

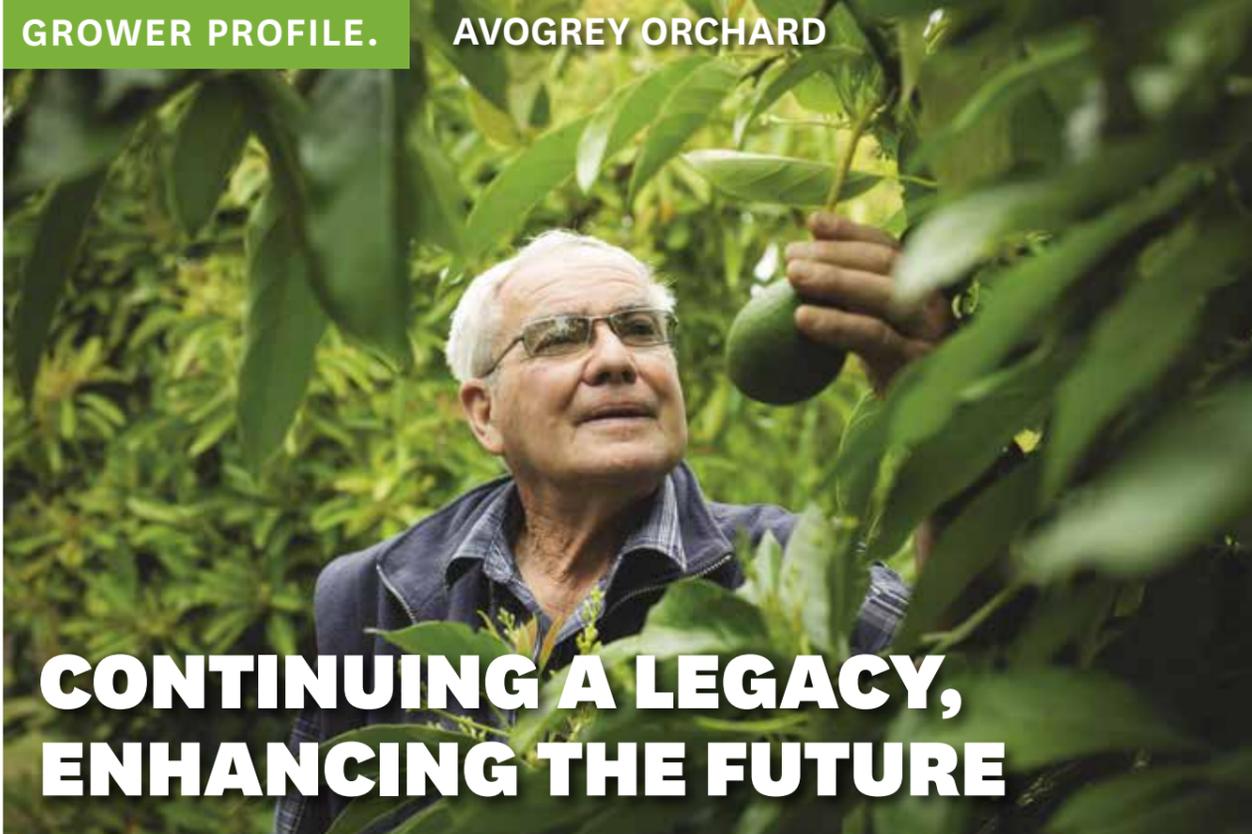
# SUPPLYLINE



NEWS FROM MG MARKETING

**GROWER PROFILE.**

**AVOGREY ORCHARD**



## CONTINUING A LEGACY, ENHANCING THE FUTURE

↑ David Grey, inspecting one of his many avocado trees

When Charles Grey planted avocado seeds in Gisborne in 1921, he couldn't have imagined the legacy he was creating by becoming the founding father of avocado orcharding in New Zealand. Over 100 years and four family generations later, the Greys are still leading the way.

