



In Touch.

Hello and Kia ora

Welcome to the March 2023 edition of In Touch, the monthly newsletter of A Lighter Touch Programme.

The In Touch newsletter is dedicated to keeping you updated on the programme's progress on agroecology crop protection here in Aotearoa.

This month we're sharing some of the exciting projects that form part of A Lighter Touch Programme, including work on attracting beneficial insects on vegetable farms, filling the gaps in crop protection programmes, and tackling fungicide resistance to Botrytis in boysenberry crops.

We hope you enjoy learning more about the projects underway as part of A Lighter Touch.

March 2023

This update includes:

- ↓ [A word from the ISAG Chair](#)
- ↓ [Boosting beneficials on vegetable farms](#)
- ↓ [Filling the gaps in crop protection programmes](#)
- ↓ [Battling Botrytis in boysenberries](#)
- ↓ [New A Lighter Touch projects](#)
- ↓ [Upcoming events](#)



A Word

From the ISAG Chair

As A Lighter Touch enters its fourth year, and projects produce results, the benefits of sector collaboration in tackling pests and diseases are becoming apparent, ISAG chair Stuart Davis says.

"The programme was designed to achieve pan-sector benefits, it was about finding solutions for those problems in common. What we're starting to see as results come in, even if the project has been led by one group, others are seeing findings they can tap into."

The Pukekohe demonstration farm is a good example. Started by Onions NZ, Vegetables NZ has now got onboard, and Process Vegetables NZ is looking to get involved. Similarly, another project focusing on squash has implications for any product groups dealing with soilborne diseases. It is likely that further multi-sector projects will develop around the management of thrips and bacterial diseases.



"The strength is in everyone working together, collaboratively, and as the programme grows in maturity, our members are beginning to reap the rewards."

STUART DAVIS – ISAG CHAIR



Native planting to attract beneficial insects at the Pukekohe demonstration farm, photo credit: Olivia Prouse.

Project Overview

Boosting beneficials on vegetable farms

A Vegetables NZ-ALT project looking to increase the abundance of beneficial insects on vegetable farms is planting natives with the aim of generating a year-round beneficials food source.

Located at the Pukekohe demonstration farm, the first plants went into the ground in December 2022 and are intended to provide a permanent source of shelter, nectar, alternative food and pollen (SNAP) to attract and retain beneficial insects.

The project's goal is to provide growers with a resource they can use to increase the biodiversity on their farm, resulting in more beneficial insects, fewer insect pests in crops, and less insecticides required. **Read more here.**



Squash was one of the crops for which trials have been completed as part of the transition projects.

Project Overview

Filling the gaps in crop protection programmes

ALT transition projects are looking to find products that will fill the gaps in crop protection programmes for growers through a series of field trials.

The transition projects are about helping growers move from older chemistry to more desirable options. The aim is to give them more tools in their crop protection toolbox, especially in sectors where products currently being used are disappearing due to factors such as regulatory constraints, resistance and market forces.

The completed trials have involved 45 different products provided by 14 different agrochemical and bio-pesticide manufacturers. New projects approved include boysenberries, summer fruit, peas, beans, lemons and oranges. **Find out more here.**

Update

Battling Botrytis in boysenberries

Nelson boysenberry grower Julian Raine outlines trials to find new disease control options for Botrytis in boysenberry crops.



Julian Raine

Project Overview

Psa - Kiwifruit Vine Canker

Psa is one of the most serious diseases globally for kiwifruit, and its discovery in New Zealand orchards in 2010 cost the industry \$1 billion. While new commercial varieties of kiwifruit are more resistant to Psa infections, the disease is still estimated to cost the industry 5% of revenue, even with management in place. The current limited range of products available for Psa control also creates a real risk of resistance development.

Zespri currently has four projects in this space that are aligned with A Lighter Touch. These include optimising application dosage and timing of existing tools, and investigating alternative biological control options.

Intellectual property considerations mean further detail cannot be discussed at this time.

The ultimate goal is to help growers achieve effective disease control whilst maintaining high-quality, premium fruit that meet market demands without compromising land for the future generations. As Zespri says, finding biological control solutions that are better for the environment, while maintaining quality and productivity, is a must.



Psa on kiwifruit, photo credit: Zespri/KVH.



Update

New A Lighter Touch projects

New ALT projects approved and underway include:

- A project with Summerfruit NZ looking at the effectiveness and residues of a new fungicide in cherries, apricots and peaches.
- Boysenberries NZ had four field trials underway over the summer to evaluate four biopesticides for botrytis control. Results are expected to be reported midway through the year.
- Vegetables NZ has a project aimed at boosting the abundance of beneficial insects through biodiversity plantings on vegetable farms, with the goal of reducing pests in crops.
- A project with NZ Buttercup Squash Council will trial new biological controls for soil borne disease management as part of the development of a Best Management Practice Guide for soil borne disease.
- Citrus NZ has field trials underway to test the effectiveness of five new insecticides for the control of Kelly citrus thrips in lemons and Australian Citrus Whitefly in oranges.
- Vegetables NZ is partnering with Plant and Food Research to study the black cricket life cycle, with the aim of using the data gathered to improve existing control measures or to trial new controls.
- A project with Processed Vegetables NZ is investigating the effectiveness of a range of bio-fungicides against fungal diseases in peas and beans, with the view to providing growers with viable alternatives.
- A Summerfruit NZ project plans to introduce under-canopy planting in summer fruit orchards to enhance orchard biodiversity. This project will leverage off knowledge gained from the ALT-supported citrus project involving companion planting.

What's coming up

Get involved with these upcoming events:

- **Field Days** 14-17 June 2023
- **Horticulture Conference Week** 31 July-4 Aug 2023

Contact

Getting involved

To find out more about a A Lighter Touch or work that is specific to your crop, please contact your industry body group. There are projects under way nationwide.

For extra information about any of the articles above,

email us here at news@a-lighter-touch.co.nz

SUBSCRIBE to In Touch

Please forward this on to **OTHER** future-focused growers and producers.

Our mailing address is:

A Lighter Touch • Kiwi Wealth House • Level 4/20 Ballance St • Wellington 6011 • New Zealand

Want to change how you receive these emails?

You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#)