZ is a small organisation dedicated to helping growers thrive. We work to deliver in five areas within our sphere of control:

## Shaping sector strategy

To ensure there is a collective long-term vision for horticulture and the support to implement strategic initiatives.

## Proactively influencing policy

To seek the best operating conditions for horticulture in the areas of environment, biosecurity, food safety, crop protection and labour.

## Telling the horticulture story

To celebrate our successes and elevate support for our growers.

## Translating sector wide change

To ensure growers and rural professionals are aware of newly implemented policy, regulations, requirements, and best practice.

## Facilitating grower connections

To enable sector wide information sharing, networking and attracting and developing talent.

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## OUR VISION

Healthy food for all forever  
Oranga kai, oranga tangata, haere ake nei

## OUR PURPOSE

Creating an enduring environment where growers thrive



# Key priorities

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We have three top priorities for this year which will be a focus for all our work areas:

**Water allocation and storage** Water is a critical resource for growing. Growers need certainty over water supply if they are to invest and increase production. We are advocating for policy settings that support expansion of and investment in water storage.

**Climate change and adaptation** HortNZ is supporting growers to recover from weather disasters and plan for a warming climate, while also reducing the sector's contribution to global warming. We continue to work to influence central and local government policy and infrastructure planning and plan for our industry to adapt.

**Food security and supply** Across the globe and in New Zealand, the notion of food security has become increasingly important and in New Zealand there is a direct correlation with access to fruit and vegetables. We are advocating for policy and regulatory settings that enable growers to provide a reliable and resilient supply of fresh fruit and vegetables and contribute positively to New Zealand's food security. We are working on growers' behalf to find more efficient ways of doing things and to share best practice to reduce their costs. And we are focused on boosting horticulture's social licence to operate.

# Delivering the Growing Together Action Plan

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Growing Together is the horticulture sector's five-point Action Plan to double the farmgate value of horticultural production by 2035. This update sets out how HortNZ has invested your levy to date in line with this strategic direction to support the pan-sector strategic approach, help execute it and what HortNZ propose to use your levy for in the future.

## Grow sustainably

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- Adopt optimised environmentally positive growing practices
- Ensure water resilience
- Increase crop protection, management and biosecurity tools
- Support growers with sound policy
- Transition to a low-emissions economy
- Optimise land-use adaptation.



- Represented growers' interests in regional planning processes for freshwater, including mediations and environment court hearings.
- Contributed to the Pukekohe Integrated Catchment Management Plan (ICMP) as part of a working group with iwi, and central and local government.

### Next steps

- Advocating for new policy settings that support expansion of and investment in water storage.
- Develop an adaptation blueprint by region and crop to test policy settings and ensure they enable the right crops to be grown in the right places to meet expected future demand (domestic and export).
- Develop and agree on a horticulture sector roadmap for transition to net zero carbon by 2050.
- Advocating for investment to model future water needs by region, crop, and growing system (including Māori land and isolated rural communities) and map evidence-based strategic water infrastructure investments.

### Work to date

- Equipping growers with knowledge and tools through extension and training programmes such as *A Lighter Touch and Growing Change*.
- Led cyclone recovery in 2023.
- Achieved safeguards for highly productive land through the National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land (NPS-HPL), which came into effect after HortNZ's continuous advocacy.
- Submitted on key policy developments including RMA reform and emissions reduction and trading.
- Ongoing advocacy for Good Agricultural Practice (GAP) scheme as a pathway to develop, implement, audit and certify Freshwater Farm Plans.



60 written submissions to central and local government



13 pan-sector working/governance groups participated in



44 scholarships awarded



23 people participated in the HortNZ leadership course



HortNZ advocates for **protecting growers' licence** to operate, reducing the compliance burden and minimizing costs from regulators with a focus on effective and integrated solutions which work for growers and achieve the desired outcome. HortNZ empowers growers to demonstrate that they meet or exceed regulatory requirements by seeking recognition pathways for industry assurance programmes like NZGAP and GLOBALG.A.P.



