

## AN EARLY HISTORY OF MARKET GARDENERS LIMITED

The rich history of Market Gardeners Limited (MG) can be traced back to 1923 when a small group of visionary growers formed the co-operative.

One of the key personalities in the early years was Mr William (Bill) Brinsley Nicolson. Bill started his career as a farmer before going on to spend time as a New Zealand clerk, local politician, builder, journalist and editor. Fortunately, he was also a part-time market gardener, and because of his governance skills, was asked to chair the original board of directors. He also put his journalism skills to good use, producing a handwritten early history, in which he describes the establishment of the co-operative as a “great adventure”.



### Excerpt of An Early History of Market Gardeners Limited, by Mr William Brinsley Nicolson:

*In time, success brought with it financial rewards but having personally taken part in the earlier days of the great adventure, I believe the leaders of the movement taught us to achieve success for its own sake rather than for material reward. Had not that spirit of high adventure been behind the struggle against odds it is extremely doubtful if success would have been achieved.*

*To use this simile of the conquest of Everest, there were crevasses to be*

*bridged, obstacles to overcome or bypassed, cliff tops to be climbed by persistent step cutting and snow slides to be avoided.*

*What then was the guiding principle which energised the inventors of the firm of Market Gardeners Ltd? Was it not a revolt against what they firmly believed was an injustice? They were determined not to submit to what they conceived was an unfair deal, whether or not their actions have bought them material gain, and it was this spirit which sustained them in the long fight before they achieved their objectives.*

*They were well aware of the meagreness of their resources, but they were willing to risk all for the satisfaction of achievement.*

*The forgoing analysis, though it covers a much wider scope than the history of one organisation, it is not out of place if it makes clear what the writer believes was the sustaining principle which activated the endeavours of the organisation. Market Gardeners received a challenge – picked up the gloves in the spirit that to win the fight was far greater than the stakes for which they fought.*



**100**  
YEARS OF GROWING  
TOGETHER  
1923 - 2023

To celebrate 100 years, a series of events will be held across the country later this year.

The celebration of the centenary is not only significant for the current MG team, but is a tribute to the people who have participated in the growth and success of the company for the past 100 years. Therefore, staff, shareholders, growers, customers and business partners will be invited to join them at one of the events.

Visit the MG 100-year website to find out more about the history of the co-operative. You can also share your images or memories online and find out more about the centenary events happening around the country.

[www.mg100year.co.nz](http://www.mg100year.co.nz)



## ARE YOU ACROSS THE ROLL OUT OF THE FRESHWATER FARM PLANS



A Freshwater Farm Plan (FWFP) is a tool which will help growers identify and manage risks related to the freshwater environment.

A Freshwater Farm Plan (FWFP) will be required for any farming operation with 20ha or more in arable or pastoral use, 5ha or more in horticultural use or any combination equalling more than 20ha.

This roll-out has an initial focus on Southland and Waikato, which started on 1 August 2023, with the remaining freshwater catchments phased in every six months through to the end of 2025.

Growers need to be mindful that there's no one-size-fits all approach. The national regulations are designed to ensure that FWFP's are tailored to the unique environment of each growing operation and to the local catchment.

### FWFP's require key information, including:

- Identified freshwater issues, along with cultural and community values of the local catchment
- Maps providing key information such as waterways, soils, landforms and land uses
- Identified and mapped risks
- Action plan indicating how risks will be managed
- Consent information
- Any regulation where the FWFP is being used to meet compliance with any other regulatory requirements

### Other key points for growers:

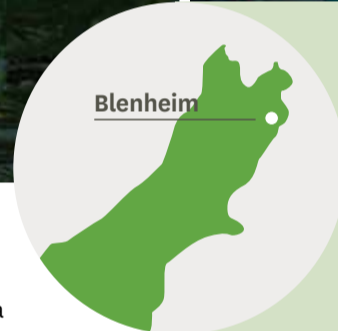
- Farm Environment plans (FEPs) can be used as the basis for FWFP's
- FWFP's are enforced by regional councils

- FWFP's must tie into these regional council plans and will be a way for growers to document actions they are taking to meet council requirements
- FWFP's need to be certified and audited by a council appointed officer
- Growers in areas where FWFP's are in effect will have 18 months to prepare their first plan for certification
- FWFP's will need to be certified every five years

Growers should continue to use any existing Farm Environment Plans to manage environmental risks related to freshwater until the FWFP's apply to their operation.

There's a lot of information to help growers on the Horticulture New Zealand and Ministry for the Environment websites.

