

# The little green and gold book

A guide to finding seasonal work in  
the New Zealand kiwifruit industry



2021



## The New Zealand kiwifruit industry

### Industry snapshot

The kiwifruit industry is one of New Zealand's horticultural success stories, accounting for over \$2.7 billion in export earnings in 2019/20 - the largest horticultural earner and rivalling other key primary produce exports.

The industry comprises of almost 2,800 growers across nearly 3,200 orchards covering nearly 13,000 hectares, which produced close to 150 million trays of fruit in 2019/20.

The industry is serviced by over 400 labour contractors and at the height of the season, employs in excess of 23,000 seasonal workers.

More than 40 packhouses process and pack the fruit which is distributed to markets in more than 50 countries.

By 2024/25, the New Zealand kiwifruit industry is expected to reach \$4 billion revenue from a projected 186 million trays.

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## Where the industry is located



### PICK, PACK AND PLAY THE KIWIFRUIT WAY...

Find kiwifruit work in a region that suits you!  
Use our Kiwifruit Jobs New Zealand Facebook page to connect with approved employers and start work in an exciting industry.



## Who's who

### New Zealand Kiwifruit Growers Inc.

New Zealand Kiwifruit Growers Inc. is the industry body which supports growers and advocates on their behalf within the industry and with the Government. For more on NZKGI go to [www.nzkgi.org.nz](http://www.nzkgi.org.nz)

### Zespri

Zespri is the kiwifruit industry's marketing organisation responsible for marketing and distribution of kiwifruit in overseas markets. For more on Zespri go to [www.zespri.com](http://www.zespri.com)

### Contractors

The kiwifruit industry is serviced by over 400 contractors who supply labour for the orchards. All contractors must be approved and are listed at [industry.zespri.com](http://industry.zespri.com) under Contractors and GAP & Grasp Contractor List.

A list of orchard employers looking for workers can be found at [nzkgi.org.nz](http://nzkgi.org.nz). Click the Find a Kiwifruit Job Now [tab](#).

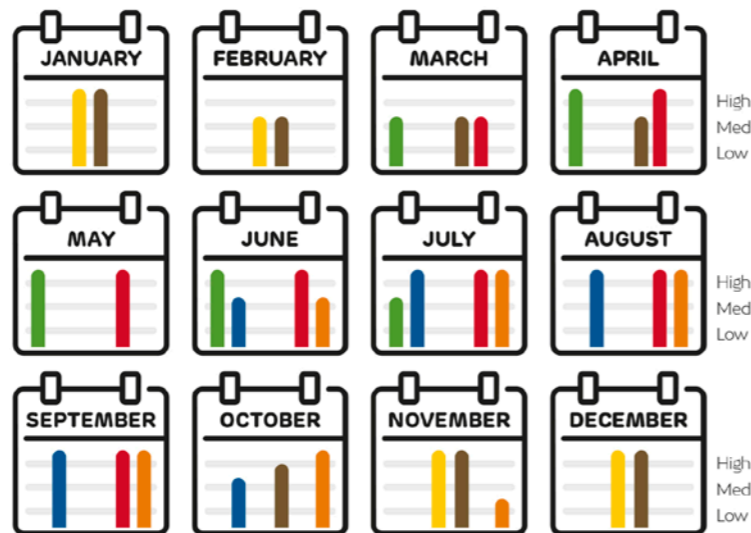
### Packhouses

The industry is well-served by packhouses; a list can be found at [nzkgi.org.nz](http://nzkgi.org.nz). Click the Find a Kiwifruit Job Now [tab](#).

## Work calendar

### Orchard/packhouse pressure timeline

Activity by month



- Picking
- Winter pruning
- Summer pruning
- Thinning
- Packing
- Re-packing



## Working in the kiwifruit industry

### Orchard work

There are four main times during the year when workers are required for orchard work:

- Picking (mid-March - mid-July)
- Winter pruning (June - October)
- Thinning (October - April)
- Summer pruning (October - February).

### Peak work periods

Harvest is the peak period for work in the industry. Pickers are required from mid-March to mid-July, and during that time a large workforce is required to harvest the huge volume of fruit on the vines when it is ready.