**A Lighter Touch programme** is a \$27 million industry and government partnership (co-funded 40% by the Ministry for Primary Industries and 60% by industry supporting New Zealand growers to move to producing plant-based foods with a lighter environmental touch.



**Growing Change** is a partnership between HortNZ and the Ministry for the Environment that is building capacity and capability within the horticulture sector to deliver Good Agricultural Practice Freshwater Farm Plans.

# Optimise value

- Diversify market access and facilitate trade
- Build the domestic market
- Optimise production and value chain innovation
- Utilise digital tools and data sharing.



## Recent advocacy HortNZ has led

- During the various COVID-19 lockdowns, HortNZ advocated for growers to continue to harvest crops and supply domestic and export markets.
- Ongoing advocacy and support of product groups for increased international access/reduced tariffs and for increased market share in New Zealand .
- Advocacy for reducing regulatory costs and constraints on growers, such as maximising use of existing industry assurance schemes.
- Keep pressure on supermarkets and the grocery sector.

## Next steps

- Support growers to diversify crops and markets with data and policy.
- Develop an urban New Zealand focused campaign to promote the horticulture story and the important benefits of our sector.
- Seek out and share more information on farm practices to assist growers with more ways to optimise production and value.
- Help the sector in capturing the use of real time data to help inform production processes, get information to markets and inform future investment.

**4,200+**  
growers

**40,000+**  
regional jobs

**100**  
types of fruit and  
vegetables grown

**125**  
export markets  
around the world

**\$7b+**  
total value



# Māori are strong in horticulture

- Increase Māori workforce participation, training and qualifications
- Increase Māori-owned land in high-value horticulture
- Access capital for investment in Māori-owned horticulture
- Support greater Māori ownership & control across the whole value chain
- Develop and protect unique indigenous horticulture.



## Work to date

- Acknowledging and supporting the key role of Māori in the future of horticulture in the areas of workforce, investment, land use and ownership.
- Strengthening relationships with iwi and hapū in our regions where horticulture is strong.
- Increasing understanding of how HortNZ can support iwi and hapū to achieve their aspirations.
- HortNZ recognises excellence in Māori horticulture through its sponsorship of the Ahuwhenua Trophy and Ahuwhenua Young Māori Grower, the most prestigious awards for Māori agriculture. We are a proud sponsor of these awards every three years.
- HortNZ sit on the Nga Pouwhiro Taimatua and the Māori Science Accelerator committees to better support potential opportunities for Māori in horticulture.

- HortNZ has committed to co funding (with Agmardt) the Taiao Ora Tangata Ora capability project to design a pilot training programme for tangata whenua to become Taiao Agribusiness specialists and practitioners on farm and in-market.

## Next steps

- Look into ways we can encourage investment and supporting opportunities for Māori owners of land that is suitable for new high value crops.
- Explore potential for working closer with Māori who are interested in diversifying their land use and are looking to horticulture to provide healthy food, revenue and investment and employment opportunities.



# Underpinned by science and knowledge

- Catapult Tier 2 crops to a world-leading position
- Optimise use of agritech across New Zealand's horticulture sector
- Breed cultivars that meet future growing needs
- Secure New Zealand's future global competitive position for Tier 1 crops
- Support the rapid and effective establishment of Tier 3 crops.



## Work to date

- A Lighter Touch, a programme to support growers to move to producing plant-based foods with a lighter environmental touch.
- Growing Change, a partnership between HortNZ and the Ministry for the Environment that is building capacity and capability within the horticulture sector to deliver Good Agricultural Practice Freshwater Farm Plans.
- Brought experts to conference to discuss advanced breeding with growers and seek opinions.
- Partnered with industry, Māori, research providers and government on final delivery and launch of the Aotearoa Horticulture Action Plan and initial implementation.
- Support the Sustainable Vegetables Systems (SVS) project, an industry-led collaborative research project, is aiming to understand the nutrient flows in vegetable crop systems and use these insights to create nutrient management decision tools.

