



AGRIBUSINESS

# Field Notes

Weekly news update from the KPMG Agribusiness network



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**20 February 2020** – This week's headlines



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## Agribusiness

### [How coronavirus impacts New Zealand's food and agribusiness](#)

[sector](#) [13 February, The Country] Rabobank Senior Analyst and RaboResearch General Manager Tim Hunt reports that the coronavirus outbreak is negatively impacting New Zealand's agribusiness sector even more so than the SARS outbreak in 2003. The coronavirus has already infected ten times the amount of people and it is continuing to spread, and on top of this, New Zealand also has a lot more exposure to China than in 2003. When the SARS outbreak occurred, less than 5 percent of New Zealand's exports were sent to China, whilst now we send 30 percent of our exports which are mainly used for domestic consumption. Rabobank has reported that there will be limited impact on the first round of dairy shipments, due to most of it having a decent shelf life, with cheese being the most heavily impacted as it is mainly used in food service. Red meat will be negatively impacted until supply distribution issues are resolved, however some can be sent to alternative markets in the meantime. Wool and wine exports are expected to have limited short-term demand. Logistical issues will have the most impact on our exports overall.

[Barriers between kai and our community](#) [13 February, Hayley Gastmeier, Wairarapa Times Age] Consultancy firm Planalytics' research has shown that having access to money largely impacts in people's ability to eat well. These people may struggle to access the help they need from food initiatives such as food banks due to stigma, transport and awareness. Food insecurity is also more likely to be experienced by women, large families and young people. A range of factors usually act together to keep people experiencing food hardship such as debt, housing, health and education.

['Bath bombs for cows' - innovation at Southern Field Days](#) [18 February, Sally Rae, The Country] 12 year-old Jorja Gay won the student section of

the Southern Rural innovation awards at Waimumu last week for her "trough bomb" which contains all necessary minerals dairy cows need and can be placed in water troughs. Jess Miller took out second place with her carry-all wheelbarrow attachment whilst the open section was won by Jared Bekhuis and his "Fitbit" for a cow.



## Horticulture

[Zespri announces plan to have 100 per cent recyclable, reusable or compostable packaging by 2025](#) [13 February, 1 News] Zespri has announced that all of its packaging will be reusable, recyclable or compostable by 2025 as part of a new range of sustainability commitments. They have also reported that on the same timeline, all plastic packaging will become at least 30 percent recycled plastic.

[An easier way to grow vegetables without masses of land](#) [14 February, Louisa Steyl, Stuff NZ] Vegepod New Zealand showcased their portable capsule at the Southern Field Days. Owner Andy Lowe states that once a customer plants their vegetables, then the pod does all the work through a self-watering system and also provides a micro-climate. The company is based in Tauranga, however a factory in Christchurch builds pods for South Island customers.

[Kiwifruit smuggler ordered to pay Zespri \\$15m](#) [17 February, Tim Murphy, Newsroom] Haoyu Gao has been ordered to pay Zespri nearly \$15 million for breaches of intellectual property law. This includes smuggling cuttings from gold kiwifruit to China and helping establish large scale orchards of the fruit which are Zespri's highest value product and need to be licensed to growers. Zespri accounts for around 30 per cent of kiwifruit sales globally. The High Court judgement could be appealed, however Zespri is now planning to proceed with action in the Chinese courts under their Plant Variety Right legislation. New Zealand's High Court judgement

reported that Mr Gao's actions placed the livelihoods of 2,800 New Zealand growers at risk.



## Economics & Trade

[Blips give trade hiccups](#) [14

February, Annette Scott, Farmers

Weekly] ANZ Agribusiness Economist Susan Kilsby reports that food producers were expecting improved global growth during 2020, however unexpected disruption has upset that. Coronavirus is cited as the biggest disrupter, whilst missiles in the Middle East, drought, fire, flooding, Brexit and Trump's acquitted impeachment also playing a part. The full impact of these disruptions is unknown however Mrs Kilsby states that there will still be opportunities for the primary sectors due to increased levels in demand.

