



Chair's Editorial

BY DOUG VOSS

Chairman's Report

We are coming to the end of a very different 2020 season. It seemed that at the start of harvest in March it was like we all jumped on a Tigers back called COVID-19 and had to hold on for dear life as we navigated through the challenges thrown up by this particularly vicious virus.

Looking back now over what happened, the following highlights what was achieved:

- Despite COVID-19 our 2020 crop was harvested and packed out during what we now know was the height of the infection levels in New Zealand;
- This followed one of driest summers for many years, which added some challenges of its own - the most significant being that the fruit size of both organic and conventional green were close to one fruit size smaller;
- The marketing season got underway at the normal time and has not looked back, which is once more clearly demonstrating the real strength of our Zespri marketing system.

This is not to say that none of the above was achieved without some real challenges:

- Onshore lockdown was imposed within the first few weeks of the harvest starting. At this time Eurofins - the kiwifruit industries contracted provider of maturity testing services - decided to withdraw their services, in what I consider to be a particularly shameful manner;
- Not to be deterred, Zespri and the post-harvest sector developed an innovative means of keeping the harvest going;

- Significant disruption to international travel meant reduction in RSE and back-packer labour availability, resulting in many unemployed New Zealanders from other industries experiencing Kiwifruit work for the first-time;
- Despite some disruption to shipping that was occurring, Zespri has been able to supply market requirements.

Zespri reports that we are close to the end of the selling season for sales to its customers, with sales for Sungold Organic completed and only a few hundred thousand trays of Green Organic to go.

So well done all, for this season's performance. But we must remember that the COVID-19 and the financial situation in many of the major markets is now significantly worse than earlier this season, so fingers crossed for 2021.

The second Zespri forecast for the year will be issued prior to the start of the roadshows (toward the end of the month), and so will be available for our final General Meeting of the year.

Our next General Meeting is on Thursday 26th of November at our normal venue, the Oak Room, Tauranga RSA, Cameron Road, Greerton starting at 5:30 pm.

Come along to hear the Zespri market update from Alice Moore and our guest speaker, Zespri Chair Bruce Cameron.

Looking forward to seeing you there.

Kind Regards

Doug

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Member contributions to the COKA News are welcome - all submissions for the next issue are to be made to Belinda McLeod. We endeavour to distribute the COKA News one week prior to the impending meeting. To provide comments, ideas and feedback about this newsletter, please email Belinda McLeod at cokanewsnz@gmail.com

What do you get out of being a COKA member... ?

- Be a part of a community of like-minded growers, who meet regularly;
- Have access to the support and encouragement of organic grower skills;
- Be part of an organization that grants sums of money into research and other matters concerned with the business of growing organically;
- Have a body that can directly address issue affecting organic growers, and provide the interface between industry organisations, government and other governing bodies on behalf of members;
- Be a member of an organisation that provides a liaison between growers and Zespri;
- Be part of a unified group in the business of organics that has a voice;
- Contribute to and receive a regular newsletter, keeping you up-to-date with industry matters;
- Be able to attend meetings where guest speakers of interest are hosted;
- Be part of upholding and enhance a favourable and responsible image for organically-grown kiwifruit.

DO YOU WANT MORE?

As a valuable member of COKA do you feel we are achieving our objectives? Do you want more from COKA? Is there something more you'd like to see the Executive do for organic Kiwifruit growers? We thought it was time we checked in with our members about what they want from COKA. Do you have any new ideas or suggestions to make?

Perhaps you have some guest speaker suggestions? Growing challenges you'd like to see the organization tackle? Or you have some content ideas for the newsletter? We would welcome any member feedback: email me at cokanewsnz@gmail.com with your ideas. As secretary, I will put the feedback into a document, so any feedback I receive can be presented anonymously to the Executive.

NEW MEMBERS

We would like to warmly welcome the following new members to COKA:

Liliane Ten Houten & Johannes Baijens
Christine & John Blackburn
Beat & Lisa Wisler
Rodger Bayly
Bridget & Mike Parker

COKA MEETING DATES 2021

All meetings are at 5:30 pm in the Oak Room at the RSA Building, Cameron Road, Greerton, Tauranga.

