

CHAPTER NINE

CAREERS IN HORTICULTURE





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A career in horticulture is not just about growing, picking and packing fruit. There are an increasing number of highly valued roles available in the scientific, business and technology sectors servicing production horticulture. People enter the kiwifruit industry through many different pathways – from seasonal workers in the orchards or packhouses, through to graduates with specific degrees. At every level there is training available to upskill and build a rewarding career. This chapter includes a career map displaying the wide range of opportunities available. There are also biographies of industry entrants to show the pathways they took to get where they are today.

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Horticulture Career Progression Managers Network

Te Ara Mahi



Who we are

A network of 9 managers working across New Zealand to increase the number of people pursuing careers in horticulture, so the industry can continue to grow and prosper



Regions

Northland
Pukekohe
Bay of Plenty
Hawkes Bay
Manawatu
Nelson/Tasman
Canterbury
Central Otago

How we work

Our role is to promote career opportunities within the fruit and vegetable industry.

We connect people to our industry, education providers, and government agencies.

We bridge the gap between education, training, and employment.

We promote horticulture careers to New Zealanders by showcasing opportunities in our diverse and vibrant industry.

We help New Zealanders decide on the training that is right for them and work out their career progression pathway.



To achieve

The right people for the right job - a work force with the right training and attitude, advancing their horticulture careers and our industry

Contact

To contact a career progression manager visit
<https://gohorticulture.co.nz/contact/>

9.1 CAREER PROGRESSION MANAGERS

Horticulture New Zealand recognised that growth in all horticultural sectors is driving a strong demand for skilled people to take on existing and future roles within the industry. Initially with funding from the Provincial Growth Fund (PGF), a network of Regional Career Progression Managers was set up. This team has now grown to nine people, positioned in the largest growing areas in the country (Northland, Pukekohe, Bay of Plenty, Hawke's Bay, Nelson/Tasman, Canterbury and Central Otago) They have been tasked with increasing the numbers of students entering into full time study, industry training, and employment in the horticulture and viticulture sectors. They work with schools, tertiary education and vocational training organisations, industry employers and government agencies to highlight the pathways for people to find rewarding careers within the horticultural industry.



GoHort has become the brand for the Career Progression Managers, with an online presence at <https://gohorticulture.co.nz/>

On this site you will find

- Descriptions of different roles
- Career pathways
- Training providers and the courses they offer
- Horticulture sector specific information and links
- Profiles of people in the horticulture industry
- Details of GoHort internships and how to apply.
- A job board for employers to advertise permanent roles in the industry
- Contact details for the Regional Career Progression Managers
- Resources for teacher to use

9.2 AGRIBUSINESS IN SCHOOLS

In 2013, St Paul's Collegiate (Hamilton) designed and developed a pilot Agribusiness Programme to encourage their own secondary students to consider career pathways in the primary sector. In the first year it attracted 44 students across years 12 and 13. From this beginning, the school established an Agribusiness Advisory Group made up of key representatives from across the primary sector and attracted business partners to help fund the work they were undertaking. With input from these groups the Agribusiness national curriculum was developed, with achievement standards at NCEA level 2 and 3, supported by the Ministry of Education (MOE). This is the only secondary curriculum developed in conjunction with industry rather than written by the MOE.

To date St Paul's has made the Agribusiness programme available to 97 secondary schools in New Zealand, with the majority in urban rather than rural areas. Many of these schools have also seen an uptake in Ag/Hort as a subject, with the recognition that the primary sector is a dynamic growth area with many opportunities. There have been corresponding increases in entrants to related university courses. Now in its 8th year, the primary sector is starting to see young graduates from the programme entering the workforce.