[Dr Jacqueline Rowarth: Why food in New](#)

[Zealand is 'expensive'](#) [17 February, The

Country] Statistics New Zealand have reported that New Zealand food prices increased by 3.5 percent between January 2019 and January 2020. Dr Jacqueline Rowarth reports that if it our farmers were not as productive then it would be costing consumers even more. In the five year period between the end of 2014 and the end of 2019, food increased overall by 5 percent, whilst wages grew by 14 percent showing that the agricultural productivity has enabled more food to be produced, ultimately benefitting the customer. Dr Rowarth reminds consumers that food is a global resource which is treated nationally, despite 50 percent of our food being imported and that food scarcity results in price increases.



## Agri-Tech

[The Halter collar lets farmers](#)

[manage herds from anywhere](#) [14

February, Louisa Steyl, Stuff NZ] Venture capitalists Data Collective have invested \$8

million into kiwi company Halter, which sells a solar-powered collar for cows, that allows farmers to manage and shift their cows remotely. Machine learning is used by Halter to monitor health and reinforce behaviour patterns of cows. Virtual paddocks are created on a mobile application and reinforced by sounds and vibrations that allow farmers to schedule moves and set virtual boundaries. The collars were on display at the Southern Field Days earlier this month.

[Huge drone set to soar into Ag sector](#) [14

February, Mark Daniel, Rural News] John Deere

has partnered with Volocopter to develop large drones which can be used for a variety of agricultural uses. The machine has a 200 kilogram load capacity and can offer flight times of up to 30 minutes. One example of use is the sprayer unit which can cover up to six hectares an hour and has better spray management than conventional helicopters due to its low altitude flights. The drone has been advertised as helping in areas of poor topography as well as in crop protection, seed distribution and frost control.



## Alternative Proteins

[Kiwi food tech company eyes global](#)  
[domination as it launches two new](#)

[meat alternatives](#) [17 February, Bonnie Flaws,

Stuff NZ] Founder of alternative protein company

Sunfed Meats, Shama Lee reports that the

company is planning to build manufacturing

plants around the world as meat-free "meats"

become more normalised in society. In

particular, China is interested in such products

due to its needs to increase food security.

Sunfed Meats is about to launch its Boar Free

Bacon and Bull Free Beef in New Zealand, and

hope to help fill the gap left in the market by the

African Swine Fever. "The company's sales have

grown 170 per cent year-on-year, and 30 per

cent in New Zealand in the last quarter".



## Forestry

### ['Absolutely horrible' telling staff they've lost jobs, says owner of Te](#)

[Kuiti sawmill cutting 35 positions](#) [13 February, Ellen O'Dwyer and Ruby Nyika, Stuff NZ] Spectrum Group Ltd have made 35 of their 48 staff redundant at the Te Kuiti plant. The forestry industry is facing disruption across New Zealand partly due to exporters being impacted by the coronavirus. Wade Glass, Spectrum Group's Managing Director reported that the main problem is that the price of pruned logs has increased to a point where it is not feasible to continue as domestic sawmills are paying more for the logs than exporters. Mr Wade stated that the redundancies come as a last resort move for the company.

[Forest head's carbon hopes are still high](#) [14 February, Richard Rennie, Farmers Weekly] NZ Carbon Farming has committed to planting 100,000 hectares to help New Zealand meet its Paris Accord promises. The private family-owned company already owns 73,000 hectares of forest and has announced it will plant 120 million trees. As a result, they will meet 20 percent of the country's Paris commitments. Managing Director Matt Walsh reports that they only plant on marginal land that has no other productive purpose and that is erosion prone, so it will not affect the availability of productive farmland. Mr Walsh has reported that by planting on less than 0.5 percent of marginal land, the country can achieve 20 percent of its emissions targets. The Forest Owners Association has supported the proposal.



## Biosecurity

### [Controls put in place to control bovine TB outbreak in Hawke's Bay](#)

[12 February, Marty Shape, Stuff NZ] Hawke's Bay has been affected by a bovine TB outbreak, with 29 animals being detected with the disease across nine farms since April last year. It has

been found that the source of the infection is wildlife north of the area. OSPRI has expanded its office in Napier to help lead a response including limiting stock movements in the area. The infection is managed by clearing infected animals and continuing to test for the disease.