# A FOCUS ON CULTURE & INNOVATION



Crops grown across 34 Ha



Tomatoes & Cherries + Sauvignon Blanc Grapes

↑ Nicola Whyte and MG Representative Jamie Russ  
 ← Nicola and Tom Whyte with MG Representatives Jamie Russ & Michael Breitmeyer

The success of Blenheim based Kinzett’s can be put down to their business philosophy of being sustainable, efficient and looking after their greatest asset – their people.

Kinzett’s have a long history of growing in the Marlborough region. Since the turn of the century, when Hedley Kinzett first turned soil on Old Renwick Road, the business has built a reputation for being forward thinking. In more recent years Paul Kinzett has been at helm, but has now taken a step back, moving into retirement.

Run today by fourth generation, Nicola Whyte (nee Kinzett) and her husband Tom, the operation employs 20 permanent staff, which are supported by over 50 seasonal workers. They specialise in tomatoes, grown year-round under two hectares of glass, and also dedicate eight hectares to growing cherries which are picked from November through to Christmas. In 1995 the operation ventured into growing grapes with 24 hectares of mainly Sauvignon Blanc varieties produced under contract for Cloudy Bay. Long time shareholders of MG, the business works closely with procurement representatives, Jamie Russ and Scott Mason, supplying most of their tomato and cherry crops to MG markets.

After a successful stint working in the medical industry, Nicola took the leap of faith, returning to the family business. Being a smaller family-owned operation means there’s plenty of crossover with the roles, with Nicola, Tom and the wider team relying on each other’s opinions and experience.

“I was out of the business, working in the pharmaceutical and medical industry for a number of years,” says Nicola. “Then I came back to New Zealand and I got back involved in cherries and would take seven weeks off work to travel down from Auckland where we lived at the time.

“When Paul wanted to step away, we stepped in. I oversee the day-to-day operations, while Tom’s much better behind the scenes with detail and numbers, but at the end of the day we all help each other out,” says Nicola.

Tom has an extensive business background so brings a different set of skills to Kinzett’s.

“I was first involved around ten years ago when Paul asked if I’d be a director, so have been involved in the governance side,” says Tom. “I also seem to get given the contractual and financial side of things.”

Growing techniques have evolved a lot over the years, with Kinzett’s always prepared to change, often at the forefront of industry. They were early adopters of rain covers and experimented with how to best produce cherries, including research into growing under glass. Another good example is the conversion to using biomass as a heat source for glasshouses back in 2004.

“Paul was ahead of his time,” says Tom. “It was a significant investment, but by moving away from using coal as the primary fuel, he saw benefits from both an environmental perspective and from a long-term cost saving perspective.

“Kinzett’s has effectively been 97% carbon neutral for 20 years,” says Tom. “We use wood chip from a local sawmill.”

“Even though we’ve grown in a more sustainable way than a lot of growers, we haven’t realised more value in the market, however, we see a future where it could be the difference between supplying large retailers or not.

“The challenge for us is that our boiler is getting older with others moving to new technology and there’s also more competition for biomass fuel.”

However, despite the advancement they have made with technology to be more sustainable and systems to be more efficient, Nicola and Tom credit a driven and loyal team to the business’s success. They have a strong focus on their workers’ physical and mental health and wellbeing, something they describe as ‘the Kinzett way of doing things’.

“For us, we like to look for opportunities for all the staff to grow their skills, especially when they show potential or interest in different parts of the business,” says Nicola.

“We’re also have a strong focus on keeping our people safe. For us it’s more than getting the paperwork right – it’s also about leading by example and keeping everyone focused on safe behaviour.”

“We’re lucky to have a good relationship with the team at MG’s farm in Nelson, JS Ewers, and appreciate that we can pick up the phone and talk to people who have similar operations. Sometimes its simple things such as sharing templates or procedures, but can also help when trying to problem-solve on-farm issues

“And, of course, when it comes to showing our appreciation to our staff, you can’t go past food – catered lunches and morning teas are always a winner.”



# COMMITTED TO THE COMMUNITY, FAMILY AND THE MARLBOROUGH REGION



Brothers Robert Harrison Jones and Alan Jones have been growing garlic their whole lives, following in the footsteps of their dad Peter Jones and his cousin Tony Tripe who originally started the business, then known as Piquant Garlic, back in the 1980's when Marlborough was a mecca for garlic producers.

With their wives, Lorna and Marion, Peter and Tony built their backyard operation into an international business. When they moved into retirement in 2003, Robert and Alan took the reins, making the transition to working full-time in the allium industry.

