

NZ Kiwifruit Growers Inc

- The cost of growing kiwifruit is increasing significantly. A major driver of these costs are regulations from local and national Government which are putting Growers under increased financial stress. What will your party do to reduce these costs for growers?
 - The kiwifruit industry is an important part of the New Zealand primary industries, representing over \$5.5 billion in annual revenue and 23,000 jobs in 2020.
 - Recently we have signed free trade agreements with the UK and the EU, the EU being the largest export market for New Zealand kiwifruit growers. Our EU FTA has resulted in the complete removal of tariffs, delivering more than \$37 million in annual savings on kiwifruit alone from the day the FTA came into effect.
 - The Kiwifruit Export Plan, agreed between the Ministry for Primary Industries and China Customs, now provides for stable biosecurity trade conditions for the export of New Zealand kiwifruit into China, underpinning the \$63.6 million trade of this iconic New Zealand product.
 - The prospect of expanding into the Indian market has been brought a step closer, with the Minister of Trade recently travelling to India and the Prime Minister promising a delegation there within the first 100 days of being re-elected.
 - We acknowledge, however, that it has been an extremely challenging year for growers affected by severe weather events.
 - This sits alongside our ongoing support for cyclone-affected primary producers, including \$74 million in recovery grants, and the North Island Weather Events Loan Guarantee Scheme and Primary Producer Finance Scheme.
 - That's why the Labour Government has contributed over \$500,000 towards the *Post Your Support* initiative, a community fundraising campaign supporting farmers and growers to fix cyclone damaged fences and growing structures.
- Labour: Access to People. Despite investment into automation, a lack of access to seasonal workers means that can't achieve the sustainable growth that our industry needs in areas where automation is currently unavailable. The increasing costs and immigration processes for seasonal workers are causing uncertainty and negatively impacting business confidence. What will your party do to increase access to good people?
 - Significant efforts are being undertaken across government and industry to attract workers—with efforts focused on more training opportunities, improvements to workplace conditions, and strategies to consider longer-term challenges.
 - We know many industries have been calling out for workers as the global labour shortage bites, and we want our immigration settings to be responsive to that, while still helping to deliver a more productive, high wage economy.
 - The fact that migration arrivals in the year to 2023 were above the long-term average continues and a recent OECD report showed New Zealand as the most attractive place for skilled workers is evidence that New Zealand remains an attractive destination for workers to come to.
 - The re-opening of New Zealand's border in July 2022 paved the way for the full resumption of the RSE scheme. Since then, we have seen the largest number of RSE workers travel to New Zealand since the scheme's inception.
- The RSE Policy has been vital in addressing labour shortages in the horticulture and viticulture sectors, but like any policy, there is always room for improvement. How does your party plan to further progress the RSE policy review to ensure it remains relevant, robust, and adaptable to changing dynamics in the labour market, global trends, and industry requirements? Can you highlight specific areas that your party will focus on in terms of amendments or refinements to the existing policy to cater to both the welfare of the seasonal workers as well as the needs of the growers?