[NZ on high alert for stink bug invasion](#) [16 February, Aotearoa Science Agency, Stuff NZ] New Zealand has been placed on high alert for the invasion of brown marmorated stink bugs after European farmers have reported devastation of their crops by the bug, with many farmers considering walking off their land for good. It is regarded as the greatest biosecurity risk for our country. One country that has been particularly impacted is Italy, with fruit crop damage exceeding \$675 million. New Zealand's mixed cropping systems are similar to Italy, so our scientists have been working in collaboration to help develop new methods for monitoring and controlling the stink bugs. The bug originates from Asia, where predators such as the samurai wasp keep their number in check. If a stink bug invasion were to occur in New Zealand, the wasp has approval for release. Stinkbugs go into a hibernation mode where they seek refuge in houses or commercial buildings, which is dangerous as they could reach New Zealand during this period, such as in 2018, when 26 live stinkbugs were found in a box of shoes arriving from Italy.



## Red Meat

### [Meat changes coming — report](#) [13 February, Pam Tipa, Rural News]

Beef + Lamb New Zealand have released a new report which reveals that what constitutes 'premium' red meat is expected to change in the next few years due to new views and market segments. It is expected that premium meat will consider how the animal was raised and the environmental impacts of creating the meat. As a result, there is an opportunity for New Zealand to help lead the conversation and communicate the unique properties of our beef. On top of this,

algorithms and technology platforms are expected to increasingly influence consumer purchasing decisions. Transparency is also gaining importance along with sustainability.

[Chinese beef major contributor to exports](#) [14 February, Rural Life] Data from the Meat Industry Association (MIA) has shown that the value of beef and sheep meat shipments to China grew by 57 percent last year to \$3.7 billion. On top of this, MIA report that the country saved almost \$25 million on tariff reductions into Japan after the trans Pacific Partnership agreement was signed. In total, a record \$9.1 billion was generated through red meat sales during 2019. Chief Executive Tim Ritchie stated that the data reinforces the importance of the sector to the New Zealand economy.



## Viticulture

[Villa Maria winery trials native plants as alternative to herbicides](#) [13

February, The Country] Villa Maria is investigating alternatives to herbicides in its commercial vineyards such as planting native plants and cover crops under vines. They have support from the Ministry for Primary Industries and Sustainable Food & Fibre Futures fund. Project Co-ordinator Raquel Kallas reports that planting native plants or cover crops under vines could serve to protect the vines through working with nature and could reduce the need for labour in the long-term. If the project is successful, the biggest challenge will be establishing native plants on a large scale. There are currently four trials running at two different vineyard sites.

[Coming up Rosés](#) [14 February, Sophie Preece, New Zealand Winegrower] Two Rivers Winemaker Dave Clouston faced the challenge of using the small intense berries of Marlborough's 2019 Pinot Noir vintage as he reports that "It was great for Pinot Noir and really, really challenging for Rosé". Mr Clouston had to act fast to ensure that the red fruit did not

tint his Isle of Beauty Rosé. The wine was named Champion Rosé at the recent Cathay Pacific Hong Kong International Wine & Spirit Competition, and trophy winner at the 2019 New Zealand Wine of the Year Awards. Mr Clouston is now focusing on promoting his Rosé internationally, with his goal of being known as New Zealand's best Rosé producer.

[Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc goes alcohol-free in world first](#) [19 February, Voxy] New Zealand winery Giesen has released the first alcohol-removed Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc in the world. This comes after increasing consumer interest surrounding low-alcohol and non-alcoholic beverages. Giesen use a spinning cone technology to separate the fragrance and alcohol from the wine, before the aroma is added back in. It is said that the wine produced is lighter in flavour whilst boasting citrus flavours with notes of blackcurrant and passionfruit. The wine also has 85 percent less calories than its alcoholic counterpart.



## Farmers & Producers

[Auckland parrot, reptile breeding ban sparks backlash](#) [13 February,

George Block, Stuff NZ] The Auckland Council have planned to ban parrot and reptile breeding and sales from 2022, which has upset a number of citizens. Professional parrot breeders are reporting that it would damage their businesses and cost them thousands, whilst the council reports that is helping to prevent non-native animals becoming prevalent in the country. Bird Breeder Mary-lee Sloan reports that all the breeders she knows take preventative measures to reduce the risk of birds escaping.

