

NEW ZEALAND PLANT PRODUCERS

MANIFESTO ELECTION 2020

Preamble

New Zealand Plant Producers Inc. is the industry body representing commercial plant nurseries and related businesses.

We represent businesses propagating and growing plants for:



forests



ecology



food



wine



amenity
plantings

Our members produce the plants growing food Kiwis eat and export, regenerating New Zealand's forests, beautifying our urban landscapes, and being planted by millions of Kiwis in their backyard.

Our industry underpins the success of New Zealand's thriving primary industries, including forestry, horticulture, viticulture, and farming. Employing approximately 4000 people, New Zealand's plant production industry is worth an estimated \$500 million each year.

New Zealand Plant Producers is a voluntary organisation with more than 100 plant producer members, comprising New Zealand's most respected nursery leaders and businesses. While our work benefits all New Zealand plant producers, it is funded by our members as proof of their commitment to our industry and the benefits it produces for New Zealand's economy and well-being.



Plant producers need reliable access to resources

1 Plant producers must get priority access to water

Primary industries rely on our production, and many families need our plants for food and wellbeing. Access to water is critical to Government plans for more horticulture, forests, and greener living spaces.

Plant producers now face severe water restrictions in Auckland and other parts of the country.

New Zealand's water infrastructure needs significant investment in water capture and storage. Doing this will enable our sector to meet the growing demand for plants across the horticulture, forestry, and amenity sectors. We support DairyNZ, NZ Beef & Lamb and Horticulture New Zealand's request for, and assessment of, New Zealand's water infrastructure and investment in viable water capture and storage.

We need an independent assessment of New Zealand's water infrastructure, to ensure it is adequate to fulfil future needs, and to identify regions at risk of water shortages. A National Water Strategy, backed by credible investment, is needed to guarantee a reliable supply of water.

2 New Zealand needs access to the World's best plant varieties

New Zealand relies on other countries to provide us with new varieties of fruit and vegetables, as well as amenity and landscape plants. The access to new plant materials benefits our income, through commercial producers, our social and community health, through recreational gardening, and our environment. But the infrastructure required to safely quarantine and test is expensive, and the cost falls strictly on the importer without being shared across the communities that benefit from access to new plant varieties. This costly imbalance is a disincentive that limits New Zealand's opportunity to benefit from world-class innovation.

We ask that the Government invests in the critical quarantine and laboratory facilities needed to enable more of this important plant material into New Zealand safely.



3 Accessing labour

Plant production relies on seasonal workers at critical times of the year. Most workers in our sector are New Zealanders, but we also rely on overseas workers, those on working holidays and Registered Seasonal Employers (RSEs). These overseas workers support the highly-skilled jobs held by New Zealanders. If access to overseas labour is limited, our ability to support local jobs and to supply the primary sectors with plants will be constrained. Employers who exploit contract and RSE workers must be strongly penalised so responsible employers can thrive and support both overseas and local staff and their families.

We ask that the RSE scheme is expanded and that we work towards having access to key workers from overseas to fill the roles are not able to be filled by New Zealanders.

4 Education and training

The horticulture industry is growing rapidly. This provides opportunities to employ people, including those impacted by the Covid-19 crisis, in meaningful, skilled jobs in regional New Zealand.

We ask that the Review of Vocational Education is prioritised to achieve the urgent improvements and investment needed in our industry training framework.



We urgently need legislation fit for the 21st century

5 Regulation and legislation must be reviewed and rationalised

Legislation affecting the biological and land-based sectors need to be comprehensively overhauled to ensure it is fit for purpose in the 21st century. NZ Plant Producers supports the current reviews of the Biosecurity Act, the Plant Variety Rights Act, and the proposed review of the Resource Management Act.

We need to reduce complexity and costs while better protecting our environment.

The fourth piece of legislation which majorly impacts our plant-based industries is the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act. This has not been substantively reviewed since it came into force 22 years ago. The Act is now widely recognised as a major handbrake to innovation. New Zealanders need access to new plant varieties for prosperity and wellbeing. There is unmet demand for new horticultural and agricultural species, which are the bedrock of tomorrow's innovative primary industries. Yet in the 22 years since the Act came into force, only a handful of new plants have been approved by the Environmental Protection Authority.

NZ Plant Producers is calling for the HSNO Act's new organism provisions to be brought back under the Biosecurity Act to save duplicated processes, cost and delays.



Photo: Paul Sutherland Photography

Our environment must be protected and enhanced

6 Biosecurity must be strengthened and supported

New Zealand needs a fit-for-purpose quarantine and plant imports system. We must work harder to keep pests and diseases out of the country, through increased resources, and regulation balancing risk, the prosperity, and the sustainability, of our primary sector.

While acknowledging that zero risk is unachievable, more resources must be dedicated to keeping the highest-impact pests out. When pests do enter New Zealand, we must quickly contain their spread and eradicate them.

NZ Plant Producers and the Ministry for Primary Industries have developed the Plant Production Biosecurity Scheme to manage the risks from the spread of pests and diseases through nursery stock pathways within New Zealand.

We ask for greater investment in biosecurity systems that protect New Zealand's primary industries and environment ensuring that everyone contributes and plays their part.

7 Investment in planting must be targeted at our most efficient producers

NZ Plant Producers applauds the Government's commitment to planting projects through initiatives like the One Billion Trees Programme, DoC Community Fund, Erosion Control Fund and the \$1.1 billion allocated regional environmental projects. This investment will make a meaningful improvement to New Zealand environment for future generations.

We ask that this funding is managed in a way that maximises planting projects, and does not fund plant nurseries operated by not-for-profit organisations or Government itself. These undermine the commercial nursery industry, roll back innovation advances, ultimately costing businesses and downgrading permanent skilled jobs into volunteer roles. Our industry welcomes new participants, but experience shows that funded nurseries have a high failure rate and seldom achieve scale to produce meaningful quantities of plants, or long-term employment opportunities.



8 New Zealanders deserve more green spaces in our urban areas

We welcome the National Policy Statement on Indigenous Biodiversity (NPSIB) and its purpose to maintain indigenous biodiversity. We agree that people have the most significant influence on whether our natural environment is degraded, or if it thrives.

We support the proposed policies requiring targets for indigenous vegetation cover of 10% in urban areas. However, the NPSIB should not undervalue the scientific, educational, amenity, historical, cultural, landscape or natural character values of non-indigenous plants and habitats; and which are also valued for the quality of life and liveability of our urban and rural areas.

After decades of neglect, New Zealand needs targets to increase green space and coverage in our urban areas, using both indigenous and exotic plants. This will improve health and wellbeing, control temperature, reduce air pollutants, regulate water flow, and absorb carbon emissions.