



PROGRESS REPORT FOR THE PERIOD JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2024

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As ALT approaches the middle of its fourth year, several significant events have taken place. Results from projects are seeing grower change and the ALT Team have been out and about sharing the agroecological message. Recent reviews of the ALT programme provided a range of insights on our progress, all with ringing endorsements.

Achievements for this period include:

ALT provides vehicle for crop protection change – The Tomatoes NZ/ALT project looking to enable the industry to return to an IPM system centred on biological control of pest insects, using native or endemic beneficial insects to predate pest insects for the control of Tomato-potato psyllid and whitefly, has seen an increase in the number of growers using biological-based pest control strategies as a result of project findings and resources that have been developed.

More beneficials, fewer herbicide sprays in understory project - First year results from the summerfruit understory project aiming to enhance orchard biodiversity has seen a higher abundance of beneficial insects and reduced herbicide sprays applied. Monitoring showed greater diversity of flowers in the orchard due to the understory planting, and this resulted in higher numbers of insects in the understory blocks than in other parts of the orchard.

Effective border management plays a role in PVH control – The four-year research project by Zespri and Plant and Food Research aims to develop an effective IPM plan for passionvine hopper (PVH) in orchards. Findings from the third year of a Zespri-ALT project demonstrated that having well considered border management practices can be effective as part of an integrated pest management plan (IPM) for PVH. Results also demonstrated the effectiveness of pyrethrum plus 0.5% mineral oil spray combination against PVH nymphs.



First season understory growth in one of the Central Otago stonefruit orchards in November 2023



The annual biodiversity flower strips in January 2023 (left) and January 2024 (right), following the addition of two extra species to the seed mix. Credit: Olivia Prouse

Sowing the seeds of last season's knowledge gains – The A Lighter Touch-Vegetables New Zealand-Onions New Zealand biodiversity project has now been in the ground for two seasons, with planting for its third year getting underway. Learnings from the project have been shared with growers through the development of resources on the [ALT website](http://www.a-lighter-touch.co.nz). Other industries are picking up on this work and implementing it in their own projects such as kiwifruit packhouse, Trevelyan's.

Resistance Management Forum – This two-hour webinar discussed updates to the fungicide, herbicide and insecticide resistance strategies. The webinar can be found on the [ALT website](http://www.a-lighter-touch.co.nz). As part of its work in pesticide resistance management, A Lighter Touch has funded and overseen the updating of resistance management strategies which are hosted on the [NZPPS website](http://www.nzpps.org.nz).

An introduction to IPM - A series of educative videos has been produced with Australian IPM expert, entomologist Dr Paul Horne. The videos are designed to introduce IPM, which is not crop specific, and gives an understanding of the three components of IPM, the importance of crop monitoring, the role IPM plays in resistance management, and an introduction to implementing IPM. You can find the three videos in the [Resources section](#) of the ALT website and on our [YouTube channel](#).



Integrated pest management (IPM) specialist Dr Paul Horne gives an overview of the general principles of IPM in a new series of educative videos



Where ALT fits into the Aotearoa Horticulture Action Plan – A Lighter Touch programme manager Sarah Sorensen discussed how the ALT programme aligns with the Aotearoa Horticulture Action Plan (AHAP). Of the five pillars which organisations and individuals involved in horticulture can align their effort and investment to, ALT aligns with three of AHAP’s pillars; grow sustainably, optimise value, and underpinned by science and knowledge.

ALT Programme Manager Sarah Sorensen discusses how the programme aligns with the action plan at the Horticulture Conference in Tauranga. Credit: Hort NZ

ALT co-hosts Growing a Greener Future - Held in Auckland on August 12, the NZPPS symposium attracted about 130 attendees representing more than 50 different organisations. ALT Programme Director Livia Esterhazy emceed the opening session Global to Local, and chaired the subsequent panel discussion.



ALT programme director Livia Esterhazy chaired the opening session themed Global to Local, which included a panel discussion with speakers (from left) Dr Aoife O’Driscoll, Barry O’Neil, Julia Jones and Will Burrett

Mid-term Review – As part of the funding commitment between ALT and Sustainable Food and Fibre Futures (SFFF), an independent Mid-term Review was conducted by the AgriBusiness Group. The purpose of this was to review and assess progress made in the first four years of the seven-year programme and provide recommendations to enable programme partners to make informed decisions regarding the future direction of the programme. The review team gave the programme a great endorsement, with emphasis on the strategic focus of extension. They did, however, acknowledge that this is not an easy task due to the diversity of partners, and stated the programme is on the right track to deliver value for growers.

Investment period contribution	Co-investor contribution	MPI	Total investment
During this Quarter	\$ 555,284	\$ 361,266	\$ 916,550
Programme to date	\$ 10,416,862	\$ 6,254,897	\$ 16,671,759