[DINZ ups on-farm support](#) [14 February, Rural News] Deer Industry NZ has appointed Phil McKenzie as its new Manager of Farm Performance. The position was created late last year after the resignation of DINZ's former chief executive. Mr McKenzie has been helping groups of farmers complete their Farm

Environment plans. Mr McKenzie has experience with Pamu.

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## Wool

### [Shearers struggling as South Canterbury sheep numbers fall](#) [12 February, Samesh Mohanlall, Stuff NZ]

Shearers are struggling to find work as sheep numbers dwindle, dropping 52 percent since 2000. Waimate Shears Co-owner Warren White reports that the profession is struggling to get young people involved in the industry. Mr White states that farmers prefer not to have learners shearing sheep as well because they are not as efficient when shearing. Shearing also involves long shifts. Federated Farmers Canterbury President Jason Grant states that there has been a swing towards dairy farming in the region.

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## Animal Welfare

### [Teen cows get moody too – research](#) [13 February, The Country]

Researchers have found that dairy cows get moody during puberty, whilst otherwise they tend to have consistent personality traits. It was also found that calm cows consumed more feed, produced more milk and had improved growth compared to more reactive cows.

[Joaquin Phoenix invited to visit NZ farms after anti-dairy Oscars speech](#) [14 February, Esther Taunton, Stuff NZ] Kivi farmers have invited Joaquin Phoenix to visit their farms and see how “real” farmers look after their animals after the vegan heavily criticised the dairy industry during his Oscars speech. South Taranaki Sharemilker Trish Rankin reported that although she believes everyone is entitled to make their own opinion, that they are not entitled to make their own set of facts. Mr Phoenix criticised the industry for not speaking up for “voiceless” cows.

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## Arable

### [Strong demand drives seed sales](#)

[13 February, Annette Scott,

Farmers Weekly] Strong growth in the past five years has occurred for export sales of New Zealand seed, with latest trade data showing export sales for 2019 was \$239.4 million, up from \$173 million in 2015. Key export categories include pasture seed such as ryegrass and clover, along with vegetable seeds. NZ Grain and Seed Trade Association General Manager Thomas Chin has reported that specialty seed exports have increased value by being GM-free and that our seed trade is competitive globally due to our high-quality supply. More than 80 percent of New Zealand’s seed production is in Canterbury. Mid Canterbury Farmer Rab McDowell has made the switch to high value cropping which he reports is also often high-risk due to germination and hygiene.

### [Fodder beet yields unaffected by reduced fertiliser use](#) [14 February, Rural News]

Plant & Food Research and other industry partners with the assistance of the Ministry for Primary Industries’ Sustainable Farming Fund, have found that when growing fodder beet, it is possible to reduce traditional fertiliser recommendations by up to 50 percent without any effect on crop yield or quality. The researchers found the maximum plant response to nitrogen was achieved at 100 kilograms per hectare which is half of the industry standard of 200 kilograms. This reduction is great for the environment and will also be a saving for farmers. Ongoing research is occurring to determine the best ways to control fungal diseases. Fodder beet is commonly used as a winter feed for New Zealand dairy farmers.

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## Dairy

### [NZ shares fall as Synlait Milk slumps to 2-year low](#) [13 February, NZ

Herald] Synlait Milk's NZX shares have fallen as low as \$6.70 after the dairy company lowered its earnings outlook due to a weak infant formula market and the risk of covid-19 to the company's supply chain. Synlait reported that it's first half net profit is down by around \$10 million and forecasted that at best its annual outlook will be a flat profit. The a2 Milk Company is Synlait's major supplier and reported after the announcement that its performance remains strong.

[Livestock Improvement eyes half stake in Israeli counterpart Afimilk](#) [18 February, Catherine Harris, Stuff NZ] Livestock Improvement Corporation (LIC) is looking at buying a 50 percent stake in Israeli farm technology company Afimilk. Discussions are currently ongoing. Israeli cows are among the most productive globally and the country generates triple the average level of milk solids per kilogram produced here in New Zealand. Afimilk creates computerised systems for herd management and dairy farming.

