



## PROGRESS REPORT FOR THE PERIOD APRIL TO JUNE 2024

[www.a-lighter-touch.co.nz](http://www.a-lighter-touch.co.nz)

As ALT begins Year 5, there is an upward momentum of results and resources are being shared with programme partners, their growers and other external stakeholders. PGG Wrightson joins us as the Programme's first merchant partner, further solidifying ALT's extension strategic priority. An international conference this quarter provided the opportunity to take the ALT message to a global audience and make connections which will further ALT's current work and potential options for ALTV2.

### Achievements for this period include:

#### GAPS workshop

Another successful annual Gaps workshop was held in Christchurch in May with collated findings sent to sector attendees and crop protection companies to find solutions to fill stakeholders' crop protection 'gaps'.

**PGG Wrightson partners with ALT** - New Zealand's largest farm supplier PGG Wrightson is partnering with ALT to support growers in moving to more sustainable crop protection programmes. With a team of 260 horticulture, field and technical advisors, PGW's extensive reach across all NZ farming sectors will be invaluable in ensuring the tools and knowledge coming out of the programme are put into practice on farms and orchards.

**FAR case study** - For arable growers, a lighter touch approach to crop protection is about extending the life of existing chemistry at risk from resistance, while adding new options to the grower's toolbox. A video case study is available on the ALT website where Foundation for Arable Research (FAR) explains their work with the A Lighter Touch programme, which aims to use the crop itself and the ecosystem that that crop exists in to determine the type of pest management programme. Watch the video [here](#).

**Sharing of resources** - A plant species list from the biodiversity planting in vegetable farms project and video recordings from the recent ALT biodiversity educational forum are now available on the [ALT website](#), as well as two episodes of the [ALT podcast](#) which explore using practical biodiversity systems to help with management of pests, diseases and weeds on farm.



*Jo Drummond, FAR Senior Researcher presenting to arable growers about the industry's work being undertaken with ALT.*

**Kiwifruit growers and research organisations utilising knowledge and resource from ALT** - A pioneering biodiversity project



*Understory planting established in a kiwifruit block as part of biodiversity project led by Trevelyan's Pack and Cool. Credit Trevelyan's.*

aimed at identifying understory planting benefits in kiwifruit is utilising knowledge and resources shared through ALT. The project started two years ago and focused on soil retention and soil improvement, however in the next stage of the project, the plan is to introduce moveable biodiversity pods and flower species row planting into the understory and/or headlands; two of the components being demonstrated at the Pukekohe demonstration farm as part of the ATL-Vegetables New Zealand-Onions New Zealand biodiversity project. Knowledge and resources from this ALT project are also being adopted by the LandWISE SFFF regenerative agriculture project in Hawke's Bay, further extending the project's learnings. LandWISE has had four biodiversity pods planted out for use at their demonstration site near Hastings and is planning to establish another four pods in the spring, using natives that are indigenous or endemic to Hawke's Bay.

**Beneficials abundance increasing as a result of understory plantings** - Insect abundance increasing by two-thirds and the mower staying in the shed are two of the benefits seen in the first year of a Summerfruit New Zealand-ALT understory planting project. The project aims to establish understory planting in summerfruit orchards to enhance biodiversity and is looking at associated co-benefits. First year results have been clear-cut showing understory planting is enhancing the insect population and diversity.

**Approval of regulatory case study** – A partnership between crop protection and crop production industries and government in a project to test the regulatory pathway for novel biopesticides in New Zealand has been approved by ALT’s PGG. The project will see a new-to-New Zealand bioinsecticide, for the control of a priority pest in brassica crops, taken through the regulatory pathway with the goal of achieving registration. It will be used as a case study to provide guidance for industry in taking a product through the NZ regulatory system.



*Dr Charles Merfield speaks at a Summerfruit New Zealand field visit to the Affleck cherry orchard this month, one of the Central Otago orchards involved in the understory project.*



*MPI and ALT representatives learning about the ALT/VNZI/ONZ Biodiversity Project from project team members Howe Young and Daniel Sutton.*

**Days with MPI** - Steve Cunningham, Jenny Cameron, Sol Tep and Emily Wakelin from MPI were hosted over two days by ALT and its partners to ‘get under the hood of the programme’. Day 1 was at the Pukekohe Demonstration farm and focused the conversation around the importance of the programme including extension, resistance education and what projects have been done in the programme to date. Day 2 was held in the Bay of Plenty, starting at Zespri Headquarters, onto Plant and Food Research’s Te Puke site and finished at Trevelyan’s packhouse with the day’s presentations focused on enduring outcomes. MPI were impressed with the amount of work being carried out at all levels and would like to see this become an annual event.

**Conference attendance in Salinas, California – the salad bowl of the world** – The ALT Programme Director and Programme Manager attended and presented at the 2024 Biologicals Summit which was held in Salinas, California on the 25/26th of June. This conference provided the opportunity to not only

understand what is happening in the biologicals space globally but make connections with international regulators to support the ALT regulatory project and connect with like-minded organisations to explore options for ALT2. Some of the key out-takes for ALT:

- Education, education, education is the key to uptake of biological crop protection solutions by growers.
- ALT is on the right path with respect to collaboration across sectors, strategically prioritising knowledge transfer and extension as well as working on the regulatory pathway.
- We can use the information gathered to help inform an ALT extension and/or ALT V2.
- The connections created across growers, regulators and other industry groups could be of real benefit to ALT Product Groups.
- We need to continue to drive the biodiversity work across various crops and particularly looking at extending beyond the demonstration farm to a more regional approach.
- Regulation is a challenge around the world and many international regulators are looking for new approaches.



*Sarah & Livia Learning about how Braga Fresh uses biodiverse plantings for crop protection in their organic celery operation in California.*

<b>Investment period contribution</b>	<b>Co-investor contribution</b>	<b>MPI</b>	<b>Total investment</b>
During this Quarter	\$ 1,181,188	\$ 553,108	\$ 1,734,296
Programme to date	\$ 9,861,578	\$ 5,893,631	\$ 15,755,209