

FRESH FOCUS

GROWER NEWSLETTER

11 OCTOBER 2007



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“SPRING IS SPRUNG”

At least Team New Zealand got to the final!!!!

Can we wait another four years for the next World Cup???
- maybe we should adopt rowing as our national sport.

Whilst most would agree that horticulture is a long term investment it probably compares quite favourably with professional sport where the return on investment has been disappointing for both yachting and rugby in 2007.

With Spring upon us it is a time to both look forward and also to reflect. Probably the second biggest factor after climate, for horticulture in NZ, is the extreme volatility and currently very high value of the NZ dollar.

Whether exporting or supplying local market the \$NZ affects us all.

NZ retailers can source very cheap Aussie Navels, Valencia's and Mandarins and Californian citrus and summer fruit and like or not this competition has impact on prices we can achieve for NZ grown product.

Exports are even more challenged with Kiwifruit, Mandarins, Navels and Lemons all producing bottom lines in 2007 which are marginally above local market realizations if you are lucky.

First Fresh has been very proactive in developing markets in Asia, USA and UK, putting a lot of time and cost into visiting customers and trying to cement long term relationships. Whilst offshore customers have generally been very pleased with arrival quality, unfortunately we compete directly with other southern hemisphere producers, so extracting premium at retail to cover risk and exchange rate is very challenging.

In 2007 this resulted in grower returns which were disappointing and

UPCOMING EVENTS

**ANNUAL SPRING
TECHNICAL WORKSHOP
1st NOVEMBER 1-5 PM
FURTHER DETAILS TO BE
ADVISED**

“It just didn't happen for us”

**“You win some, you lose some.
There's no point wondering
what you should have done”**

- Graham Henry



BUY NEW ZEALAND GROWN FRUIT CONTINUED

sometimes negative bottom lines for exporters.

BUT we do need exports if only to shorten supply of the NZ market in times of oversupply AND the \$NZ will weaken. !!!

Hopefully it will not take four years. !!!!!!!!

Bill Thorpe



NZCGI AGM—REPORT

The 2007 NZCGI AGM and Product group AGM's were held in Gisborne early last month. These meetings serve to review NZCGI activity in the year just gone and look forward from a budgeting perspective to the following season.

Every three years elections are held for each of the three product groups. First Fresh continues to be actively involved in NZCGI with Ian and Phil being the marketing representatives on the Mandarin and Orange & Tangelo product groups respectively. In addition Wayne Hall is on the R& D committee and Ian is on the NZCGI board. Gisborne growers are also well represented with at least one grower in every product group and three for the Orange & Tangelo group. It was good to see some fresh faces on the O&T group with Lloyd Foss, and Don Stevens being elected for the first time. Tony Cornelius has assumed the chairmanship of this group.

Of particular note from this years meeting was the passing of a resolution that reduces the Satsuma Mandarin levy from \$0.01kg to \$0.005kg for the 2008 season. This was largely driven by Northland and Matakana growers and centered on the effectiveness or not of the generic promotion program initiated and paid for by NZCGI. In what was a quite a close result the resolution was passed and the levy will reduce. The reduced levy income will not allow for any generic promotion in the 2008 season. It will be up to the individual marketing companies to continue with their own branded promotions.

Navel Oranges and Satsuma Mandarins have commodity levies in place and growers are legally required to pay them. Levies are normally deducted at first point of sale. The levy rates for the 2008 / 09 season commencing April 1st, 2008 are as follows;

Satsuma	\$0.005kg
Other Mandarins	\$0.005kg
Lemons Limes & Grapefruit	\$0.020kg
Navel Oranges	\$0.010kg
Other oranges & Tangelos	\$0.010kg
Process grade (all varieties)	\$0.003kg

Please advise if we are not deducting the voluntary levies from your payments and you would like us to. Levies fund essential research and development work.



MOBILE PHONE SERVICE PROVIDER

We have recently changed from Vodafone to Telecom. Due to the fact that there is now "number portability" in the telecommunications industry our numbers have not changed at all and we retain the 021 prefix. The only change of note is that we are no longer part of the Vodafone "Gisborne grape Growers" plan and as such growers who are on that plan will no longer be able to call us for free.