Please note the bar is no longer open before our meeting - if you would like a drink you can go into the RSA bar and bring it with you.

MARCH	Thursday 25 March 2021	5:30 pm	Oak Room of the Tauranga RSA, Cameron Road, Greerton
JUNE	Thursday 24 June 2021	5:30 pm	Oak Room of the Tauranga RSA, Cameron Road, Greerton
AUGUST	Thursday 26 August 2021	5:30 pm	Oak Room of the Tauranga RSA, Cameron Road, Greerton
SEPTEMBER	Thursday 23 September 2021	5:30 pm	Oak Room of the Tauranga RSA, Cameron Road, Greerton
NOVEMBER	Thursday 25 November 2021	5:30 pm	Oak Room of the Tauranga RSA, Cameron Road, Greerton

**DEPENDING ON THE REGIONS' COVID-19 LEVEL STATUS, THERE MAY BE CHANGES TO MEETING DATES.
MEMBERS WILL BE NOTIFIED IN ADVANCE OF ANY CHANGES BY EMAIL.**



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Come along to our final meeting for 2020!

Thursday 26th November at 5:30 pm in the Oak Room of the Tauranga RSA, 1237 Cameron Road, Tauranga. We are pleased to announce that our guest speaker for our next meeting is **Bruce Cameron**, long-time Kiwifruit grower and Chair of the Zespri Board.

It's our last meeting of the year so there will be drinks and nibbles. And as an added bonus, **Gaz Ingram** of Farmlands is going to host a short fun-filled Xmas quiz! With prizes!

So come along, and have some fun!



Syndrome seen in Italy highlights importance of a Pathway Plan

BY KVH

There have been several articles in the media recently highlighting Kiwifruit Vine Decline Syndrome (KVDS) in Italy, a phenomenon with yet undetermined cause that is believed to be associated with the collapse of more than 3000ha of kiwifruit in Italy. This is not new and has been observed since 2012, however is gaining more attention as the syndrome is associated with an increasingly large number of hectares and kiwifruit growing regions in Italy.

KVDS was first observed in 2012, near Verona in the North Italian province of Veneto. Initially the decline was observed on about 50ha of kiwifruit, but over time an increasingly large number of hectares have been reported with about 80% of vines in this region now impacted, and reports of the syndrome from other kiwifruit growing regions including Piedmont, Emilia-Romagna, Lazio and as far south as Calabria.

The syndrome has been referred to by several names, initially as Verona vine decline, then La Moira or "the death", and is now referred to internationally as KVDS.

While the increase in media attention has brought this syndrome to the forefront of people's minds, KVH and Zespri have been monitoring this vine decline syndrome closely over the last five years, including visits to the region and funding research to better understand the possible role of pathogens in this syndrome (which has been inconclusive).

The most obvious sign of KVDS is the sudden and rapid wilting of the plant which ultimately results in plant death. Affected vines can sometimes die within weeks of first symptoms appearing. These symptoms are usually associated with a compromised root system, where feeder roots disappear, then root necrosis sets in.

There has been a recent increase in research efforts in Italy to better understand what is driving this decline and yet the cause still remains undetermined. Researchers have been trying to understand whether it could be irrigation practices, significant climatic rainfall events, soil borne organisms, such as bacteria and fungi, soil oxygen levels, global temperature increases, or a combination of these. While various hypotheses have been developed into what is driving this decline, more work is required to clearly define the relationship between the potential causal factors.

Zespri and its SunGold Kiwifruit partners have set up a task force to investigate this decline and initiate an industry wide response to KVDS, developing tools to help and support growers. KVH will continue to work closely with Zespri and its partners to ensure we continue to remain informed of this emerging risk.

KVH, through Zespri, has also made our On-Orchard Biosecurity Guidelines available to Italian growers to ensure they remain vigilant around on-orchard biosecurity. While there is no evidence of a pathogen being the primary cause, if it were to be discovered later that an organism was responsible, managing its spread through good pathway management would be vital to ensuring the industry had the best chance at possible eradication or at the very least, a good containment strategy to help minimise its impact.

