



A LIGHTER TOUCH®

Progress report for the period July - September 2021

www.a-lighter-touch.co.nz

As spring arrived so too did our new season of field work. It is exciting to see many new projects getting underway and to be able to showcase our work at conferences and field days.



Illustration of understory planting to enhance biodiversity and natural enemies in a citrus orchard.

One project that has drawn a lot of interest is the use of understory planting to enhance the agroecosystem and provide resources for beneficial insects to thrive. This is “Agroecological approaches to insect pest control in perennial crop systems”. The concept is being tested over a two year period in citrus orchards, to develop an understanding of how overall biodiversity and natural predators can be enhanced within a citrus orchard environment to better manage insect pests and to potentially reduce the need for applications of agrichemicals.

A workshop on this project was held in Gisborne and attended by nearly 50 growers and industry personnel. Due to Covid restrictions numbers had to be limited but, despite this, the “Cover Cropping Initiative” has generated a great deal of interest with other sectors. A summary and presentations are available on the *A Lighter Touch* website (www.a-lighter-touch.co.nz)

The programme team and participant organisations have also been busy getting other projects underway. These include:

- In partnership with Zespri a new kiwifruit integrated pest management plan for passion vine hopper (*Scolypopa australis*).
- Arable field trials as part of the Foundation for Arable Research’s proof of concept project to reduce overall agrichemical inputs into arable systems.
- Soil borne disease management with the NZ Buttercup Squash Council, and annual arable and vegetable crops.
- With Onions NZ, the validation of agroecological and IPM approaches to crop protection for onions.
- In association with Tomatoes NZ an IPM programme for glasshouse tomatoes incorporating arthropod Biological Control Agents.
- Six efficacy and residue projects on new crop protection products for horticultural and arable crops.
- Updating the pesticide resistance management strategies currently hosted by the NZ Plant Protection Society (www.a-lighter-touch.co.nz/transition-technical-lead-update-june-2021).

The programme team also had the privilege of presenting the *A Lighter Touch* programme to the Vegetables NZ conference as part of a panel session on new approaches to pest management. These presentations will be available on the *A Lighter Touch* website soon. The horticulture NZ conference also provided a great opportunity to present at a display stand and interact with the wider horticulture community over the 3-day conference (thanks to Vegetables NZ for funding the display space).

We look forward to bringing more updates over the spring-summer period, as these projects further take shape. Don’t forget to check out our newsletter and website’s Programme News” pages for more updates.



Discussing A Lighter Touch at the programme’s stand at the Horticulture NZ Conference. From left: David Rogers (Plant & Food Research), Jeff Smith (Agroecology Technical Lead), Stephen Ogden (Programme Manager), Paul Munro (Transition Technical Lead), Sally Anderson (Research & Innovation Manager, Vegetable Research & Innovation Board), and David Hadfield (Chair Process Vegetables NZ and Chair Vegetable Research & Innovation Board).