- The very nature of seasonal work means that RSE workers will remain essential to the success of the horticulture workforce.
- That's why we lifted the cap on the number of RSE workers who are able to come to New Zealand from 11,000 in 2017 to 19,000.
- Following the targeted consultation process, officials are developing high-level policy recommendations for Ministerial decision. Cabinet will consider initial policy decisions in due course.
- Following Cabinet decisions, it is likely that further policy work will be needed to determine the pathway for implementation, including appropriate timeframes.
- In recent times, the availability of proper accommodation for the seasonal workforce (e.g. WHV and New Zealanders relocating for seasonal work) has emerged as a pressing issue, with direct implications on the welfare of the workers as well as the operational capabilities of the growers. How does your party plan to improve access to affordable, safe, and decent accommodation for the seasonal workforce, and consequently, foster a more stable and sustainable working environment in the industry?
 - Before COVID-19, the Government set out clear conditions the sector needed to meet before it would consider an increase to the Scheme's cap. This included making jobs more attractive and accessible to New Zealanders by improving wages and working conditions, and offering training. Another factor has been reducing pressure on existing housing stock in some areas, by providing purpose-built accommodation.
- Significant changes for growers are underway with regional councils working hard to update their freshwater policy and notify their regional policy statements and regional plans by the end of 2024, along with the phased rollout of the freshwater farms. Would your party make any changes to the legislation that is driving these requirements? If so, what would those changes look like?
 - No, Labour stands by the Essential Freshwater package.
 - Demonstrating our sustainability credentials is critical for future export growth and the Labour Government is investing \$22.5 million from the Essential Freshwater fund to help farmers, growers and advisors develop the plans.
- Can you please share your party's views around the potential to use precision breeding or gene editing to reduce the time taken to find new cultivars?
 - In 2019, the Labour Government launched the *Fit for a Better World* roadmap, a bold new vision for the country's vital food and fibre sector.
 - The roadmap brings together actions, investment, and resources that will work to accelerate the transformation we need. For example, in Budget 2023 we invested in the design, construction, and commissioning of the new Plant Health and Environmental Laboratory which will support New Zealand's capacity to effectively manage known or suspected biosecurity risks.
 - The new lab will also support the horticulture industry by:
 - Increasing MPI's ability to screen and test for pests and diseases that could threaten industry.
 - Providing industry with greater ability to import new cultivars to support their exports.
 - Assuring global trading partners of our current pest and disease-free status, and our ability to maintain this in the future.
 - Improving crops that may do better with the changing climate.
 - Identifying new crops that may create future industries.
 - We've also invested in secure containment for new imported plant varieties and breeding material that requires testing for pests, and to enable the introduction of imported plant material for the horticulture sector to develop new and innovative high-value crops and cultivars.

- Any potential changes to New Zealand’s gene editing regulations must be balanced against the brand value of being GE free provides us in the international market.
- What is your parties’ stance on the RMA reform?
 - The Natural and Built Environments Act and the Spatial Planning Act replace the 30-year-old Resource Management Act. Despite regular tinkering by successive governments, the RMA was failing to either protect the environment or enable sensible development.
 - The new resource management system has been five years in the making, following calls for fundamental change from all sides. It was supported by numerous reports from business, environmental and other interests, and was based on a major expert review panel study chaired by former Court of Appeal Judge Tony Randerson KC.
 - The new system will deliver less red tape, lower costs, and shorter approval times, all while providing better outcomes for the environment.
- What support will your party offer to growers affected (past, present and future) by severe weather events?
 - The Labour Government has contributed over \$500,000 towards the Post Your Support initiative, a community fundraising campaign supporting farmers and growers to fix cyclone damaged fences and growing structures.
 - This sits alongside our ongoing support for cyclone-affected primary produces, including \$74 million in recovery grants, and the North Island Weather Events Loan Guarantee Scheme and Primary Producer Finance Scheme.
- How will your party support New Zealand Kiwifruit Growers?
 - In February this year the Labour Government, with industry, launched a strategy to grow the value of New Zealand’s horticultural production to \$12 billion by 2035.
 - By accelerating growth and sustainability in our horticulture sector we can support businesses to grow, create new jobs, lift exports and provide greater domestic food supply.
 - The Horticulture – Growing Together 2035 – Aotearoa Horticulture Action Plan Strategy sets out the pathway to achieve what is an ambitious and achievable goal.
 - Consumers here and around the world continue to demand high quality and nutritious fresh fruit and vegetables to boost their wellbeing. Food security is a growing issue globally and we want to ensure New Zealanders have access to affordable food.
 - The Growing Together 2035 Strategy’s vision is that Aotearoa New Zealand is synonymous with world-leading healthy produce, which is grown with care for people and place, and is enjoyed by consumers around the world.
 - The Horticulture Strategy sets bold outcomes and actions to maximise value, boost sustainability, increase Māori participation in high value horticulture, and attract and retain the right people.
- Does your party support the Single Point of Entry?
 - Yes. Growers voted in the Kiwifruit Industry Strategy Project referendum in 2015 and over 97 percent voted in support of the industry structure.
 - The single desk arrangement has enabled the kiwifruit industry to improve the value of its exports by making use of economies of scale, setting standards for high fruit quality, developing markets and investing in research and development.