Now, with the trading name change to Garlico Marlborough, they have built up the business to supply approximately 40% of New Zealand's garlic. Since taking over, the brothers looked to maximise the excellent growing conditions in the region, introducing new categories of alliums each season, complementing the shallots and garlic which are still the main part of the business.

"We grow 26 hectares of garlic and around 14 hectares of shallots," says Robert. "Marlborough is the best place to grow garlic in New Zealand, with cooler winters, hot summers and low humidity - the climate has a lot to do with it."

Instead of letting the tractors and machinery sit idle between harvesting and planting they use

their seasonal downtime to run an agricultural contracting business working primarily in vineyard development, as well as making land 'crop-ready' for Marlborough farmers.

Demand has continued to grow as garlic and shallots became a not-so secret ingredient enjoyed by a growing number of Kiwi households. In addition, the focus of health has never been more important, driving families towards high quality produce which supports well-being.

"New Zealanders these days love cooking garlic and shallots, understanding that they add so much flavour when cooking," says Robert.

"Looking back, one of the major things that gave demand a boost was when the cooking channel was launched, which drove people to look for garlic and shallots at the supermarket.

"These days people are aware of how to use them and aware of the extensive health benefits."

Even though the growing operation is demanding, Robert and Alan find time for their other love, which is enjoying a close connection with the Marlborough community. Individually, and through the business, they have been long-time supporters of the Marlborough A&P Show, sponsor the Heart Foundation and local clubs while also regularly donating product to support local community fundraisers and events.

"Alan is heavily involved with horses and that has led him to be a committee member of the A&P show in Blenheim for over 25 years," says Robert. "I'm involved in the local Renwick Rugby Club where my wife Vicki and I are life



↑ Robert Harrison-Jones and Alan Jones with MG Representative Michael Breitmeyer

members and have both served for long periods on the committee. I've also enjoyed being on the Board of the Renwick Recreational Domain, which runs the grounds for a range of sports.

"As they say, if you want something done, give it to a busy person.

"The business supports a number of local events (as you do), with donated product that is used for fundraising."

Above all else, Robert says he enjoys the massive challenge of harvesting garlic and shallots, especially when the work is shared with family.

"The garlic harvest goes for about three weeks around January and the shallots in March. We machine dig them up and leave them out for mother nature to do her job of semi-drying the fresh product, then with a handful of people and a bit of machinery we bring in the season's crop.

"We have a small team of permanent staff who are amazing and then bring in casual workers as required and when my three kids are home, they get commandeered to help do the work, especially at harvest times.

"My daughter, Olivia, gets involved. She's finishing her teacher training, so when she's back during uni breaks she's out on the tractor or on the harvester.

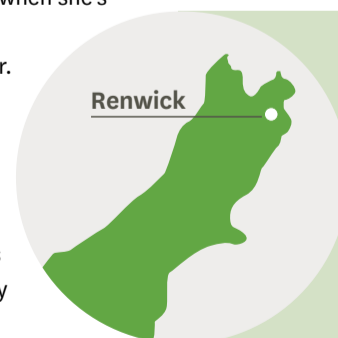
"One of our boys, Zac also helped in the field but is now overseas, so I'm waiting for son number two, Quinn, to get back in October after he's finished his stint in Invercargill playing rugby for the Southland Stags, and

we'll have him through to February working the machinery and welding repairs.

"Alan's daughter, Emma, along with our nieces and wives have also all done their stint in the packhouse at what Alan and Robert affectionately calls the 'University of Garlic'."

The business has enjoyed a relationship with MG that goes back to the early days when Peter and Tony got started, with the partnership continuing to grow over the years.

"We deal with Mike Breitmeyer and Roger Georgieff, along with the guys in the different MG branches throughout New Zealand - we all get on like a house on fire," adds Robert.



Crops grown across 40 Ha



Garlic & Shallots



The event is sponsored by the MG Charitable Trust and focuses on building confidence to thrive in the horticulture industry.

**Date: Thursday 12 October 2023**  
**Time: 10.30am - 12.30pm**

**Venue: Zespri International, 400 Manganui Rd, Mt Manganui**

Visit the events section of the United Fresh website for more information and to register:  
[www.unitedfresh.co.nz](http://www.unitedfresh.co.nz)



# A PERFECT STORM FOR A CHALLENGING YEAR



It is no secret that this year has presented numerous challenges for many growers in New Zealand.