This is a classic example of the need for biosecurity practices to be in place as routine day-to-day activity, as would be the case under KVH's proposed Pathway Plan for the kiwifruit industry. We're currently consulting on this proposal - for more information please visit the KVH website at www.kvh.org.nz or give us a call on 0800 665 825 to discuss further in person. Most importantly, please take the time to send us an email and let us know your views on the proposed Plan.

Your Free 2021 Calendar

If you would like one or some of the fantastic, bright and colourful Port of Tauranga Biosecurity Excellence 2021 unwanted pest calendars (created by KVH, Biosecurity New Zealand and the Port of Tauranga), send us an email at info@kvh.org.nz letting us know your postal address and we'll get one in the mail to you.

The calendars are produced every year and always run out so get in quick!

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2021 CALENDAR



The Growing Complexity of Water

BY FRED JORDON

It is not by chance that most of New Zealand's kiwifruit is grown in the coastal BOP. The location makes it easier to grow subtropical outdoor crops due to the presence of favourable free draining volcanic ash soils, mild temperatures and (usually) reliable rainfall during the growing season. We have been growing Kiwifruit organically on the same property, north of Katikati for 24 years.

In the past we have only needed to irrigate young vines until their root systems are developed enough to draw on water deeper in the soil profile. Then with good soil management and regular rainfall they have grown well without irrigation. Of course it would be a different story if your orchard has been heavily contoured, or you are located in an area that has heavier clay dominant soils or is drought prone.

To monitor the need for irrigation, moisture tensiometers are traditionally used. We use our weather station data - if monthly rainfall during the growing season is less than 100mm per month, then we become aware that irrigation is likely to be needed.

Thankfully we installed an irrigation bore in 2015. It was not used much up until the last two - very dry - seasons, and during those it has certainly paid for itself!

Previously our main need for water has been for frost fighting, which requires high volumes, but for less than 5 days per year (on average).

For 20 years we have been drawing water from a temporally dammed stream, using up to 80 m³ per hectare for an all-night frost event. The automated system worked well and could cope down to -3 degrees.

When it was time to renew my consent this year, I assumed it would be straight forward as it previously has been... but a little research suggested otherwise.

Since my last consent was approved in 2010 the conditions imposed by the Regional Council have significantly escalated in the areas of Environmental and Cultural Assessments. It was no longer an application that I felt I could do, without expert consultation. One of our neighbours has waited six stressful years to be granted a water-take consent. Our water consultants warned that it could cost up to \$20,000 to get consent granted (compared to \$500 in 2010!).

It was time to think outside the square (and pray a lot), so we decided to side-step the bureaucracy and source our frost-fighting water elsewhere.

We have ended up with a more complex system involving water from three different sources. Our primary source is from a spring fed 300 m³ pond backed up with the irrigation bore and county water, if required.

It's not fully automated like the good old stream take, but we have managed to bypass the costly bureaucracy - for now anyway!

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Hail and the 'what if'

BY JON MERRICK

Organic Category Manager - Seeka

With recent weather events, I thought it fitting to do a 'what if' you unfortunately have a hail event.

You have within 72 hours to notify the Zespri Grower Contact Centre. You can do this three ways: even if you're unsure there is any damage to vines or fruit, you can:

1. Phone 0800 155 355
2. Email contactcanopy@zespri.com
3. Through your industry portal

It is also important to notify your post-harvest facility, who in most cases also have hail insurance for their growers.

You need to provide the following:

- Your name and KPIN;
- Physical location of your orchard;
- The date and time the event occurred;

- Are you the owner or lessee of the orchard?;
- Estimate of percentage of fruit damaged;
- Any additional information that may be helpful to the loss assessor e.g. hail stone size, leaf cover damage.

Zespri will then send the information on to an independent loss assessor. The loss assessor will then contact you to arrange a suitable time to come and carry out a preliminary estimate of hail damage on your orchard.