For more information about the Agribusiness programme see
<https://agribusiness.school.nz>



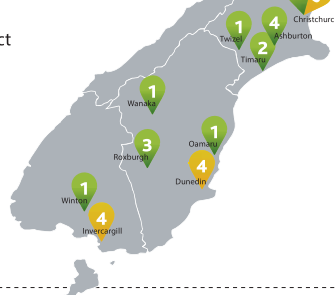
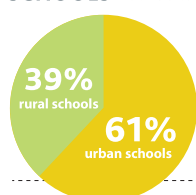
Agribusiness in Schools

DELIVERING AGRIBUSINESS TO NZ SECONDARY SCHOOLS

IN 2014 WE RECOGNISED THE NEED TO ESTABLISH A FORMAL AGRIBUSINESS PROGRAMME, WITH A GREATER VISION; TO TAKE OUR PROGRAMME INTO SCHOOLS RIGHT THROUGHOUT NEW ZEALAND. THE SUCCESS OF THE PROGRAMME IS EVIDENT TODAY.



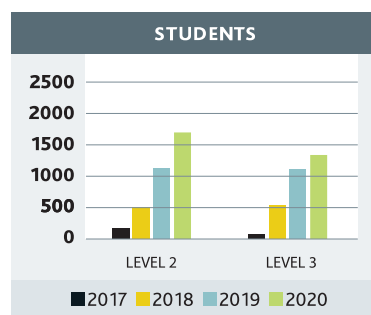
97 Agribusiness is now a key subject option in 97 New Zealand schools.



1 Whangarei	2 Rotorua	1 Wellington
1 Maungaturoto	1 Otorohanga	1 Blenheim
1 Helensville	1 Taumarunui	1 Nelson
14 Auckland	1 New Plymouth	3 Christchurch
1 Pukekohe	1 Hawera	8 Christchurch
1 Ngatea	1 Whanganui	4 Ashburton
1 Katikati	2 Marton	2 Timaru
1 Tauranga	1 Feilding	1 Twizel
3 Tauranga	4 Palmerston North	1 Wanaka
1 Te Puke	1 Gisborne	1 Oamaru
1 Morrinsville	4 Napier	3 Roxburgh
7 Hamilton	1 Napier	4 Dunedin
2 Cambridge	2 Masterton	1 Winton
1 Putaruru	4 Wellington	4 Invercargill

The numbers of students learning and schools teaching Agribusiness have consistently increased over the last four years.

YEAR	LEVEL 2 STUDENTS (YEAR 12)	LEVEL 3 STUDENTS (YEAR 13)
2017	173	87
2018	529	570
2019	1121	1120
2020	1728	1329



**Unit standards and achievement standards are two types of assessments schools use to assess student knowledge. Both standards specify what a candidate needs to know, do, and understand.*

Unit standards are competency based and usually vocational based assessment, developed by the relevant industry training organisations such as the PrimaryITO. Schools need to be accredited to assess unit standards by the relevant industry training organisation. There are just two grades; Achieved (A) for meeting the criteria of the standard and Not achieved (N) if a student does not meet the criteria of the standard.

Achievement standards are based on assessing New Zealand curriculum developed by the Ministry of Education. Achievement standards are measured by four grades; Achieved (A) for a satisfactory performance, Merit (M) for very good performance, Excellence (E) for outstanding performance, and Not achieved (N) if students do not meet the criteria of the standard.

Partnering with secondary schools in New Zealand to teach Agribusiness



St Paul's COLLEGIATE SCHOOL



Profitability Sustainability Competitiveness



Profile: Pioneer Student of Agribusiness

After growing up on a dairy farm and kiwifruit orchard in the Bay of Plenty, Kate Wilkins thought she would never pursue a career in horticulture. But after studying Agribusiness at St Paul's Collegiate School, she discovered the world of opportunity in New Zealand's primary sector.

The 25-year-old is now an Extension Delivery Specialist at Zespri, the world's largest fruit marketer.

The company sells kiwifruit to more than 50 countries around the globe and has licensed growers in Italy, France, Japan, and South Korea.

"Having grown up around agriculture and horticulture I wasn't sure if I wanted a career in the sector. It was 'normal' and not exciting to me, and after working in the summer holidays in the kiwifruit orchard I didn't want to ever work in an orchard again," laughs Kate.

Kate studied Agribusiness in Year 12 and 13 at St Paul's, starting in 2014 when the course was still in its infancy.

