

# SEASON UPDATE

## The War on Psa

**Growers need to work together to keep Psa out and think about the approach they will take as a community**

Aongatete staff and growers attended a Psa meeting in Katikati on Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> May. Shane Max, ZESPRI Orchard Productivity Manager - Global Supply presented a sobering case study on the outbreak of Psa in France and talked about his recent trip to Italy. Richard Pentreath, ZESPRI Orchard Productivity Manager - NZ Supply followed with a Kiwifruit Vine Health (KVH) presentation that talked about on-orchard Psa management plans and future strategies for fighting Psa.

A strong message from Shane Max's presentation was that a community approach is critical for fighting Psa. This is especially relevant as Psa-V has not been identified in Katikati at the time of writing this article. Growers need to work together to keep Psa out and think about the approach they will take as a community when (*not if*) the first orchard is diagnosed. The best way of fighting Psa is to not get it on your orchard!

Currently 5% of all New Zealand kiwifruit orchards are affected by Psa. At this stage there is no cure. A good spray programme seems to delay an orchard from contracting Psa and it can slow the spread of Psa within an orchard (but it is not a cure), therefore thorough spray coverage is essential. KVH are currently working on a winter spray programme which will be released very soon. Coper and Serenade are recommended protectants at this time.

Shane Max also talked about the research and development program for Psa. He acknowledged that at this point in time there are a lot of unknowns surrounding Psa and a plethora of studies are being undertaken to learn as much as possible about Psa.

Additional information and a video of ZESPRI's Psa presentation can be found on [www.zespricanopy.com](http://www.zespricanopy.com) or [www.kvh.org.nz](http://www.kvh.org.nz). Please don't hesitate to contact your Grower Services Representative to talk about your concerns and decide on the best protection strategy for your orchard.

## New Single-Lane Repack Machine Installed

Our custom-made Compac single-lane repack machine (pictured) was installed earlier this month and started operating on May 20th. We commissioned Compac to build this machine subsequent to trialling a similar machine in our packhouse last season; it is tailor-made to our specifications.

### The new repack machine has the following unique features:

- Eliminates the requirement to 'squeeze' the fruit
- A soft-handling grading system
- The ability to gently fill bulk boxes
- Four single-layer repacking outlets
- Dual Near Infra Red (NIR) cameras which can detect soft fruit
- Automatic tray delivery to the repack station



The repacking we have carried out on this machine to date has been very successful and we estimate it will reduce our repack labour costs and at the same time preserve fruit quality. We intend to use the machine to test fruit from our CA stores for softs and dry matter. Taste Technologies are assisting in specialising the software programs for this machine.

## Packhouse Report

We are currently tracking behind last season in terms of both picking and packing which places a lot of pressure on our pack plan. This is due to the late nature of maturities compounded with the frustrating rainy weather patterns we have been experiencing.

This season our packhouse staff have been consistent and reliable which has helped to keep the shed operating smoothly. While the majority of our staff this season are locals, 40% are RSE workers and 5% are people on the working holiday scheme. We have staff from Tonga, the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Malaysia, India, Germany, Canada, Brazil and Argentina!

We have been working some extended hours, occasionally until 2am. We are currently operating from 8am until midnight (day and evening shift). It's great to see everyone working together as a team.

We have seen an increased number of growers coming to watch their fruit going over the grader this season. This is a great opportunity for growers to learn more about the postharvest process, we welcome you doing this.

At this stage we anticipate we will complete main pack in the second week of June.

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**REJECTS: Proximity Marks**

At this time in the season our most recurrent reject defects are proximity marks. Proximity marks occur when fruit rub together on the vines in heavy winds like we have recently experienced. Usually only the more exposed parts of orchards are affected by this.

When proximity marks are visibly indented and/or black they are categorised as a ZESPRI defect. If the mark is light green and not soft or visibly indented it can still go into Class 1 or 2.

**Softs and Over-Ripes**

We are seeing many lines with softs and over-ripes, this again is attributed to the unseasonal weather conditions. We are using our NIR machine to remove softs from lines, it is certainly a great aid to have. We are also monitoring the dry matter on each line of fruit.

On the up side we have noticed a significant reduction in sooty mould this season.

## Horticultural Report

**Maturity**

We have reached the point in the season where more than half of the maturity tests being submitted are now moving backwards. If your maturity result moves backwards it has the potential to move your fruit down a TZG category (for example from a Y to a T, or from a T to an M) which could therefore affect your Market Delivery Premium (MDP) and your Grower Taste payment. A reduced maturity result also has implications for the packhouse as it can limit the flexibility of markets we can export the fruit to.

If you would like to retest your orchard's maturity we encourage you to talk to your Grower Services Representative or our Laboratory beforehand.

**Copper Sprays**

It is essential to apply a copper spray to your orchard immediately after picking. We have been informed that there is currently a shortage in Nordox and Low Biuret Urea in New Zealand. Aongatete have secured a supply of both these products so please contact Bernie Cookson on 07 552 0916 ext 754 or 0275 363 754 if you would like to place an order.

## Maturity Season Drawing to a Close

After walking hundreds of kilometers through orchards and slicing over 36,000 pieces of fruit, the end of the 2011 maturity season draws to a close. This year will be remembered for its warm weather, low solids and painfully slow start.

Weather has caused most of our complications. Warm nights prolonged vegetative growth which resulted in slow and staggered brix and solid accumulation which certainly tested growers' patience.