It is Charles's grandson David and his wife Judi who are now at the forefront of the industry. David may have inherited his passion for growing from his grandfather Charles, but it was his parents, Len and Dorothy, who were the real pioneering avocado growers. Len imported a range of new varieties from California throughout the 1940s and can take credit for introducing the Hass variety to New Zealand in the late 1950s.

But if you think David and Judi simply stepped into the family business, you'd be wrong. Their growing story starts in 1968 when the couple, along with David's brother Bruce, purchased a 13-hectare property on Bushmere Road just outside Gisborne. After years of hard graft, which included a significant contribution from their three sons, Paul, Phil and Tony, they built a thriving orchard business.

"It was bare land with just a few broken down fences and old sheds," says Judi. "At the time it had been used for fattening lambs and growing kumara."

"We cut our teeth with a lot of cash cropping which was long hours and hard work."

As David reflects on their time establishing their growing operation, he talks about how they were forced to think outside the square.

"We didn't have a lot of money and managed to live off \$25 a week until we'd developed the business," says David. "We found ways to get the most out of what we had."

"I remember growing buttercup squash under hot caps. No one in Gisborne has seen it done before and it meant we'd sell them at the market before any of the local growers thought it was possible."

On the orchard you'll find a range of citrus fruit, tamarillos and other speciality fruit, but avocados are the Grey's real passion.

In keeping with their family tradition, the Greys refused to stand still and in the late 1990s planted around 30 avocado seedlings from the Sharwil variety.

Their relentless pursuit for excellence was rewarded as they developed three standout performers which form their Avogrey Greenskin Series – the GreyStar®, Eclipse® and Titan®.

"A key point in time for us was when an old friend from the University of California, Dr Bob Bergh, visited and we asked him what was the best avocado."

"He didn't think for long and came up with Sharwil because of its eating quality and natural resistance to pests and disease, but it doesn't perform very well in our conditions - it has the quality, but not the production."

"So we went ahead and trialled 28 variations of Sharwils. Out of those there were a couple of real dogs which we got rid of but three were exceptional. GreyStar in particular was outstanding, producing excellent avocados and fruiting by age three."

"Then we have Eclipse which fruits super late and Titan which is extra large. They're three outstanding performers."

"Another benefit is that the fruit is largely protected by leaf cover which is great for quality, especially from the sun which can be harsh here in Gisborne."

"We're now in a process of phasing out the current trees and replanting the new varieties."

It's the instinctive approach, developed over decades of growing, that has contributed to the success of the business and the development of three new world-class varieties.

"To some extent we haven't followed the trends," says David. "There has been a focus on different inputs, growth controllers and intensive planting but our approach has always been to work with nature and not try to dominate it."

Now established, with Plant Variety Rights (PVR) protection, they are working closely with their sons and MG Marketing to promote the trees and give other growers the opportunity to share in the success.

"Our boys are involved as well, looking after the contracts and business side, all the social media and signage," says Judi. "We work closely with MG Marketing who connect with growers, deal with agreements and work with the growers planting the new varieties."

"We have a fair bit of interest and have curious growers phoning up and wanting to talk about the varieties. They're often keen to take a look so we show them around. That's part of the role we play."

→ David and Judi Grey, with MG Representative Michael Breitmeyer

### AVOCADOS

**GreyStar**  
Large fruit, matures December to March

**Eclipse**  
Ovate shape, matures late season, to July

**Titan**  
Super-sized fruit, matures November to January

**MG Marketing is the licensed marketer of the Avogrey® varieties.**

For further enquiries and orders please contact:  
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**GROWER PROFILE. FRANKLIN FARM**



↑ Young Arlo Franklin helping out on the farm

## FOCUSING ON A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

From humble beginnings in 1906, to the flourishing celery growers we see today, Franklin Farm has always been a dedicated, family operated business.



After originally starting with a small block of land in Mt Roskill over a century ago, urban sprawl led to the decision to move to the small settlement of Waimauku. Over the years they managed to acquire neighbouring land, enabling Franklin Farm to expand to be a large operation, growing celery across 30 acres and producing 1,500 cases each week.