Picking is done by hand as the vines are set at a manageable height; no ladders are generally required. Picking is labour-intensive; the picking bag can weigh up to 20kg. Orchard work can be interrupted by rain.

Winter pruning follows harvest and takes place from June through to October.

Orchard work continues at a high level from October through summer, with summer pruning and other orchard maintenance tasks.

## Working in the kiwifruit industry

(continued)

### Packing and cool-storage

Once harvested, the kiwifruit crop must be processed and packed at one of the industry's many packhouses.

Roles within the packhouses include:

- sorting and grading
- packing the fruit into trays
- forklift operation
- machinery operation.

Packhouse roles involve working shifts of 8-12 hours and there are roles to suit a variety of people. Much of the work involves standing while working.

The minimum age to work in the industry is 16.

### Career opportunities

The kiwifruit industry is a year-round business. Orchards require a fair amount of maintenance outside the harvesting and packing period to prepare the vines for the next season and the requirement for orchard workers is high at those times as well.

It is possible to undertake seasonal work in the industry for up to 46-48 weeks a year, but there are a number of peak employment periods such as harvesting (March to July), winter pruning (June to October) and summer orchard maintenance (October-February).

There are also opportunities to take up a full-time, permanent role in the industry in horticultural and management roles. For more information on careers in the kiwifruit industry, go to [nzkgi.org.nz](http://nzkgi.org.nz) visit the Education page.



### Pay rates

Pay rates vary depending on the employer and the nature of the seasonal role.

In the 2020 season, harvesting roles paid an average of \$24.35 per hour. Rates, however, do vary, from minimum wage to \$37.50. These rates can be affected depending on whether you are paid hourly or on a piece rate, i.e. a rate based on how much crop you pick.

Orchard maintenance roles such as summer pruning or thinning paid minimum wage to \$20.41 per hour (in 2020). Winter-pruning roles pay higher rates once a worker has been trained and has experience.

Unskilled packhouse roles such as packing start from minimum wage plus holiday pay; more skilled roles in the packhouse for trained and experienced workers can pay up to \$38 per hour. Workers who demonstrate commitment and aptitude have the opportunity to take on more skilled roles.

All workers must receive the minimum wage (from 1 April 2021 the minimum wage will be \$20.00) +8% holiday pay.



## The kiwifruit world - attractions

Kiwifruit is grown in several areas of New Zealand, where an excellent climate and rich soils produce bumper harvests.

As well as providing excellent conditions for growing kiwifruit and other crops, the kiwifruit growing regions offer great scenery and host a wide range of outdoor activities.

No matter where you go - from Kerikeri in the far north to Nelson at the top of the South Island - there are plenty of things to do and see.

New Zealand offers a wide range of outdoor activities for thrill-seekers wanting to push themselves to others who just want to relax with a swim after working in the kiwifruit orchard all day.

Kiwifruit is grown in eight regions: in the Northland areas of Whangarei and Kerikeri; just south of Auckland near Pukekohe; around Cambridge in the central Waikato region; on the East Cape near Gisborne; in the orchard-intensive regions of the Bay of Plenty (BOP), Waihi/Coromandel

and Hawke's Bay; around Whanganui; and as far south as Nelson and Motueka at the top of the South Island.

Northland enjoys among the warmest weather in New Zealand, with attractions close on both coastlines along with harbours and forests to enjoy. The eastern regions of BOP and Gisborne are famous for their high sunshine hours and world-class beaches. Hawke's Bay offers cycle trails, beaches and vineyards.

Further south, Nelson and Motueka have some of the highest sunshine hours in New Zealand as well as stunning national parks and water-sports.

### Northland

Often-called the "winterless north" of NZ, Northland boasts an excellent climate and two coastlines that offer a wide range of recreational activities from surfing to diving at the likes of the spectacular Poor Knights Islands and boating in beautiful Bay of Islands. New Zealand's early history is on show at Waitangi,

## The kiwifruit world - attractions

(continued)

while the trip up 90 Mile Beach on the west coast to the country's northernmost promontory Cape Reinga is well worth taking.

