

## The First Fresh Team

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## THE END OF AN ERA AND A NEW BEGINNING

I was going to start with the title; "Out with the old in and in with the new" but figured that;

A) Wayne might be offended at being called old (even though he is older than me!) and B) it would be a bit of me flippant given the huge contribution Wayne has made to our business and that of Gisborne growers in general over the last 10 or so years.

We will miss him in the sense that he will no longer be working for us and providing growers with wide ranging advice and assistance. But luckily we haven't lost him completely in that he will now be on the other side of the fence in his new role as a 'grower'. I am sure he is relishing the opportunity to 'challenge' our performance much in the same way as we will be challenging him to deliver high quality fruit. We wish Wayne all the best in his new endeavour, no doubt there will be some challenges along the way but I am sure that like always, Wayne will rise to the occasion, meet the challenge head on and deliver a top quality result.

So that was the end of an era and now to the new beginning.

Dave McLellan started with us on Monday as the new Technical Advisor for First Fresh. Many of you may already have met him at our Navel Orange Field Day last week and also this week as he travels the district with Wayne. Dave heralds from the Hawkes Bay where he has spent the last 17 years in a similar role albeit centred mainly around Apples, Grapes and Persimmons. Additionally he has packhouse management experience and worked for a large horticulture operation in the UK. There is no doubt he has the skills and the expertise to do the job and once he gets his head around some of the nuances that are peculiar to citrus and Gisborne I am sure he will take over from where Wayne has left off. Dave brings with him a solid commercial background in horticulture and I have no doubt he will be a huge asset for our collective businesses going forward.

**So as is tradition in these instances of farewells and welcomes we need to have a drink!**

What we would like to do is to invite you all to share a drink with us next week as we farewell Wayne back to your fold and welcome Dave into ours,

**WAYNE'S FAREWELL & DAVE'S WELCOME**

**When: Tuesday September 27<sup>th</sup>**

**Where: Hika pub**

**When: 4.30pm onwards**

See you there!

## **Product Reports — Ian Albers**

### **EXPORT UPDATE – CITRUS**

#### **MEYER LEMONS**

We have just paid another progress payment on all three Meyer Lemon pools. With just a handful of sales to be completed in the US I am hopeful we can make the final pool payments by mid to late October. All in all we have been pleased with how the pool system has worked this year and with the quantity and quality of fruit that we delivered into the marketplace. Conditions in the US have not been as good as last year and the larger size profile definitely made it a tough sell at times. Interestingly I met with a large grower/marketer of US Meyers in Hong Kong last week and he is very excited about the prospect of extending his program by supplementing it with NZ grown product.

Our Japan volume was up significantly on last year with a couple of new customers taking small volumes and our main customer also increasing their orders. Again the large fruit size and too much green fruit early on did cause some challenges but it all panned out OK in the end. With another increase in volume expected for 2012 we will need all of the above and more in order to maintain a decent market return.

Stuart has done a fantastic job on the local market as well and kept fruit moving through on a steady basis. Thank you to all of the growers who have supported our program. I know the pool system has not been easy to get your heads around and I am grateful for your patience and understanding as we wrap things up.

## **YENBEN LEMONS**

We have run a small but consistent program of Yen Ben export to Japan this year and this has worked well. Arrival quality has on the most part been good although we have had a few issues with internal browning/dryness particularly on highly coloured fruit. Net grower returns have been ahead of the local market return for much of the season despite the fact that Lemons have been over supplied in Japan.

With the local market return now lifting we will probably cease exporting and take advantage of these better prices. As with Meyers and Yen Bens we graded fruit to Premium grade from field bins then repacked that fruit to export grade as and when it was needed. This gives us a second look at the fruit before it goes in the box and I believe it has contributed to good out turns. It does add a layer of complexity in regards to line reports and grower payments and it may well be the case that we head down the same track as Meyer's and run a pool system whereby you are paid for PREMIUM grade as an average of the export and local market content of the repack. It is also useful in that we can harvest the fruit when it needs to be harvested and store it until it is required for repacking. Food for thought.