Now in the hands of the fifth generation, the newest owner, Luke Franklin, considers himself a celery grower since childhood.

"Last year my wife Jasmine and I bought the business and took over the day-to-day management," says Luke.

"I've been involved right back from when I was a kid when I would work as often as I could to get a bit of extra pocket money."

"Then I got more involved after high school, and I started full-time about 15 or 16 years ago."

"It's a lot different now we're running the farm which takes a lot of time and energy."

"We're still supported by my parents Alan and Monique and grandparents Graham and Lucy who all remain hands-on in the business."

The Franklin family are open to improving the way they grow and it is this openness that will ensure they are sustainable over the long-term. Prior to taking over the business, Luke and Jasmine spent a number of years investigating regenerative farming practices and developing strategies that focus on reducing inputs and improving soil health.

"We know it's a good idea to look at other ways to grow to get ideas on how we can improve what we do on the farm," says Luke.

"It's not easy to get good information that's specific to market gardening, so we just got on with it and started running trials."

"It's such a slow process because one trial can take nearly the whole year from setting it up, cropping, rotating and with trials you don't get the perfect result the first time – it takes years."

Luke also understands that making tough decisions is crucial to maintaining a sustainable and profitable growing operation.

"You can't be sustainable if you're not profitable," says Luke. "Running the business has taken a huge amount of time and focus."

"However, we see real value in regenerative growing practices, both from an environmental and cost saving perspective, so we're determined to continue."

While regenerative farming is part of their long-term plan, they have taken other steps on their journey and continue to look at all opportunities to improve their environmental performance.

"We've installed solar power to run our cool room, packhouse and workshop," says Jasmine. "We also plant multi-species cover crops in the summer months to add diversity to the soil biology and structure."

Franklin Farm and MG Marketing have always enjoyed a strong relationship. Luke's father Alan served on the Board from 2010 to 2018 and the family have been grower-shareholders for more than 30 years.



"We work closely with the sales team and then Neil Bridgens from the procurement team provides us with a lot of additional information," says Luke. "We have a very good relationship."

"The MG team seem to enjoy what they're doing and care for us and the sustainability of our business."

"We know it's a good idea to look at other ways to grow to get ideas on how we can improve what we do on the farm," says Luke.



↑ Luke, Jasmine and young Saskia Franklin with MG representative Neil Bridgens

↓ Four generations of the Franklin family



## WHAT IS AN EMS AND WHY IS IT SOMETHING GROWERS SHOULD BE THINKING ABOUT?

**EMS stands for Environmental Management System. In a nutshell, it's a system that provides a business with a structured process to improve its environmental performance.**

The future of horticulture in New Zealand is closely linked to a healthy environment and growers working with the environment in a responsible and sustainable way. The industry is also growing and, at the same time, customer, consumer and community interest in environmental issues has heightened.

While it is accepted that New Zealand growers traditionally manage their growing operations sustainably, it is not always formalised and this can lead to some environmental issues being overlooked.

An EMS is used to identify all the environmental risks and then systematically work to address them through on-the-ground action. Growers should think of it as a useful plan to recognise their environmental efforts and a framework that records their

objectives and actions. It is also used to ensure growers are meeting legal obligations and compliance requirements.

Another benefit of having an EMS is that it enhances a businesses reputation and can be an additional way to have environmental stewardship recognised in the marketplace. Businesses in other industries are also finding that establishing an EMS and thinking about their processes and inputs can lead to improvements that reduce costs.

While there are off-the-shelf templates and guidelines, the actual impacts will vary for each grower, region and type of operation. Therefore, while the overall EMS format is similar, it works best when growers develop their own strategies that are relevant to them. They can then integrate the actions into the daily operations in a way that is meaningful.