[Concern about coronavirus hits dairy auction prices](#) [19 February, Farmers Weekly] Increasing concern around coronavirus has resulted in a second downfall in dairy prices at the latest Global Dairy Trade auction. Nick Smyth, Strategist at the Bank of New Zealand reported that this may have the effect of downward reassessments of analyst's dairy pay-out forecasts. The price index dropped another 2.9 percent from the last auction a fortnight ago, with whole milk powder dropping 2.6 percent to USD\$2966 (approx. NZD\$4643) a tonne. Skim milk powder dropped 2.6 percent, anhydrous milk fat 5.5 percent and rennet casein 0.9 percent.



## Fisheries

[Reserve network could cost fishing \\$3m](#) [18 February, Emma Perry, Otago Daily Times] Fisheries New Zealand and the Department of Conservation are seeking

feedback on a proposed set of protected marine areas off the southeast coast of Otago, which have the potential to cost \$3 million in lost catch to the commercial fishing industry. The area covers almost 1300 square kilometres. Some of the areas would have total fishing bans, whilst others would have restrictions placed on them for fishing and kelp collection. The industry which would be hit hardest would be the lobster industry. Submissions close 17 April.



## Environment & Emissions

[New ryegrass 'boosts production, reduces methane'](#) [12 February, Rural News] Seed company Germinal reports that a new variety of ryegrass with higher fat levels can help farmers to boost production whilst lowering methane emissions. The ryegrass is more energy-dense which improves milk production and has been developed through conventional planting methods. Germinal is looking at breeding ryegrass with double the usual amount of fats, at a concentration of five percent.

[New fertiliser deposits closer to home](#) [14 February, Mark Daniel, Rural News] Shipping fertiliser globally has both environmental and socio-economic issues however New Zealand may soon be able to source its phosphate from Australia. Lake Mackay is the biggest undeveloped sulphate of potash bearing salt lake in the world and is expected that it could produce 426,000 tonnes during the first 20 years which works out to double Australia's current annual consumption.

[How this seaweed could slash dairy emissions](#) [19 February, Marc Daalder, Stuff NZ] Entrepreneur Nick Gerritsen co-founded CH4 Global with Alan Groves, which uses a certain strain of seaweed in feed for cows to help reduce methane emissions by more than 90 percent. Research has found that a diet made up of 2 percent of the seaweed appears to be the



optimal amount for cows to consume. CH4 has received money from the Provincial Growth Fund in order to carry out its research and development. The seaweed is seen as having a lot of potential for farmers not only in New Zealand, but globally.



## International

### [UK liquid milk consumption halves](#)

[12 February, DairyNews] United

Kingdom's milk consumption has dropped by nearly half since 1974, which is at a higher rate than the US, at 40 percent per capita since 1975. 98.5 percent of UK households are still purchasing milk to drink, however average rates of consumption have dropped from 2.7 litres a week to 1.4 litres a week. The Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board report that despite this reduction in milk consumption, value-added items like cheese have actually been experiencing growth.

[University beef-ban overturned](#) [12 February, Rural News] Thousands of students at the University of Edinburgh have successfully fought a potential ban on the sale of beef in all of the student association's cafes and restaurants. 6,000 students voted on the proposal, with 58 percent of students not in favour. Similar beef bans have occurred at other institutes such as the University of Cambridge and the University of East Anglia (although this was overturned in 2019).

[Brain wave: How DuPont is pushing the boundaries of sensory testing for better consumer feedback](#) [12 February, Oliver Morrison, Food Navigator] DuPont Nutrition and Biosciences is researching and developing brain testing techniques to use at the same time as traditional sensory testing panels for new products to ensure customer satisfaction. Consumer feedback from traditional panels is usually dishonest as consumer's have no desire to offend. As a result, DuPont is starting to use electroencephalography to reveal people's

unfiltered responses about food through measures such as facial expressions, pulse, pupil dilation and sweat levels. The use of these techniques is intended to help new food products succeed on the market.

### [The world's 'tragically high' food waste problem is worse than previously thought](#)

[13 February, Amber-Leigh Woolf, Stuff NZ] Some New Zealand households are throwing up to four kilograms of food or more a week in the bin, and global food waste estimates have been said to be grossly underestimated especially within wealthy countries. A paper written from Wageningen University and Research in the Netherlands reports that targeted education is the best way forward to help reduce food waste. Certain groups have been acknowledged as spending the most on food each week, "including young people aged 18-24, families with children under 15, families with more than five people, and families who earn over \$100,000 per annum". Tips for reducing waste include offering leftover food to others, storing fruit in the fridge and bread in the freezer.