### Auckland

The sprawling metropolis of Auckland which lies between two large harbours - the Waitemata and the Manukau - offers a host of big city attractions with world-class restaurants and entertainment. But visitors can also take in the delights of the islands in the harbour from the majestic Rangitoto Island to its near neighbour Waiheke and further out the wildlife reserve at Little Barrier Island and the bounteous attractions of Great Barrier Island. Auckland's kiwifruit industry is located to the south of the city around Pukekohe, which is close to attractions on both coasts including the Hauraki Gulf on the east coast and surf beaches on the west - and is not far from the tourism gem that is the Coromandel Peninsula.

### Waikato, Waihi and Coromandel

The Waikato and Waihi/Coromandel are among New Zealand's richest agricultural regions, with kiwifruit featuring around Cambridge and Matamata not far from the Waikato regional centre at Hamilton, as well as at Waihi and other Coromandel locations. Both the Waikato and Waihi/Coromandel are notable for both their rural and coastal scenery, excellent surf breaks on both coasts, walks and cycle tracks and world-renowned attractions like Hobbiton near Matamata.

### Lower North Island

Kiwifruit growing has also taken strong root in the lower North Island around Whanganui, which lies a relatively short trip from the Taranaki Region and the capital city Wellington. Natural inland and coastal scenery abounds throughout the region, from mountain walks and vineyards to uncrowded beaches on both coasts, rivers and lakes.



### Bay of Plenty

New Zealand largest kiwifruit growing region, with around 80% of the planted vines, the Bay of Plenty regularly attracts huge numbers of visitors to the scenic beauty of the tourist triangle formed by Tauranga, Rotorua and Whakatane. Tauranga and Whakatane offer the delights of sandy beaches, fishing, diving and surfing, while Rotorua a short distance inland is a gateway to the geothermal wonders of the North Island's volcanic plateau as well as a showcase for Maori culture. Within the region there is much to do, with - as elsewhere in NZ - many nature walks and sports activities like golf, under a climate that's hard to better.

### Poverty Bay

Poverty Bay centres on the tourist jewel that is Gisborne and offers visitors a great climate with plenty of activity including surfing and diving, walking, cycling or sightseeing to notable attractions like the East Cape - another kiwi hidden treasure with endless bays to explore. It's also a short hop to the magnificent attractions of Lake Waikaremoana and Cape Kidnappers and the neighbouring bay, Hawke's Bay to the south.

### Hawke's Bay

Hawke's Bay is a very popular destination notable for its wineries and scenery. As elsewhere throughout New Zealand, there's plenty in the region to offer tourists, from the urban attractions of Napier city - a showcase of 1930s Art Deco architecture - to the offshore fishing and diving in the Bay.

### Tasman District

Located at the top of the South Island, the Tasman District encompasses the cities of Nelson and Blenheim, which regularly top the most-sunshine records for NZ, along with the scenic attractions of the Marlborough Sounds and Farewell Spit. There's plenty for the visitor to do in the Tasman area - walking, cycling, water sports including kayaking and just taking in the breath-taking scenery.

### Key attractions - further information and to follow up

For information on the other kiwifruit growing locations - search out some great places to see and things to do at: [www.newzealand.com/nz/](http://www.newzealand.com/nz/)





## Worker welfare

### IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR SEASONAL WORKERS

#### Employee

A prospective employee will need the following before approaching an employer for work:

- a valid work visa for New Zealand or evidence of residency
- a copy of their passport (non-NZ residents) or other identification
- an IRD (tax) number (go to [ird.govt.nz](http://ird.govt.nz) choose the Individuals and Families tab, IRD numbers and then click **Apply for a personal IRD**)
- a New Zealand bank account.

#### The employer

Employers must provide every employee with an employment agreement including:

- the names of the employer and employee
- a description of the work to be performed
- an indication of the place of work
- the hours of work or an indication of the hours of work (the agreement must set the

maximum number of ordinary weekly hours)

- the wage or salary payable
- a plain explanation of how to help resolve employment relationship problems, including advice that personal grievances must be raised within 90 days
- a statement that the employee will get (at least) time-and-a-half for working on a public holiday
- any other matters agreed on, such as trials or probationary agreements
- the nature of the employment - whether it is fixed-term, seasonal or permanent.

The employee must be encouraged and able to seek advice on the contents of the agreement before signing.

Employees should make sure they receive a copy of the signed employment agreement for their records. They will need it in the event of any dispute.