## **NAVEL ORANGES**

Our 'success story' for 2011. With over 230mt shipped this season we have been very pleased with how this program has evolved. Some of success is due being in the right place at the right time with good tasting fruit but there was also a lot of hard work that went into making sure we delivered what the customer wanted. The early varieties looked and tasted great and hit a market that was experiencing strong demand. Our later arrivals of Washington or Parent Navels were a little bit more inconsistent in terms of taste and quality and this has caused a few problems. Oleo seems to be the main complaint and I guess the extreme weather event in July was the root cause for much of this. We have now concluded our export program and are waiting for the repacking results on the last few arrivals before we finalise the grower payments. Again grower returns were well ahead of the local market equivalent and certainly helped to increase the overall grower average during what was a period of price pressure.

Once the season settles out we will review how we went with our Japanese customers and look ahead to 2012. The feeling is a similar sized program with possibly some upside from another couple of customers. One of our big focuses will be working with growers who can present fruit for export and making sure that the right spray programs are used. This will be addressed by Dave over the next couple of months.



## SATSUMA MANDARINS.

Yesterday we received the final tallies for the Satsuma market monitoring that is conducted by the NZCGI each season and the final data was as follows.

<u>Total kg's produced</u> Region	Year			Increase in kg's on 2010 season	% Increase in kg's on 2010
	2009	2010	2011		
Northland	3,931,842	2,838,476	5,437,491	2,599,015	92%
Gisborne	3,664,904	4,069,124	5,398,467	1,329,343	33%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>7,596,746</b>	<b>6,907,600</b>	<b>10,835,958</b>	<b>3,928,358</b>	<b>57%</b>

I will not elaborate on the above any more in Fresh Focus as am working on the season summaries where I will talk more about the season that was...

We are very close to closing off the 2011 Satsuma season, but there was fruit packed in September which is holding up completion of the final summaries. Once this has been finalised I will send out the season summaries.

I would also expect that we will make a Fresh Rewards payment for Satsuma Mandarins towards the end of October.

## TANGELOS

We have started testing fruit maturity and packed the first of this season's early Tangelo's last week.

Impending School holidays always put the brakes on demand for the earliest production but any delay helps fruit to exceed the minimum brix to acid ratio of 7.5 to 1 which is a good thing.

We are happy to test fruit maturity on blocks that want to get under way with a select pick of large fruit in the next couple of weeks.



## ENCORE MANDARINS

Over recent years Encores have proven to be a very popular Mandarin and one which does have a lot going for it, ***and this season we have managed to get both supermarket chains taking Loose and pre packed fruit which is a first for Encores.***

The Encore season has begun. **Growers should be "Select picking" for size on their first pick and targeting fruit 55mm+,** which will allow for up to 2-3 picks during the season which normally runs from October to March. This fruit holds well on the tree, and continues to size after the initial pick has reduced the crop load.

Encores do tend to have a biennial fruiting habit. This is becoming less of a problem as growers are maintaining regular pruning programmes. A colder season does tend to lead to smaller sized fruit. The fruit also re greens during the heat of summer and growers need to be aware of this when making harvesting decisions.

The hail last week caused some damage to the new Encore crop but from what we have seen to date it's not as bad as originally expected and in most cases the worst damage looks a bit like Encore Spot, which there are allowances for in the TAG grade standards.

Please call me if you require a sample to be collected for brix testing, and either Tim or I will pop in and grab a sample.

## VALENCIA ORANGES

Firstly after the recent product re shuffle I am now responsible for Valencia Oranges.

This season we are anticipating higher than normal demand for NZ Valencia's, the main reason for this being that the bulk of the Navel crop bar the late varieties have already been harvested. This may leave a gap in the market that can be filled with Valencia's?