St Paul's established the agribusiness programme to meet the primary industry's needs for engaged, well-qualified young people, enthusiastic about their career opportunities in the primary sector. NZ Kiwifruit Growers Inc have partnered with the Agribusiness in Schools project which is now being taught in 97 schools nationally, catering to 3057 students in 2020.

Kate had always enjoyed economics and accounting and with a farming background she says Agribusiness seemed like a natural progression for her.

"Studying Agribusiness at St Paul's really opened my eyes to the multitude of career opportunities within the primary industry, which didn't just include working out on an orchard or on farm," she says.

Kate found the course offered students access to industry leaders and she remembers guest speakers including Richard Burke, General Manager of LeaderBrand, which is New Zealand's most diverse horticulture business. She says their presentations and the curriculum provided insights across the entire value chain of the primary industry.



After finishing high school, Kate enrolled for a Bachelor of Commerce at Canterbury University, but by the second semester she decided to shift to Lincoln University to study a Bachelor of Commerce Agriculture.

"I could see a clear career path. It was economics and accounting, but it also took in the supply chain, animal science, plant science and soil science. It gave me a sense of purpose around what I wanted to do," says Kate.

When she graduated in 2017, Kate returned to work on her family's farm. She set about establishing a new 12-hectare organic gold kiwifruit orchard to add to the six hectares of gold and green orchards they already had.

It was while establishing the new orchard Kate found her niche.

"We had a lot of people through the orchard at that time, including people from Zespri, because what we were doing was new and fresh."

Kate was offered a role in Zespri's Extension team.

As an Extension Delivery Specialist Kate says she is now focused on creating positive change in New Zealand's kiwifruit industry.

"We're supporting and inspiring growers to produce the world's best kiwifruit, whether that's through changes in sustainability practices, production practices or even health and safety. No two days are the same," says Kate.

She loves that it's not a typical office job and that she can get out in the field and see the impact her work is having on growers.

"I love the interaction with growers and using my knowledge to provide them with advice or solutions to problems. One day I can be running a field day and the next day I'm writing a newsletter or talking to growers about nutrient management and irrigation methods."

For anyone thinking about taking Agribusiness Kate encourages them to go and research the jobs on Seek.