While the rise in the cost of living is putting pressure on Kiwi families post-COVID, increases in inflation also highlights the challenges confronting many growers. A number of different factors have all come together to result in the variable supply levels and periods of higher-than-average prices in some categories. These include skyrocketing energy, insurance, fertiliser and transport costs, as well as increased compliance requirements which require an investment of both time and money.

Labour availability and wage increases have also been a significant factor. Despite some categories experiencing higher returns this year, the overall rise in costs and labour shortages have resulted in some growers taking the unprecedented step of reducing their planting.

Mother nature also dealt a cruel blow to a large number of growers in key growing regions this year, with two once-in-100-year events within two weeks of each other. Market gardens and orchards that would typically be teeming with life were damaged or destroyed. Like most commodities driven by supply and demand, a shortage leads to price increases and impacts production.

It can be frustrating when the fresh produce industry is singled out with one-off statistics which generate sensational headlines. They don't tell the full story, as the reality is that the retail price doesn't necessarily translate to higher profits for producers. The industry has been accumulating costs over a number of years and a lot of growers have been barely hanging on. The challenge our industry faces is how to maintain a profitable level of production while also managing increasing operating costs.

No one wants to see large price spikes or for Kiwi's to struggle to access fresh fruit and vegetables, but nor do growers want to see produce sold for less than the cost of production. In a supply and demand driven market, prices in some categories will fall in the future. However, consumers need to adjust to pricing that better reflects the increased cost incurred by the producers and the supply-chain.

It's interesting that the current government is looking to remove GST on fresh produce. While the jury is still out as to whether it's the right lever to pull, it's pleasing to see that it has sparked a conversation about how we can help families enjoy more fresh produce. Lifting fruit and vegetable consumption not only takes a positive step towards improving the nutrition and health of the general public, but also supports a more productive industry.

Education is also important. A lot of consumers have limited knowledge about where their food comes from and the complexity involved in getting it from a field or orchard to their table. In addition to the messages about recommended intake and health benefits, it would be helpful to see more publicity about work that goes into growing affordable produce, as well as the basic rules of economics – the price is determined by the level of supply in the market. Our industry also needs to keep telling grower stories and look to create an emotional connection between producers and consumers.

As a grower-owned business, we understand the pressures faced at the forefront of the industry. Our procurement representatives and wider MG team are available to help our family of growers be successful through providing assistance with business strategy, growing plans, quality assurance and sales planning.

® Together.Stronger.

Peter Hendry  
CEO



## MG Trust supports cyclone affected growers

The latest MG Charitable Trust (MG Trust) contestable funding round saw NZ Apples and Pears Inc provided with funding to organise and host a series of field walks for winter and spring management on flood-affected orchards.

The goal is to bring together all the experts across the Hawke's Bay and Gisborne region to create a forum where people can discuss scenarios and options for their blocks, to learn from each other, and to make good decisions for the 2023/24 season.

The first of four events was held at Kilhaven Orchard in July. There was an excellent turnout, with 120 people braving the rain, sharing ideas, and enjoying the opportunity to network with other growers.

### Other recipients (November 2022 and June 2023 funding rounds):

**Women in Kiwifruit**  
Establish a mentoring programme for women in the industry

**Onions NZ**  
Produce a business case for the Vegetable Industry Centre of Excellence

**Katikati Horticulture Trust**  
Digital tech for the new Katikati horticulture learning centre

**Women in Horticulture**  
Series of regional workshops

**Te Koromiko School**  
Tools and materials for a Seeds of Learning programme

**Summerfruit NZ**  
Funding towards the development of an online growers portal

**NZ Avocado**  
Industry conference registration and costs for the World Avocado Conference

### Looking ahead

The MG Trust has successfully completed four contestable funding rounds, providing funding to support 20 projects and initiatives.

The Trustees have taken time to reflect on the work undertaken to date and are immensely proud to be able support such a broad range of organisations and individuals.

They have also spent time reviewing the MG Trust and refining their funding strategy. As such, they have narrowed their focus, with a greater emphasis now put on areas the funding can make the most impact in the horticulture industry, including:

- Supporting applications with a focus on education.
- Providing educational opportunities for individuals or groups which are directly linked to the industry or for people about to enter the industry, with less weight put towards funding junior school programmes.
- Supporting applications for projects which aim to enhance the profile of the horticulture industry.

For more information about the MG Trust, including information about how to apply for funding, visit: [www.mggroup.co.nz/mgtrust](http://www.mggroup.co.nz/mgtrust)