Here is a directory of all First fresh and NZ Fruits mobile numbers;

FIRST FRESH		NZ FRUITS	
Bill Thorpe	021 2220163	David Fox	021 2756353
Ian Albers	021 2852596	Jamie Fox	021 2220162
Brian Pepper	021 2852597	Del Nield	021 2220010
Phil Croy	021 2897950	Rebecca Garth	021 2220185
Stuart Mansill	021 2852005	Yard / Inwards	021 2422620
Wayne Hall	021 2420051	Brett Thornton	021 2220273
Tim Creswell	021 2474519		



SATSUMA MADARINS

The last month of Satsuma Mandarin sales (August) saw demand increase as supply dwindled away and grower returns improved accordingly. This seems to be normal and we should be planning to push more fruit into this time. We sold the first of the Richards Specials on the 7th September. Although the harvest season for these is normally September when there is a shortage of easy peelers, supply from Gisborne remains light and does not meet current demand.

I have been advocating the need for late season Satsuma Mandarins for some time now. There still is an unfilled “window” for New Zealand Mandarins from August through September. During this time we do see cheap Australian Mandarins on our shelves. But buyers will support New Zealand Mandarins as long as there is consistent supply.

Suitable, reliable varieties for production in this time frame are currently limited. Richards Special is one option but has not gained much support from growers and buyers alike. A well grown Richards Special sells well, but a poorly managed tree produces fruit of inferior size and taste.

Afourer has been introduced to fill this time slot as well, but with limited production to date the jury is out on this variety. Peter Gallasch refers to the Afourer as a “very nice, lovely tasting easy peel Mandarin that is seedless if isolated from other pollen sources.” Harvest in NSW is expected to be October. But will the early harvests from Afourer fit into the easy peel category of seedlessness, flavour and ease of peeling? Will we be able to harvest this in September, or will this compete with the existing Encore harvest.

With the May-June Satsuma Mandarin mountain continuing to cause marketing concern, I believe it is well worthwhile for Gisborne growers to look at extending the Satsuma Mandarin season as late as possible, to take advantage of the September gap at least. The Satsuma Mandarin is the most popular because of the easy peel characteristic, plus the fact that it is easier to retain shelf space for an item than to try and introduce a new category which is the case for Mandarins such as Richards Specials. Increasing production of Satsuma Mandarins in the North during May and June makes this change even more imperative.

However, I am merely a marketer and do not know the practicalities of this request. But please don't sit back and do nothing because it is in the “too hard” basket. Doing nothing about the current “Satsuma Mandarin Mountain” will make Satsuma Mandarin production and marketing uneconomical and eventually cause the demise of what has been a very successful industry.

ENCORE MADARINS

Harvesting commenced in the first week of October to a responsive market. There appears to be a mixed crop out there. Where there are heavy crops, Fruit size is certainly smaller than preferred. This may have been accentuated by the dry Autumn. There is reasonable demand at present. The Encore has a good following from Supermarkets and independents alike and is now recognized as a summer mandarin and allotted space accordingly. The smaller fruit this year will cause problems for loose fruit sales. There is strong demand for fruit greater than 65mm. Current packouts of XL are currently running at less than 10%. Ideally this should be 25%. We will continue with our Encore Mandarin programme until re-greening causes us to pull out of the market for the year.



CROP REVIEW



Brian Pepper

PERSIMMONS

We are very close to making our final payment for export Persimmons. Most orchards will receive a better payment per kilo of export fruit than last season. This result will be very pleasing when considering the strength of the New Zealand dollar over the period that sales were made.

TANGELOS

Tangelos seem to be following the lead set by Navels and the fruit we have packed so far is at least one fruit size smaller than the same time last year. Retailers are planning for children being back at school and have started to place orders for *First* and *Giz'Os* brand Tangelo prepacks. Our prepackers will be utilised fully to maximise demand, and returns, for fruit that is smaller than normal.

To maximise yield most growers who are want to get under way early in the season are planning to select pick medium size (70mm) fruit and larger and are leaving the smaller fruit to size-up. Those growers who want to do one pick are waiting for average fruit size to improve.