We have always had good opportunities for pre packed fruit but struggle each year to get a market for larger fruit as we are normally competing against higher coloured more cosmetically appealing Navels from the US. I am waiting for an update on USA Navel arrivals and timing and will update growers when I receive more information from my sources as to how the import deal is shaping up.

We will keep you updated as things progress but I'd like to think that we can slot Valencia's in straight after the end of the Navels.



# Product Reports — Brian Pepper

## PERSIMMONS

Earlier this month Ian and I attended Asia Fruit Logistica in Hong Kong. Asia Fruit has become a key meeting point for any person involved in the international trade of fresh fruit and vegetables and 90% of our Persimmon customers attend. It is a great opportunity to hold face to face meetings with our customers while the trials and tribulations of the Persimmon season are fresh in their minds.



On the whole our importers were very happy with the taste and cosmetic quality of the fruit that they received from us this season. We learnt that the fruit condition in the last consignments for this season were not quite up to our normal standard. Our buyers in Singapore and Malaysia made us revisit the perennial problem of competing with very low priced Australian Persimmons at the start of our season, but I do not think we will ever find a solution to this problem that maintains a healthy grower return!

We have been able to pay growers for approximately 90% of the fruit that we sold this season and by the time we publish the next issue of Fresh Focus we will have signed off on the 2011 season and will be starting to plan for 2012.



## TAMARILLO

Tamarillo harvesting, packing, and sales keep ticking over and although the demand has fallen a little bit over the past month the prices are still very good compared to past seasons. The end of our harvest is in sight and we will be finished the season in the next week.

## BEANS AND SWEETCORN

First Fresh has had successful growing and sales programmes for fresh green

Beans and Sweetcorn in past seasons. The first Bean seeds for our pre-Christmas sales programme were planted two weeks ago and we are interested in talking to anyone growing Sweetcorn for the fresh market.



## AVOCADOS

A large increase in the national crop has been predicted for many years and this season it is likely the export crop will reach 5.6 million trays. This is an increase of about 1 million trays from the previous biggest season and comes from a supply base that has reached 1,500 growers and is based mainly in the Bay Of Plenty.

To maximise returns this season Gisborne growers who are producing for the domestic market will need to consider our regions natural ability to hold fruit late or supply fruit at times when there is a gap in B.O.P and Northland production.



## NAVEL ORANGES

We are still seeing good demand for Loose Extra Large Navel Oranges as well as Prepacks from supermarkets. Fruit size from the Parent/Washington Navels has been smaller than the early season Navelina and Newhall Oranges. This is usually a seasonal trend and so we concentrate on prepack promotions during the later part of the season. One big promotion during the middle of September saw 57,000 bags of oranges packed and sold New Zealand wide. This is a great way to add value to smaller fruit lines that supermarkets will not otherwise stock. Prior to the Rugby World Cup we all expected the influx of visitors to add to demand but now we are 2 weeks into the tournament we now realise that unless you are providing Alcoholic drinks, fast foods, rental cars, or accommodation, demand has actually dropped. Our grower returns for the larger sized fruit are ahead of the same time last year. This reflects the shortage of these sizes. This trend will continue for the rest of the season.

Packing results from some blocks are still being affected by the higher percentage of select grade fruit caused by the terrible wet, cold, windy spell experienced in August. This has certainly affected grower returns, as supermarkets are mainly interested in Choice grade fruit. Fortunately we do have out lets for this cosmetically challenged fruit, but usually at lower returns.

Fruit numbers are tracking slightly less than last year, and with the earlier start to this season we are heading for an earlier finish. At this stage we are approximately 80% through the crop and so we expect to commence harvesting the Late Navels earlier and we could see the season pretty much done and dusted by the end of October.



## LEMONS

The marketing programme for the main winter crop of Meyer and Yen Ben Lemons is now completed. Fruit quality this year has been excellent. We are very pleased with the result of our harvesting plan for Meyer Lemons this season. To get the fruit harvested at optimum maturity has definitely proven successful from a marketing point of view. Our customers have generally been pleased with container out turns this season. The local market sales programme has also been very successful. By the end of this month most Meyer Lemons will be harvested and sold.