#### Minimum wage entitlement

From 1 April 2021, the minimum wage in NZ will be \$20.00 per hour, before tax. This rate applies to all employees aged 16 or over, who are either full-time, part-time, fixed-term and/or seasonal, working from home and paid by wages, salary, commission or piece-rates.

#### Work breaks

Employees are entitled to unpaid meal breaks (30 minutes) and paid rest breaks (normally 10-15 minutes) that are appropriate given the length of the working day or shift, and that give employees a reasonable opportunity to rest, to eat and drink and to deal with personal matters.

#### Health & Safety

While the level of workplace hazards is very low in most kiwifruit operations, Health & Safety is still given a high priority, particularly in the packhouses where machinery is involved.

All employees must be advised of Health & Safety risks and protected from them through

training and provision of personal protective equipment (PPE) where required.

#### Payslips

Payslips verify that employees and employers have the same understanding of how the employee's pay is made up. Employees are entitled to request wage and time records from their employer showing the pay rate, hours worked, any deductions and how the employee was paid. Employees should make sure they sign their timesheets indicating agreement on the hours worked.

#### Tax

Income earned in New Zealand will have tax deducted through the Pay As You Earn (PAYE) system, as well as an Accident Compensation Commission (ACC) levy which goes towards New Zealand's insurance scheme for covering any costs involved when an employee is injured.

Your employer is not allowed to make any other deductions from your pay without your signed permission.





## Worker welfare (continued)

### Assistance

In the event of a dispute in the workplace, employees can contact the following agencies for help:

- Employment New Zealand will provide free employment information but not assistance in interpreting employment agreements, legal matters or personal grievances; tel. 0800 209 020; [www.employment.govt.nz](http://www.employment.govt.nz)
- Labour inspectors are able to assist in investigating breaches of laws relating to minimum employment conditions (e.g. holidays owed and pay); tel. 0800 209 020 (employment complaints) or 0800 030 040 (Health & Safety complaints). Visit [employment.govt.nz](http://employment.govt.nz) and go to the **Resolving Problems** tab.
- The Employment Relations Authority is an independent organisation that helps resolve employment relationship issues; tel. 09 970 1550; [www.era.govt.nz](http://www.era.govt.nz)

- Crimestoppers is for issues relating to immigration fraud or worker exploitation; tel. 0800 555 111
- Citizens Advice Bureau can be contacted for a range of advice on issues affecting workers; [www.cab.org.nz](http://www.cab.org.nz)
- New Zealand Kiwifruit Growers Inc.; [nzkgi.org.nz](http://nzkgi.org.nz) or 0800 232 505

The kiwifruit industry is working to ensure that all workers are treated well by their employers.

**If you have any feedback on your experience in the kiwifruit industry or issues with your employer, please contact NZKGI (0800 232 505).**

We will use this information to help improve working conditions throughout the industry.

## Choosing an employer

### Checklist

Workers are encouraged to query the following:

- confirmation that the employer is an approved contractor\*
- what the pay rate is and whether it is a fixed hourly rate or a piece-rate
- if it is a piece-rate, ask for that to be explained as an average hourly rate
- how often you will be paid and whether you will receive a payslip automatically
- if the pay rate includes or excludes 8% holiday pay and how that is paid, i.e. as part of the regular payslip or at the conclusion of the work period
- what systems are used for notifying work requirements and how much notice is provided if work is not available
- if workers are paid for travelling between orchards
- whether transport and/or accommodation is provided.

\* A list of approved contractors can be found at [industry.zespri.com](http://industry.zespri.com) under **Contractors and GAP and GRASP Contractor List**.

## Important considerations

### Where to stay

Seasonal workers taking up kiwifruit industry jobs will likely require local accommodation which is provided in a number of ways:

- backpacker hostels
- rented accommodation
- accommodation attached to packhouse and orcharding operations
- holiday parks.

Freedom camping is an acceptable option but there are restrictions on how long freedom campers can stay at one place and expectations from the community that freedom campers act responsibly in terms of their rubbish disposal and general behaviour.

For more information on freedom camping in New Zealand, go to [www.govt.nz](http://www.govt.nz) and visit the Recreation and the Environment tab, then choose **Freedom Camping**.