## Next steps

- Strong focus on science and technology driving increasing diversity, products, crop management and feeding into future development of the horticulture and policy direction.
- Work with strategic science and technology partners to stimulate opportunities and exposure to leading edge technologies to grow the yield, revenue and diversity of our sector.
- Work to ensure science, practice and technology advances can be utilised by growers safely and sustainably.
- Keep our growers informed of new developments that can grow our markets and keep us leading global trends for crops to markets, drawing on our outreach programmes and global connections.
- Policy work to speed up the development of cultivars, look at and understand advance breeding techniques.
- Support tier 3 crops to ensure the diversity of our sector and the variety of crops being produced allow for future growth.

# Nurture people

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- Establish a coordinated capability framework for horticulture
- Enable right person, right place
- Build a responsible and attractive industry
- Support diversity and development.



Cap on Pacific workers increased in 2023 to **19,500** allowing employers access to more labour.

## Work to date

- Young Grower of the Year and Horticulture Industry Awards are run by HortNZ to showcase the best of our industry.
- HortNZ leadership programme, and scholarships to promote horticulture as a career.
- The ACC Grow Home Safe project has developed new approaches to reduce harm and enable people to thrive throughout the horticulture industry.
- Ongoing advocacy for removing current legislative barriers to businesses employing and rewarding people, for example, Fair Pay Agreements.
- Support growers to be good employers, with high standards in practices, health and safety, careers and conditions.
- Successfully advocated for quarantine-free travel for RSE workers during COVID.
- Ongoing advocacy on policy around RSE workers as the Government makes policy decisions, to support our ability to harvest and strengthen our relationships with Pacific RSE nations and communities.

## Next steps

- Continuing focus on planning for the attraction and retention of a skilled workforce, being good employers and diverse and rewarding career paths.
- Present Government with a long term view of the labour needs of our members, because seasons don't wait for Government policy.
- Continue to support our businesses, people and communities.
- Meeting growers' request to better understand cultural perceptions and expectations of RSE workers - develop a cross cultural awareness framework with the hope it will maintain positive employee-employer relationships, creating an environment that encourages happy and enthusiastic workers.
- To lead the implementation of an effective leadership development programme.



## How to have your say

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Over the coming weeks, HortNZ will be consulting with growers on the future of the Commodity Levies (Vegetables and Fruit) Order.

Your views on how you want us to represent and advocate for you are important.

Every grower opinion counts.

Anyone wanting to provide feedback on anything in this document can do so by:

- Speaking at a roadshow, find roadshow details on our website [www.hortnz.co.nz](http://www.hortnz.co.nz)

- Making written comments on the *Growing Together* feedback form available on the commodity levy section of our website [www.hortnz.co.nz](http://www.hortnz.co.nz) or at grower events.
- Giving us a call on 0508 467 869
- Emailing us at [info@hortnz.co.nz](mailto:info@hortnz.co.nz)
- Giving comments directly to the Minister of Agriculture, Parliament Buildings Wellington.

Please comment by **Friday 12 April 2024** so we can take your feedback into account before issuing a formal proposal for you to vote on in May/June 2024.



# The final say – vote to grow together



In May/June you will be asked to vote in support of continuing the Commodity Levy (Fruit and Vegetable) Order. Voting papers will be sent to you and you will also have the option to vote online.

It's important that you vote because the levy must be supported by more than half the participants in the referendum, representing more than half the value of total production.

A yes majority vote will mean HortNZ continues to promote and protect your interests in an ever-changing environment.

A no majority vote will mean an end to HortNZ - the organisation would be wound up, there would no longer be an advocacy body dedicated to working on behalf of growers. Events such as Young Grower of the Year and programmes such as Growing Change will end. The sector will lose capability and vital relationships.

- **2018** - Growers supported currently levy of 0.14% (and the maximum levy rate of 0.15%)
- **2024 February - March** - Levy consultation grower meetings
- **2024 April** - Proposal document sent to growers
- **2024 May** - Voting papers sent to growers
- **2024 May 14** - Voting opens
- **2024 June 14** - Voting closes
- **2025 March 31** - Current levy order expires