Most of the Tangelos we have tested recently have achieved the minimum brix to acid ratio of 7.5 to 1 and have been cleared.

BEANS AND SWEETCORN

We have started work on this year's sales programme for beans and sweetcorn and we are aiming to build on the successful growing and sales programmes we have had in past seasons. We are very keen to talk to people growing either of these crops.



CROP REVIEW



Phil Croy

NAVEL ORANGES

We are now well over half of the way through the 2007 Navel season and we continue to be challenged by small fruit size, -wind blemish, oleocellosis and the new one this season; Albedo breakdown.

Supermarket customers on a whole have been reasonable happy with the fruit we have presented to them this season, the main frustration we hear is when weather or lack of pickers causes fruit shortages especially when promotional activity is underway.

Returns up until the 15th September are up when compared to last season. YTD average grower returns are \$0.48/kg compared to \$0.42/kg last year.

Some amazing transformations have taken place in a number of blocks. One highlight being the **Wipere Trust Manutuke Navel Block** which is also where First Fresh has a focus block.

The work that has been done here is a real tribute to Lloyd Foss and him team, and also to Wayne Hall who spearheaded the project a few years ago. It really shows that in some cases given the right inputs you can (excuse the pun) **"make a silk purse out of a pig's ear"**

The field day there last month was well attended and we have already heard murmurings of joy from Paul Gordon that a few more growers are investigating the potential installation of artificial shelter for their blocks after seeing the work that has been completed at Wipere.

Fruit size has continues to be affected by the dry conditions in Gisborne and fruit sizing has slowed or almost stopped in some blocks over the past month.

The abundance of small fruit has put real pressure on the market to keep smaller fruit moving through to avoid stock piling up. We are fortunate to have a very strong prepack program with both supermarket chains which utilises and adds value to size challenged fruit.



GRAPEFRUIT

The grapefruit harvest is near completion and it will be the earliest that we have ever finished.

The main factor which has led to this was the successful “Process Grade” programme that started this season. This new outlet for Select and Juice grade Grapefruit is the main factor that contributed to an increase in the net grower returns up from \$0.50 last season to \$0.69/kg this year.

Another other factor is that by taking the bulk of the Select/Juice grade out of the market the returns for Choice grade fruit were held at higher average levels than in previous seasons. The customer has committed to this programme for next season as well, which is great for growers.

Thank you to all growers that supported this programme this year, I will contact you all regarding next years requirements as the new season approaches. Pencil in early May as a likely start date.

YEN BEN LEMONS

Lemon sales have picked up as demand has increased over the passed couple of weeks, returns are also on the increase and this should continue as we head towards the summer lemon crop.

Growers who are regularly skim picking are seeing good increases in average fruit size and this practise seems to be working well in most Yen Ben blocks especially those with no irrigation.

We have seen an increased incidence of rind spotting over the past couple of months, there has been quite a lot of work completed and published in regards to this issue in the NZCGI newsletters, any growers with this issue should have a look at these publications.

We have exported a small amount of fruit this year, all to Japan. We would have liked a lot more. See Stuarts export report for details.

LIMES

Lime returns have been very good over the past couple of months, this is predominantly due to the fact that there has been very little imported product coming into the country to fill the gap. If only we could work out how to shift the bulk of the season’s crop back a couple of month’s things would be looking very rosy.

Next season will be very interesting to say the least, one new block coming on stream is looking at increasing production from the 5mt picked this season to 26mt the following season, this will no doubt have a huge impact on the local lime market.....watch this space.



EXPORT LEMONS

We have shipped over 100 tonnes of Lemons to Japan this year. These are direct sales to our own customers. Japan continues to be our key Lemon market.

As written in the NZCGI chairman’s report, the big freeze in California has benefited our marketing into Japan. Demand has easily out-stripped supply. While this is great for growers, we do need to be mindful that it is during these times that we need to be cementing our business with our customers as reliable suppliers of quality Lemons . I would like to see extra effort placed on quality over the next few years so we can establish our reputation in export markets. There are very clear quality guidelines and buying preferences in Japan for Lemons. Californian fruit is considered No1 in Japan with New Zealand (Oceania) fruit currently standing at No. 4, (Chilean and South African product are 2 and 3). Another reason for needing to improve our quality is that we do not want to see our own local market “dumped on” with large volumes of export rejects.