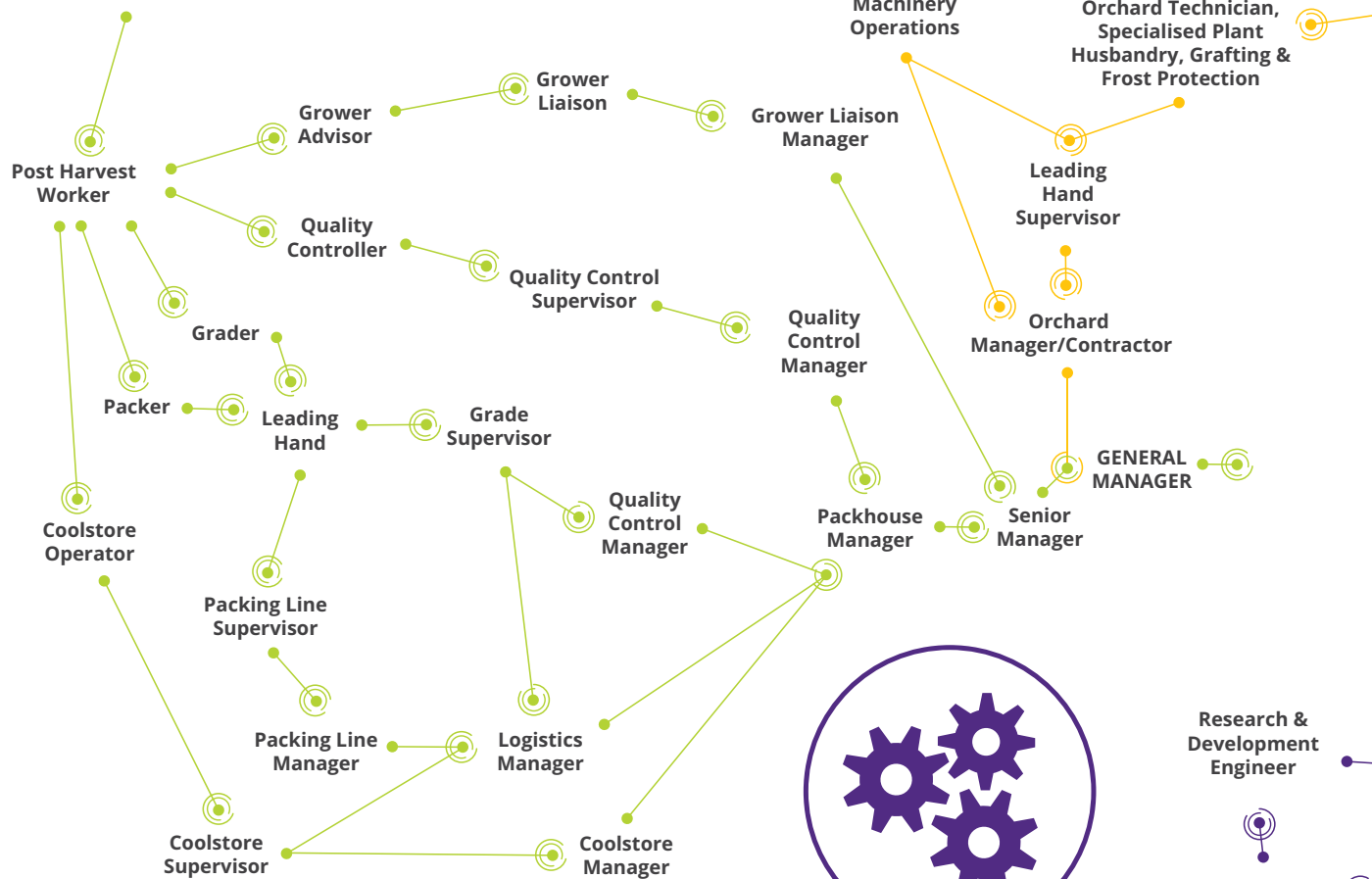
"Search roles in Agribusiness and see the jobs that come up. You'll soon realise it's not all on a farm or in an orchard," says Kate.



9.3 HORTICULTURE CAREER PATHWAYS

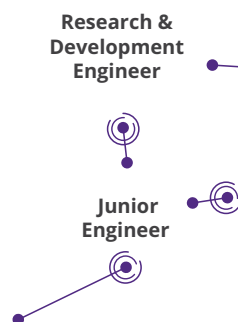


START HERE FOR A POST HARVEST CAREER



START HERE FOR AN ENGINEERING CAREER

OBTAIN A ENGINEERING DEGREE:
ROBOTICS/AUTOMATION
SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT
PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT





START HERE FOR AN ORCHARD CAREER

Orchard Worker
- Harvesting,
Plant Care and
Construction



**GROWER
DIRECTOR
CEO**



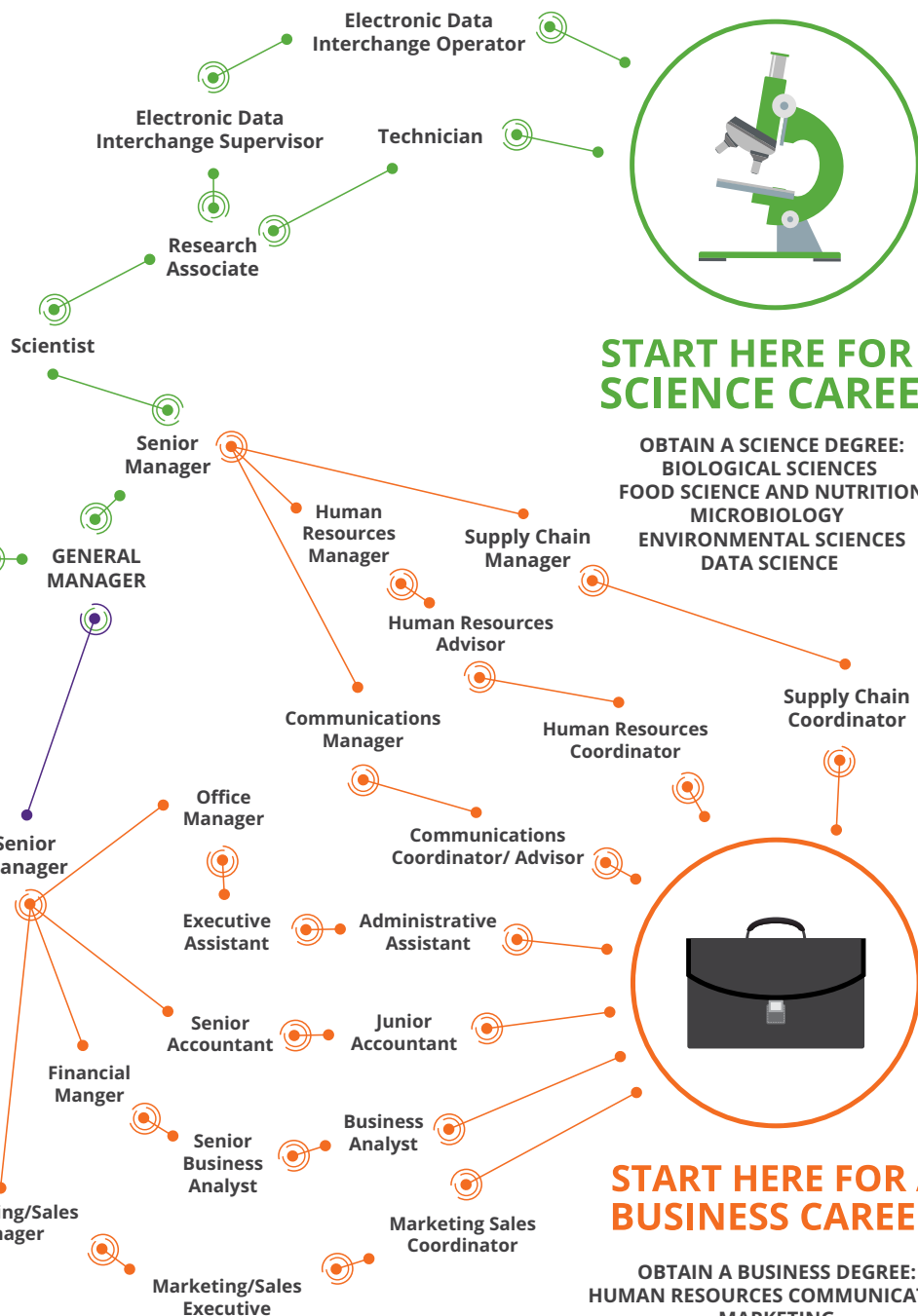
START HERE FOR A SCIENCE CAREER

OBTAIN A SCIENCE DEGREE:
BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES
FOOD SCIENCE AND NUTRITION
MICROBIOLOGY
ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES
DATA SCIENCE



START HERE FOR A BUSINESS CAREER

OBTAIN A BUSINESS DEGREE:
HUMAN RESOURCES COMMUNICATION
MARKETING
FINANCE/ACCOUNTING
BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION
SUPPLY CHAIN

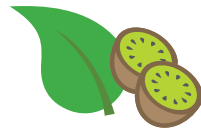


As indicated in the horticulture career map on the previous page, there are many ways to enter the industry whether it be through direct employment, part time study alongside employment, or full-time study.



Direct Employment

Roll up your sleeves and hit the ground running by entering the industry directly to get valuable work experience. Once you are in the industry, many employers offer upskilling and study opportunities so that you can advance on the job.



Part-Time Study/Employment

Earn while you learn by working within a kiwifruit orchard, packhouse or kiwifruit-related business as well as studying. There are vocational study options to suit everyone from Level 1 Horticulture or Primary Industry courses, through to cadetships, apprenticeships, and advanced Level 5/6 certificates and diplomas.



Full-Time Study

University study in any of a wide range of subjects, from business, engineering or technology to science or horticulture, can lead to a career in the kiwifruit industry. Many scholarships are available to assist with fees and expenses.



