



A LIGHTER TOUCH

PROGRESS REPORT FOR THE PERIOD JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2023

www.a-lighter-touch.co.nz

Quarter 2 2023 sees the midway point of the A Lighter Touch Programme (ALT). Three and a half years in the Programme has 35 completed or in progress projects and numerous others' being scoped by participating Product Groups or the ALT Team. Engagement with the primary sector industry continues to grow through both the ALT Team and extension of project results by our stakeholders. We are working with our partners to identify priority workstreams for the remaining time in the Programme.

Achievements for this period include:

- Engagement continues to grow with 271 e-newsletter subscribers, up from 224 in quarter 1. The average opening rate of 49% is well above the average opening rate for e-newsletters of 34.4%. The A Lighter Touch LinkedIn page has seen strong growth in the past quarter, with numbers having increased to 494 followers from 321 in quarter 1 – an increase of 54%, and is appearing in up to 150 searches each week.
- At the beginning of August, ALT hosted four project presentations at the Horticulture Conference in Christchurch. In addition, Tomatoes NZ and Process Vegetables each hosted project presentations in their respective breakout sessions and the Programme Manager presented an overview of the Programme to the full conference.
- NZ Plant Protection Society conference in August and the Communications Manager presented to an engaged group of scientists and agrichemical company representatives who were eager to hear more about the Programme.



Sally Anderson of Citrus NZ shares results from the programme at the Horticulture Conference in August.

- Our Product Group partners are also sharing their ALT journey. At their recent annual conference, FAR senior researcher Jo Drummond spoke about the role the programme plays in the future of crop protection in New Zealand for arable growers by helping its growers prepare for a crop protection future with less reliance on agrichemicals.
- A series of workshops began in September to help growers and advisors become more experienced in integrated pest management (IPM) practices in vegetable crops. These workshops are hosted by Vegetables New Zealand, with the support of A Lighter Touch, Plant and Food Research and Balle Brothers at the Pukekohe Demonstration Farm, Cronin Rd. The first series workshops focuses on a spring lettuce crop, while a second series held later in the growing season will look at management of summer broccoli.



IPM workshop at the Pukekohe demonstration farm.

- Growers from several ALT partners joined their kiwifruit counterparts at recent spray education workshops Zespri hosted in Bay of Plenty and Northland to focus on safe spray practices. Zespri extended an invitation to growers from other sectors after ALT programme work identified more grower education around best practice spray use was needed to support a more agroecological approach to crop protection. Growers from the strawberry, persimmon, citrus, tomatoes and passionfruit industries attend the workshops, illustrating the value of cross-sector collaboration that is a key element of the ALT programme.
- The first year of the Process Vegetables New Zealand project aimed at identifying bio-fungicides and bio-stimulants which are effective against two of the key diseases in peas and dwarf beans, *Sclerotinia* and *Fusarium* is complete. As with many ALT projects, there is pan-sector interest in the trials, with the outcomes having the potential to also benefit both the arable and fresh vegetable sectors.
- Knowledge gained from the Tomatoes New Zealand (TNZ)- A Lighter Touch project focusing on revitalising integrated pest management (IPM) in greenhouse tomatoes has been used to create new grower resources for whitefly management. The first version of the resources produced were shared with growers online and in person at a workshop focusing on management of whitefly using an IPM approach and are available in the TNZ website. While these resources have been developed specifically for tomato growers, they may also be useful to other greenhouse crops.



Recording plant biomasses in the Process Vegetables trials. Credit PFR.



A still from the whitefly management video for tomato growers.

- Key Industries Ltd recently signed up to the A Lighter Touch programme, joining our founding crop protection partners Corteva Agriscience and Syngenta.

| Investment period contribution | Co-investor contribution | MPI | Total investment |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------|-------------------------|
| During this Quarter | \$270,581 | \$282,575 | \$553,156 |
| Programme to date | \$7,305,928 | \$4,426,069 | \$11,731,998 |