People planning to travel for seasonal work are advised to organise their accommodation well in advance as many accommodation providers get booked out quickly.

Some accommodation is also available at the orchard and packhouse sites for a very reasonable nightly fee.

A guide to low-cost accommodation options in kiwifruit locations can be found at [nzkgi.org.nz](http://nzkgi.org.nz) under Labour & Education in the Find a Kiwifruit Job Now! tab and **Backpacker Accommodation list**.

### Getting around

Depending on where the work is located, seasonal workers may also require some form of transport while working in the industry.

Most will have their own vehicles, but many employers provide transport to get groups of their workers to the orchards or packhouses.



## Testimonials

New Zealand has beautiful nature and nice people. Te Puke is very nice. It's close to the beach at Papamoa and you can also go for hikes after work in the bush.

The work is not too hard and it's pretty fun. You can do a lot of different jobs - like bud-thinning, flower picking and trimming branches. It's a nice change after living in the Czech Republic.

It's really refreshing to listen to music and podcasts while I work. With these jobs you can work for a while and then take some travel around New Zealand.

Working in the kiwifruit industry is a really nice experience and it's definitely worth it.

*Radim Kubik - Czech Republic / 33*

I work at Apata Packhouse in Katikati, preparing documentation for kiwifruit and avocado packs, mostly our organically grown fruit.

I enjoy the challenge of understanding and processing the export packing requirements and protocols for the fruit.

Interaction with the packhouse floor staff, especially the young international backpackers, brings a vibrancy to each day. You hear many different languages and see the young ones expand their English skills and enjoyment of our beautiful country. Each year there are new friendships made, some of which will be life-long.

There is a small window of time for the harvest and pack-out of fruit and we must operate in a timely and efficient way. It is rewarding knowing that in some way I have contributed to adding value to this vast export market.

*Delwyn Ogilvy / 63*

I'm a lifer in the kiwifruit industry: I started as a cadet and 38 years later I'm a grower, a packer and a contractor. I thoroughly enjoy the growing side. You have a rural lifestyle and work outdoors, and there's a huge variety of work - you don't just pick the fruit and the rest happens.

Kiwifruit is a thriving industry with many opportunities and new developments all the time - new varieties, new technology. For those who do get involved it can become infectious - many try it and turn it into a career. And you get a real blend of cultures - a real cross-section of kiwis working with backpackers and RSE workers.

Ours is a real family business - our workers are like family and many have been with us for 20 years-plus. We live, work and play on the orchard.

*Sean Carnahan / 55*



I work for Apata Group where I started in the industry as a packer, moved to grading, then worked on analysis of rejected fruit and as a "Kiwigreen" lady, which involved pest-monitoring and foliage sample collection in the orchards for testing. I am working towards my qualifications in Quality Control.

I enjoy the different roles I have been able to explore within the industry. I like being able to meet new people from all over the world that I get to work with during our busy season and build some awesome relationships. I like the free food too!

Working in the kiwifruit sector is rewarding because you learn so much about the ins and outs of how the industry works and our export and import system. And it also pays my bills!

*Preet Kaur / 20*

When I first moved to Te Puke I met so many people who worked in the kiwifruit industry. Out of curiosity I joined a packhouse to see what it was all about.

I wake up every morning and can't wait to start work - that's how much I love working in the industry. I'm currently training to be an orchard supervisor so my working day mainly involves organising my team to carry out the day's work programme. I'm also doing level 4 horticulture studies at Toi Ohomai.

The best part of working in the kiwifruit industry is that no day is the same; every day you learn something new. Thanks to kiwifruit I've learnt new job skills, gained qualifications and worked alongside a diverse range of people. I highly recommend working in the industry because there is a huge range of areas to work in, and you can gain a lot of different skills and qualifications while earning a good income.

*Stacey Marino / 38 (right)*







Keen to find seasonal work  
in the kiwifruit industry?

For up-to-date information  
on orchard and packhouse  
jobs, accommodation, scenic  
attractions and facts and figures,  
check inside.

Or visit our website:  
[NZKGI.org.nz](http://NZKGI.org.nz)  
and Facebook page:  
[KiwifruitJobsNZ](https://www.facebook.com/KiwifruitJobsNZ)