Young Grower Competition

There are many opportunities for development and upskilling of people in the kiwifruit industry and the wider horticultural sector. Since 2007, Horticulture New Zealand has run the annual Young Grower of the Year competition. Young fruit and vegetable growers from around the country compete in regional heats, testing their horticultural skills and knowledge in both practical and theory challenges (see the 2021 BOPYG contestants at the front of this chapter). The winners of the regional competitions then compete in the national final. Young Grower pushes contestants out of their comfort zone and teaches them valuable new skills along the way. The competition provides exceptional professional development and networking opportunities, providing a massive career boost to all who enter. Criteria for entry:

- Must be currently working full time in the fruit or vegetable industry in an organisation that is closely associated with growing.
- Must be 30 years of age or under as at 31 December.
- Three years practical work experience in the industry.
- Must be a New Zealand citizen or hold a current New Zealand residency permit

The next page will provide career profiles of people currently working in the kiwifruit industry, each with a unique story of their pathway.

9.4 CAREER PROFILES



CAMPBELL WOOD

Role/Organisation: **Director of Pivot Horticulture**

Pathway: **Cadetship/Apprenticeship/Further Industry Study**

What I enjoy about this industry is the diversity of working with lots of people coming from a range of cultures and places around the world. The kiwifruit industry offers a huge range of professional development opportunities which have helped advance my career and I am passionate about attracting young people to the industry so that they too can experience the amazing opportunities that are available.

What I like to tell younger versions of myself deciding what career path to take is this:

- Knuckle down and stick to an industry - ride out the highs and multiple lows
- Do the hard yards - work harder than expected, invest in doing more than required, don't be afraid "to sweep the factory floor"
- Push yourself out of comfort zone on a regular basis - take on challenges where you think you're out of your depth and own the outcome be it positive or negative

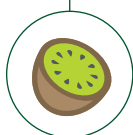


JEFFREY BENFELL

Role/Organisation: **Human Resources Assistant, Apata**

Pathway: **Direct Employment**

After 20 years in the travel industry, I was made redundant at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. I made a call to a friend in the industry that led to me being hired by Apata as a human resources assistant, starting just as the country headed into lockdown Alert Level 4. My role covers the full scope of human resources, from recruitment to attendance, so I was able to transfer many of my skills I learned in decades in customer service. Almost anyone can work in some capacity in kiwifruit. For stackers, it's quite a physically demanding job. For graders, it's mentally focused. And for tray preparation and packers, it takes a lot of skill, thought and speed. Apata pack both kiwifruit and avocados. Because we have both it keeps a lot of our people in very good employment for 10 months of the year.



WAI DE FLAVELLE

Role/Organisation: **Inventory and Logistics Coordinator at EastPack**

Pathway: **Direct Employment**

I started out in the industry working in the packhouse at EastPack located in Te Puke and within those five years I have worked in a range of roles including Packer, Packhouse Team Leader, Allocations Coordinator, Field Technician, Crop Assessment Team Leader, Inventory Assistant and finally to my current role as Inventory and Logistics Coordinator. I have found that in this industry, if you are a hard worker you can progress very quickly! There are so many opportunities within the kiwifruit industry to learn, grow and develop a meaningful career.



STACEY MARINO

Role/Organisation: **Orchard Supervisor, Kiwifruit Investments**

Pathway: **Direct Employment**

I started as a packer and then a grader in the packhouse. After my first harvest I stayed on and did the re-pack season. The following year, I got asked to be a packaging supervisor, teaching others the skills I learnt in packing and grading. The industry has an array of jobs and so many areas to branch off in, whether it's in the packhouse or the orchard. I tried fruit thinning the next year and loved it even more than being in the packhouse because I enjoy being outdoors. Supervisors and managers will spot you out and advance you. They put a lot into helping people, and giving them different skills and areas to work in. I really enjoy the work because it's always changing, and I enjoy teaching people. I love learning new things, and the industry is always evolving.



