



PROGRESS REPORT FOR THE PERIOD OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2023

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Quarter 3 is always a busy time for ALT Product Group participants and this year is no different. Numerous trials have been approved and harvesting of spring crops is underway. Engagement with the primary sector industry and growers continues through both the ALT Team and extension of project results by our stakeholders.

Achievements for this period include:

- 138 new subscribers to In Touch, the A Lighter Touch newsletter, an increase of 62% from the previous quarter, bringing the total number of subscribers at the end of December to 364.
- 226 new followers of the A Lighter Touch LinkedIn page, an increase of 86% on the previous quarter, bringing the total number of followers to 644 at the end of Q3.
- In November the Programme Governance Group and ALT management team held a strategy day to determine what the enduring outcomes of the programme could be. An outline of the outcomes and a draft plan for how the remaining programme resources and time (including a possible extension) can be best directed to achieve these outcomes has been developed.
- A prioritisation approach to ensure that new projects 'move the needle' towards delivering our purpose of 'a lighter touch' before the end of the current programme has been approved. Three focus areas have been identified:
 1. Burning platform roadmap: a common 'strategy on a page' format is being drawn up for each of the product groups to identify possible gaps and ensure that the programme is focussed on delivering key projects for each group;
 2. Key chemical groups: finding alternatives/support to group 3 (DMI) and group 7 (SDHI) fungicides and replacements for organophosphate and synthetic pyrethroid insecticides across all crops, and;
 3. Biologicals: overcoming the barriers (education, regulation and extension) to greater adoption of biological crop protection products.
- The first series of workshops aimed at cultivating understanding of integrated pest management (IPM) practices in vegetable crops has been completed. Lettuce was used as the focus crop and a marketable crop using IPM practices and with no use of insecticides on-farm was achieved, with the harvested crop having been accepted at market.
- Approval of six minor use trials and a project investigating a selection of organic compounds as potential controls for bacterial pathogens. It is an extension of initial work by Zespri which identified some naturally derived bio actives that inhibit Psa.
- Welcomed new Industry Stakeholder Advisory Group (ISAG members) David Hansen (NZ Feijoa Growers Association) and Debbie Baxter (NZ Passionfruit Grower's Association).
- A Lighter Touch joined vegetable growers and sector partners in sharing knowledge of three aligned industry programmes at the Regenerative Farming Project field day in Gisborne. Hosted by LeaderBrand in conjunction with their programme partners Woolworths NZ, Ministry for Primary Industries and the New Zealand Institute for Plant and Food Research. Programme Manager Sarah Sorensen and Technical Leads Jeff Smith and Paul Munro presented updates of ALT vegetable-related projects.



Graduates of the spring IPM series of workshops with their certificates attesting to their areas of knowledge growth.



A Lighter Touch joined growers and industry partners at the LeaderBrand Regenerative Farming project field day. Credit: LeaderBrand

- A Lighter Touch’s first educational forum was held as a webinar, focusing on *Strategies to encourage grower adoption of new technologies*. 180 registered, and a peak audience of 113 attending online. Speakers Dr Trevor James, of AgResearch, Dr Geoff Kaine of Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research, Denise Bewsell of Scarlatti and Dr Jim Walker, of Plant and Food Research, all shared their knowledge and expertise. They spoke about the importance of growers being part of the solution, the need to understand your audience, the value from an entire sector working together with a common goal, and the need to build trust through taking ownership and responsibility. The full recording of the webinar, and each presenter’s slides are available in the [Resources section](#) of the A Lighter Touch website.

Investment period contribution	Co-investor contribution	MPI	Total investment
During this Quarter	\$ 655,849	\$ 387,432	\$ 1,043,281
Programme to date	\$ 7,961,777	\$ 4,813,502	\$ 12,775,279