The first step in developing an EMS is identifying your environmental risks and the mitigations that are already in place. The EMS will then support the overall management of key areas from action plans and recording key data to effectively dealing with nutrient inputs and losses, soil health, soil erosion, sediment control, irrigation and waterway management.

It also encourages growers to go beyond compliance, by making incremental gains and achievements over time.

If that's not enough, on-farm environmental management is firmly on the radar for regulators across the country and will become mandatory in the future. In Canterbury, any farmer or consent holder is already required to have a Farm Environmental Plan.



NZGAP offer an Environmental Management System Add-on programme. Their EMS system encompasses a number of elements including guidelines, property maps, the farm environment plan (FEP), environmental risk assessments, guidelines for good and best management practices, compliance criteria, and a grower/third-party auditor checklist.

## NEW ZEALAND'S CHANGING LANDSCAPE

The landscape across New Zealand is constantly changing. Manaaki Whenua - Landcare Research have developed a number of tools, which are regularly updated to monitor the way land is changing across the country.

Land cover describes the extent of vegetation, built environments, water bodies, and bare natural surfaces across New Zealand. It is an important measurement of environmental change and urban development and is used for policy, research, environmental reporting and decision-making at national and regional level.

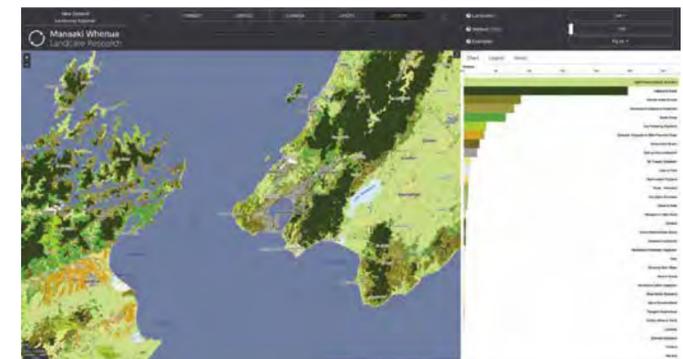
The Land Cover Database (LCDB) differentiates the New Zealand landscape between 33 different types of land cover and provides spatial distribution and changes over time. Changes in the areas of plantation forestry, indigenous forest, scrub, wetlands or pasture can be identified when using the LCDB.

A useful tool to view land cover over time is the New Zealand Landcover Explorer website which is built and hosted by Manaaki Whenua - Landcare Research. This site allows you to explore and analyse New Zealand landcover change over five time periods - 1996/97, 2001/02, 2008/09, 2012/13 and 2018/19.

The comprehensive mapping tool includes land used for orchards, vineyards and perennial crops.

<https://vizbe.landcareresearch.co.nz/>

Even more information can be sourced from the LRIS Portal, also available from the Manaaki Whenua - Landcare Research website.



← Example of the mapping interface available on the Manaaki Whenua - Landcare Research site.



## LONG-TERM STRATEGIES ENSURE LONG-TERM SUCCESS

When you're on an orchard, the fruit you immediately see and is within easy reach is the low-hanging fruit. The fruit that's up high is often the best quality but is much harder to spot and more difficult to get your hands on.

In business, the "low-hanging fruit" principle relates to the focus owners and managers have on the most easily achievable strategies. These are the things that get the quickest results with the least amount of effort.

While they are important, it's the more challenging business decisions that take the most time and strategic thinking, and therefore reap the greatest rewards.

At MG Marketing (MG), we pride ourselves on our ability to flex and react to situations and take advantage of opportunities when they present themselves – the low hanging fruit. However, we also never lose sight of the big picture and have a business strategy that ensures our success over the long-term.

For example, a key long-term focus at MG is developing or obtaining rights for IP varieties and then partnering with growers to bring them to market.

This can be a long and complex process and can take a number of years, but the prize at the end is substantial. Our strategy is to target varieties that are developed for their superior qualities. Often it's taste, size, colour and yield but can also be because it produces earlier, later or is more resistant to pests and disease.