GAVIN STAGG

Role/Organisation: **Labour Coordinator, New Zealand Kiwifruit Growers Incorporated**

Pathway: **Direct Employment**

Until I joined the kiwifruit industry, the longest I'd held a job was two years. In this business, no two days are the same, so it keeps me interested! Prior to kiwifruit, I trained as a chef, joined the army, and held various other positions, mostly managing people. My first role in kiwifruit was as an employment officer for a packhouse. As my industry knowledge grew, I was promoted to Packhouse Operations Manager in a year. From there, I secured a new role as an Operations Manager for a different packhouse which involved managing the entire site. I left that role in early 2019 to start my current role with NZKGI. The highlight of this role is the different people that I get to interact with, from contractors, growers and packhouses through to government agencies.



MEGAN FOX

Role/Organisation: **Orchard Technical Advisor, Southern Cross Horticulture**

Pathway: **University Degree**

I love working in the kiwifruit industry because there is a huge network of supportive people both within my workplace, and externally, that are always willing to lend a hand or impart valuable knowledge. Further, it is an exciting industry to be a part of as there are a lot of opportunities to move laterally across the industry as well as huge potential to move up very quickly. Currently we are planting 700ha per year of G3, and the average orchard manager is managing 50ha, meaning we need to hire 14 new orchard managers every year to help with our growth- the demand for skilled labour is huge. I would recommend anyone to consider entering the kiwifruit industry to gain access to some amazing career opportunities!

9.5 'DIARY OF A GRADUATE KIWIFRUIT TECHNICIAN'

Written by Ben Luke, Zespri

With a last-minute position needing to be filled, I was given the call up to spend two weeks at sea monitoring 1.2 million trays of kiwifruit bound for Japan. With three days' notice I fervently prepared for the journey. I underwent intensive training with the Zespri team and spent the night before boarding watching 'Captain Phillips' to prepare for the worst and to potentially pick up some handy tips if any pirates boarded. Fresh faced, nervous yet excited, I was ready to board the Atlantic Erica on 3 June.

Right:
Ben Luke standing next
to the Atlantic Erica



I soon got into the swing of things on board with the Filipino crew, with a typical day beginning by avoiding mysterious goo covered meats or fish for breakfast, and instead chowing down my trusty cereal and milk. After breakfast, I would hike up three flights of steep stairs to the bridge to see the Chief Officer. He would organise one of the crew to accompany me down into the cargo holds and let me know if the conditions were safe enough to collect the fruit for assessment. The monitoring process included collecting a total of 320 pieces of fruit, both green

and gold, from eight different libraries which gave me access to four different pallets from four different grower lines. Before being loaded onto the ship, each library was chosen to ensure it was representative of the hold it was in. It's designed like this so if the temperature in the hold is adjusted based on the monitoring results, the rest of the fruit in the hold should ripen in the same way. The fruit collecting process took me around 50 minutes, which to the crew was probably very slow. It was as if they learnt how to climb ladders before learning how to walk.

I methodically checked the temperature, firmness and brix of the fruit collected which took around seven hours. The crew popped in every now and again to check everything was ok and once I finished testing all the fruit, I filled in my daily log, checked the data, save the file onto a USB stick and took it to the Captain to send back to Zespri New Zealand. The Zespri team in NZ then analysed the results and sent back instructions about any temperature changes to be made in the hold to ensure the fruit doesn't over ripen or ripen too slowly.

“No communication or sight of land for two weeks was an interesting experience but amazing at the same time.”

The highlight of my trip included enjoying a day with the crew on the Captain's birthday. Everyone indulged in a few brews, various meats and took a dip in a self-made pool at the back of the ship. The crew could not have been friendlier to me. Constantly offering me beers, inviting me to watch movies and treating me as if I were one of their own made me feel very welcomed. No communication or sight of land for two weeks was an interesting experience but amazing at the same time. Seeing a log floating in the vast empty ocean half way through the trip even made me excited. I'm not itching to get back on a ship, but it was definitely an experience I will never forget. I certainly have a new-found respect for the team of technicians that come back year after year to spend weeks on end at sea, all to get our fruit to the other side of the world in optimal condition.

Right:
The crew on board
Atlantic Erica celebrating
the Captains's birthday