Note: after a hail event it is important that a PSA protectant is applied as soon as possible, due to all those damaged leaves and stems that are all entry points for PSA, and a good quality seaweed is also recommended to help boost the plant and vigour.

ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES (Indicative assessment process):

1. The Independent Loss Assessor will make a preliminary estimate of hail damage on orchard. The preliminary estimate is only to determine if the loss is a likely Constructive Total Loss (CTL) and/or to provide the assessor with an indication of potential losses;
2. If CTL is likely a formal orchard assessment is conducted;
3. If a CTL is declared in a formal assessment either:
 - Grower can accept the CTL. Once the CTL is accepted, the grower cannot harvest and receives payment for 90%* (*Potential Yield less deductible*). No further assessment is required; **or**
 - Grower can opt out of CTL. The grower will only receive payment for final assessed loss less deductible (*grower is now ineligible for CTL payment regardless of subsequent assessment outcomes*).
4. If the loss is not a CTL or the growers opt out of CTL, then the

grower must agree a harvest and assessment plan with the independent loss assessor;

5. If the grower is going to thin hail fruit or select pick, they must notify the independent loss assessor before doing so as the assessor will need to count any discarded fruit so that it can be included in the count for final fruit loss;
6. At harvest, the grower or nominated representative must notify the independent loss assessor that fruit is being sent to packhouse;
7. The independent Loss Assessor will do a final packhouse assessment when the fruit is picked and is being graded so that they can determine how much Class 1 fruit was rejected directly as a result of hail;
8. It is important packhouses adhere to the cool storage and grading procedures to ensure losses can be accurately assessed. Packhouses should also adhere to the Hail sampling Specifications in the Zespri Quality Manual.



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Ten Years' On

BY MARK WHITE

Recently I found myself multi-tasking (despite my wife's claim that males cannot do this) whilst I applied a PSA protectant spray on our organic green canopy. As I admired the 'PSA spot-free foliage' that I was spraying, I found myself reflecting on what has changed in our industry over the past ten years since PSA became a significant issue.

The cutover from Hort16A to SunGold was a remarkably successful transition to a gold variety which perfectly suits an organic growing regime. We now grow an organic kiwifruit gold crop that is in high demand from our consumers, and the plant performs in terms of fruit size, taste, pest tolerance, volume, and ability to grow replacement cane. Despite the regular attempts by PSA to limit our ability to produce a viable organic green crop we have over the years figured out how to navigate the various PSA hurdles during the growing season - most of which have simply added layers of cost and complexity to our orchard operations.

Together, our industry has risen to the PSA challenge. Our scientists, our plant breeders, our suppliers, our growers and post-harvest operators, and our industry leaders can be enormously proud of how the industry came together to meet this challenge.

Ten years on and we find there is another significant issue related to China that growers need to take an interest in - unauthorised plantings of SunGold. This issue will require today's industry leaders to develop solutions with the same level of strategic foresight as those who faced the PSA challenge ten years ago. It is likely that some of the proposed solutions will result in taking some risks both now and into the future, and I urge growers to take an interest over the coming months as this issue is about more than the SunGold brand of Kiwifruit.

It seemed ironic that KGI recently attended a COKA general meeting to speak about Hydrogen Cyanamide (Hi-Cane). Our orchard is due for our annual GAP audit very shortly, and this situation KGI was discussing simply appeared to be a lost opportunity to reset expectations of industry compliance within operational guidelines - which will no doubt be a discussion point for the Environmental Protection Authority in the near future.

The HWOB fruit marketed this year had an average size of 37.1 following a dry summer in the main growing regions. The Zespri marketing team has indicated that the desired size profile for the upcoming harvest is 33.3. We will be having a discussion at our next general meeting about the size profile of HWOB, and will be looking at some OGR modelling to help growers with decisions around this issue. Look forward to catching up at our next meeting.

Interested in Organics? Come and talk to us.

Phone Nic Roderick on 027 315 5727
or nicola.roderick@trevelyan.co.nz

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