Our suite of summerfruit varieties have been a success story. They are highly valued by customers and consumers, giving the growers who partner with MG to grow the fruit a real competitive advantage. Similarly, our early season M7 Navel has proven to be a winner for growers.

MG has also secured the exclusive growing and marketing rights for BerryWorld varieties, a significant global player in the breeding of strawberries, raspberries, blackberries and blueberries which are widely acknowledged as some

of the best in the world.

Another exciting development underway is in the apple category with MG involved in holding the licence for internationally successful Cosmic Crisp and Snap Dragon apples, along with our locally developed Bay Queen.

Our goal is to identify new varieties that offer a real point-of-difference and therefore help growers to obtain a greater share of the New Zealand and international markets.

To help achieve our goals in this area, we have invested in dedicated in-house expertise and have an ownership stake in a specialist IP business, the New Zealand Fruit Tree Company. This strategy has helped position our co-operative as an innovator and a leader in the commercialisation of IP varieties.

While I've used the example of IP, there's a number of ways you can apply long-term thinking to your business including how to best use technology, accessing new skills, using data insights effectively or a combination of these and other opportunities.

Making a business strategy less daunting by focusing on common problems that can be solved easily is a common mistake. Take the time to step back and consider all your options and work out what's best for your business in the future (not just the low-hanging fruit).

® Together.Stronger.

Peter Hendry - CEO

## GOOD BUNCH DONATES OVER FOUR TONNES OF BANANAS



The Good Bunch was launched last year by MG Marketing and Dole New Zealand Ltd to donate bananas to New Zealand's most vulnerable communities through Salvation Army foodbanks every week.



It has delivered on its promise, with over four tonnes of top-quality Dole bananas distributed to nine key locations across the country.

A key driver for establishing the Good Bunch programme was not only to donate

bananas but to also create a direct link between MG branches and local foodbanks, enabling our co-operative to facilitate the distribution of other produce that might otherwise end up going to waste.

Now established, it also provides a platform for MG growers to contribute fresh produce. Growers are encouraged to get in touch with their local branch to talk about how they can support the programme.

## MG MARKETING (MG) GROWER UPDATES



### Social Practice Certification

It is a requirement for all growers currently supplying Foodstuffs North Island and Countdown to have a social practice certification. MG is making it mandatory for all growers supplying our network of branches to be certified by 30 June 2022.

MG strongly urges all growers to take steps towards getting certified now. Growers can start by visiting the NZGAP website and completing the short online NZGAP Social Practice Add-On registration form. Alternatively, you can consider GlobalG.A.P. GRASP or SMETA/SEDEX if these are preferable for your business.



### Crates and Pallets

Foodstuffs North Island (FSNI) now only accept crates from Viscount FCC and or Loscam into their North Island stores and distribution centres.

At the same time they have stopped accepting all 75L crates. Growers supplying FSNI and using the 75L crate have converted to the 47/49L or 60/61L option. MG will still accept Viscount FCC or Weck 75L crates into all of their branches.

### Maximum Pallet/Lift Heights

In the near future, MG will be moving towards implementing a maximum height for pallets for produce delivered to branches. More information will be communicated to growers in the coming weeks.



### Grower Delivery Advice (GDA)

MG is rolling out a new IT system called M3 later this year. The new system requires all growers supplying MG to use the GDA web portal. The GDA is an internet-based system, that allows consignments to be logged electronically with a MG branch ahead of the produce arriving. The MG Procurement Team is happy to help and provide guidance to growers not yet using the GDA system.



### Responsible Sourcing

In addition to complying with local laws and regulations, MG has established a Responsible Sourcing Policy to ensure suppliers align with standards related to worker welfare and safety; business integrity; and environmental practice. A copy of the Policy will be distributed to all MG suppliers.



### Farming funds and programmes

The Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) has funding available to encourage innovation and support agriculture and horticulture producers and their communities. Growers are encouraged to visit the MPI website to find out about funding options such as the Productive and Sustainable Land Use package and the Sustainable Food and Fibre Futures fund.