THOSE WINDS AGAIN

Last month I commented on some of the reasons why a number of navel blocks were under performing financially. One of the key reasons was due to a significant number of blocks having limited protection from damaging winds which hit our district about this time each year. Flowering and fruit set takes place for the majority of citrus varieties over the next 4-6 weeks. Young developing fruitlets are particularly vulnerable to wind and insect damage from Late October onwards.

Citrus trees require a protected environment in order to produce high yields of top quality fruit. Wind protection may be provided in various ways – a row or rows of trees around the planting, single rows within the orchard (internals), plantings of long standing maize in alternate rows when the trees are young, or construction of artificial windbreak.

Coastal plantings such as those in Gisborne which are often prone to constant multidirectional winds may require a substantial windbreak around and throughout the orchard. Drying summer winds will measurably reduce the growth rate of young trees. It is important live windbreaks are planted in a way that air speed is reduced and the shelter trees are managed in a way that minimises shading into the orchard. Air movement is vital for allowing rapid drying within the orchard especially when the incidence of disease is high.

Research conducted in Australia in the 1970's indicated that leaf margins, especially from hard old leaves are the main course of wind related blemish. The abrasions result in damage to the fruit skin, followed by the release of oil on the fruit surface and then the production of repair tissue that becomes corky.

While wind is responsible for the initial fruit blemish, two other factors can aggravate the problem. Poor pruning methods can increase blemish and copper sprays can darken blemishes. Pruning work completed last spring at Wi Pere orchard at Manutuke, which consisted in the removal of a significant amount of dead wood and spindly fruit bearing wood, has paid huge dividends this season with respect to improved packouts.

I strongly believe that local citrus suppliers (especially those specialising in navel production) could dramatically increase their returns by improving their current orchard layout, by either incorporating additional live shelter or alternatively installing artificial windbreaks. Several growers have recently decided on the latter and this is resulting in a marked improvement, not only in packouts, but also in tree growth as the trees are under less stress from damaging winds.



WAYNE'S REMINDERS

- ⇒ The crop monitoring season kicks off again from next week onwards to coincide with navel flowering. Satsuma blocks will start towards the end of the month. A reminder that insecticides for Kelly Citrus Thrips should not be applied until **petal fall** and the threshold for spraying is 5%. If sprays are being applied to Lemon blocks (with ongoing flowering) ensure bees are not actively foraging and time sprays accordingly.
- ⇒ Encore and Tangelo suppliers should be thinking about a 'select pick' through their blocks for larger fruit. If you are carrying a large crop (the majority of blocks this season) aim to remove at least 50% of the load to allow the remainder of the crop to size. If greenhouse thrips are present apply a suitable insecticide after the 1st pick and before flowering.
- ⇒ All new plantings should be well staked from planting to reduce the amount of stress and moisture loss occurring. Mulching with compost is recommended and good weed control from the start is critical.



CLASSIFIEDS

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RECIPE OF THE MONTH



Heidi Beuth

INGREDIENTS

- 4 Gurnard fillets (150g)
- 80g butter
- 400g fettuccine cooked
- 30ml olive or avocado oil
- 60g capers, washed
- 80g sunflower seeds or pinenuts
toasted under the grill
- 4 tomatoes peeled and cut into 8ths
- 2 limes sliced
- 120 g salted butter

PAN FRIED GURNARD WITH CAPERS, TOMATO & LIME

Recipe sent in by Amanda Lewis

Cook fettuccine until al dente, toss in hot avocado/olive oil and place in the middle of a large warmed bowl/plate. Keep hot.

Folds gurnard fillets in half, dip in seasoned flour and pan fry in butter until cooked and golden. remove from pan and place on top of fettuccine. keep warm.

Toss capers, lime, seeds/nuts in the pan for 1 minute and place on top of the fish.

Place salted butter in a pan and melt until golden brown, pour over fish and serve.