[Sneaky symbol behind mince 'rip-off'](#) [13 February, NZ Herald] A Woolworth's customer in Australia purchased a 500 gram packet of beef mince from the supermarket, however when weighed, it only came to 262 grams. Mandy Smith complained on Facebook about her findings and was told that the 'e' stands for estimate, which lets the company get away with it. Woolworths has confirmed it will investigate the issues, whilst other people suggested shoppers get their products weighed in the store or opt for independent butchers instead.

[Tesco pays soy farmers to halt deforestation in the Brazilian Cerrado](#) [14 February, Flora Southey, Food Navigator] 'Funding for Soy Farmers in the Cerrado' is a new initiative to help financially incentivise Brazilian farmers to stop deforestation, and support farmers to produce soy only on existing agricultural land. A cohort of food and feed businesses are behind the new initiative including Tesco. Deforestation in the



Cerrado is double that of what is occurring in the Amazon rainforest. It is estimated that £230 million (approx. NZD\$465 million) is required in the next five years to limit additional deforestation for soy production in the region.

#### [Sugar taxes work even among poor... just: study](#)

[14 February, Oliver Morrison, Food Navigator] 18 months after Chile introduced a range of regulatory measures on foods high in sugar, fat and calorie content, sales of sugary drinks dropped by nearly a quarter whilst purchases of water, diet soft drinks and no-added sugar fruit juices increased. Some of their regulations included advertising restrictions, front-of-package warnings and ban on junk food in schools. The researchers indicated however, that the measures did not reduce socio-economic inequalities in diet-related health and were most effective at a high socio-economic level, with monthly purchased volume dropping by 31 percent. Middle socioeconomic groups sugary drink purchases dropped by 16 percent, whilst low socioeconomic groups dropped by 12 percent.

#### [Gut back to grassroots: Why you need to make shoppers microbiome savvy](#)

[14 February, Nikki Hancocks, Food Navigator] The Gut Stuff is a company owned by radio DJs Lisa and Alana MacFarlane which is aimed at educating consumers about better gut health to inspire them to buy into pro and prebiotics. The twins report that the industry still has a long road before gut health products and knowledge is mainstream among the mass market. The two DJs aim to educate through making things as simple as possible for the average consumer.

#### [US farmer wins \\$411m in weedkiller lawsuit](#)

[17 February, Rural News] Herbicide providers Bayer and BASF have been ordered to give a US Farmer USD\$265 million (approx. NZD\$411 million) in punitive damages after he claimed their herbicide had drifted over from neighbouring properties and damaged his 1,000 acre orchard. Mr Bader sued the companies, with claims that “they encourage farmers to

spray their dicamba-based herbicides irresponsibly”. Bayer plans to appeal the verdict, and BASF is undecided on its next actions.

[Futureproof recipes, Instagram-unfriendly restaurants and sober bars: new consumer trends identified](#) [18 February, Oliver Morrison, Food Navigator] Wunderman Thompson has highlighted new food and drink trends in its latest report including the importance of consumer’s sustainability concerns. Other trends noted are exotic ingredients, regenerative agriculture, sober bars and Instagram-unfriendly restaurants as consumers seek more meaningful dining experiences.

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## Organisations referenced in this week's Field Notes include:

Afimilk  
ANZ  
Auckland Council  
Bank of New Zealand  
BASF  
Bayer  
Beef + Lamb New Zealand  
CH4 Global  
Data Collective  
Deer Industry NZ  
Department of Conservation  
DuPont Nutrition and Biosciences  
Fisheries New Zealand  
Forest Owners Association  
Germinal  
Giesen  
Halter  
John Deere  
Livestock Improvement Group (LIC)  
Meat Industry Association  
Ministry for Primary Industries  
NZ Carbon Farming  
NZ Grain and Seed Trade Association  
OSPRI  
Planalytics  
Plant & Food Research  
Rabobank  
RaboResearch  
Spectrum Growth Ltd  
Statistics New Zealand  
Sunfed Meats  
Synlait Milk  
Tesco  
The Gut Stuff  
Vegepod New Zealand  
Villa Maria  
Volocopter  
Wageningen University  
Waimate Shears  
Wunderman Thompson  
Zespri

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