The demand for Yen Ben Lemons is now increasing. These have sold well all winter despite the large Meyer Lemon programme. The quality of Yen Ben Lemons has been very good this year. It is good to see growers realising that the returns for second grade Lemons are uneconomical and that it is worthwhile spending time on the trees to produce good crops.

We can expect demand for Lemons to increase as the warmer months approach.



## ASPARAGUS

Once again it is time for the Asparagus season. We run a very successful export programme with growers in the Bay of Plenty and Waikato regions. The recent colder weather has slowed growth but we are still expecting to commence our export sales to Japan by the first week of October.



## OUT IN THE FIELD

### Navel Field Day

We recently provided navel growers with navel presentation and discussion on the pruning of mature navel oranges. Growers were able to see how important light interception is for the production of high quality fruiting wood. Older plantings are often 'under pruned' which results in smaller fruit sizing with higher levels of blemish, as a result excessive dead wood that is present in the canopy.

It is important growers prune annually to prevent overcrowding of branches and over cropping on trees. For example some of the plantings of early navels this season had a very light crop load and will enter a heavy flowering this spring. If pruning is not done correctly over cropping will occur and the trees will become established in a biennial bearing pattern which becomes very difficult to correct.

Aim to complete all pruning by Late October on all early and mid season varieties. New seasons flowering will commence from Mid October. Later summer navel varieties may still be harvested into November which will delay any pruning work in these varieties.

### Spring Nutrition

Ground fertilisers such as Nitrophoska, Citrus Mix 12-5-0 and CAN should be applied when ground conditions begin to warm up in Late September/Early October. Rates and product choice should relate to recent soil and leaf test results. Be careful not to apply high rates of nitrogen to trees that are still carrying their current crop load as this will dramatically affect fruit quality. Excess nitrogen will also promote unwanted growth and fruit may take a long time to reach full colour at harvest time.

A pre flowering LBU (urea) spray can be applied to navel blocks from mid September. The rate to apply is 1%. (20 kg/2000 litres of water). Ideally this spray should be applied a month before flowering.

Commence foliar nutrient sprays of Magnesium, Zinc and Manganese as soon as there is sufficient 'new flush' present (around mid October). Aim to apply a minimum of 3 Magnesium sprays before Christmas. Magnesium Nitrate is the preferred option at this time of the year, especially if conditions are dry and no ground fertilizer has been applied. Magnesium Nitrate can be safely applied at 1.5% - 2%. The rate for Magnesium Sulphate should not exceed 1%.

Most foliar nutrient sprays can be applied at reduced water rates than what would be used for insecticide spraying. Suggested water rates of between 500 l/h (small trees) and 1500 l/h (tall, dense canopies). This allows for larger blocks to be sprayed more cost effectively with less time spent filling the sprayer.

Calcium sprays can commence from fruit set – early November onwards. Calcium sprays need to be applied on a regular basis, ideally every 3-4 weeks.

## New Position

As most of you are aware I will be finishing with First Fresh at the end of September to take up a full time position as operations manager for horticulture with the Wi Pere Trust. First Fresh has been a tremendous company to be part of and I have witnessed it go from strength to strength over the 10 years I have been with the company. There is a great group of growers associated with our company, and for me it has been extremely rewarding to be able to work with you all and share in your success as growers. The team within First Fresh is second to none and I wish them all the best for the future. I would also like to welcome my replacement Dave McLellan on board as the new Technical Adviser . Dave has been involved in horticulture for a number of years and is quickly getting to grips with the Gisborne citrus industry.

I look forward to catching up with you all at upcoming grower meetings and field days. I will still be actively involved in citrus research through the NZCGI research group.

All the best to you all for the new season.

WAYNE

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