Some 'out of the box' thinking was required by our maturity team to get orchards through, with solids proving to be an

indicator of brix stability in the early season. A big thank you to our maturity team who worked extremely hard to obtain the best possible maturity results for our growers.

If the last two seasons are anything to go by, next season will bring a whole raft of new challenges! If you have any questions in regards to maturity please contact Margaret Miller, Technical Support Leader or your Grower Services Representative.

## Controlled Atmosphere (CA)

As May draws to a close we have closed two and are in the process of loading our third CA store.

When selecting fruit for CA we target crops that are harvested with a 7-9° brix and with suitable dry matter. Compared to 2010 (which was a very fast, high dry matter season) we have had to wait until later in the season for fruit maturities to move into this category.

This season has also been unusual as a number of our traditionally later-harvesting CA crops were picked during KiwiStart, causing us to have to reassess our CA storage crop plan. Graduated monitoring of all main pack orchards has helped us track the movement of brix and solids for each crop giving us a heads-up on what to expect going into storage.

If you have any questions in regards to CA, please contact your Grower Services Representative.

## Free Fertiliser Recommendations

Now that the weather is starting to cool, the leaves are beginning to fall, and the fruit is finally off the vine, it's time to start thinking about growing the next crop! To grow a successful crop, nutrients removed during harvest need to be replaced to sustain production levels and keep the vines healthy.

Aongatete are pleased to provide fertiliser recommendations as a free service to help growers optimise their crop with a well-balanced fertiliser programme which is customized to their orchard. This season we will be utilising the Overseer nutrient budgeting software which takes into consideration your orchard's inputs and outputs and other factors such as distance from the sea, irrigation and soil type. A nutrient budget is a valuable indicator of the long term sustainability of an orchard system.

If you would like assistance with a nutrient programme we can use your 2011 soil test results to generate a nutrient plan, or arrange for a soil test on your orchard.

**Soil test charges (As per Hill Laboratory's 2011 Pricing Schedule) are as follows:**

|               |         |                                   |
|---------------|---------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>Gold:</b>  | \$95.00 | Basic Soil, Organic Matter, Boron |
| <b>Green:</b> | \$75.00 | Basic Soil, Organic Matter        |

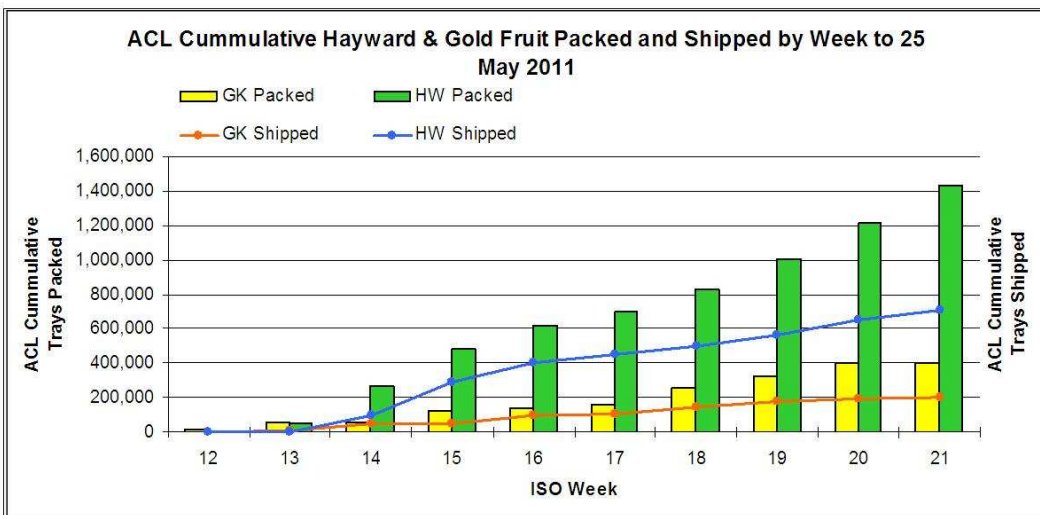
Please contact me if you have any queries or want to arrange a soil test/consultation.

Margaret Miller  
Technical Support Leader

## Season Statistics

Aongatete had packed 1,838,647 trays up to May 26th (Week 21), see graph 1 for more information.

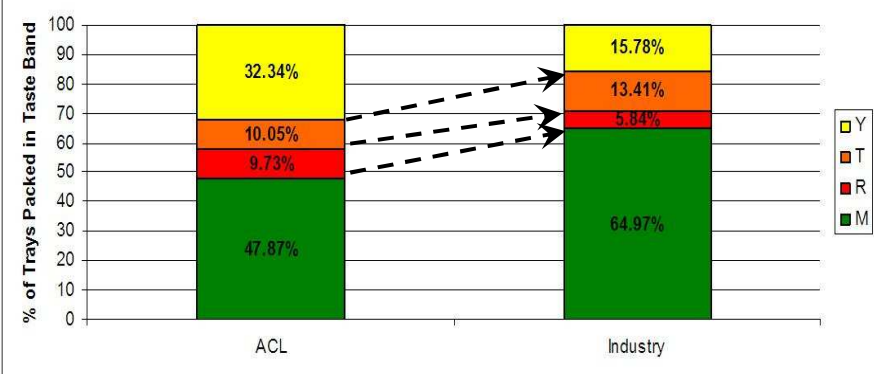
To date we have shipped 43.2% of our Gold crop estimate and 34.86% of our Hayward crop estimate which equates to 36.28% of our total crop estimate for the current season.



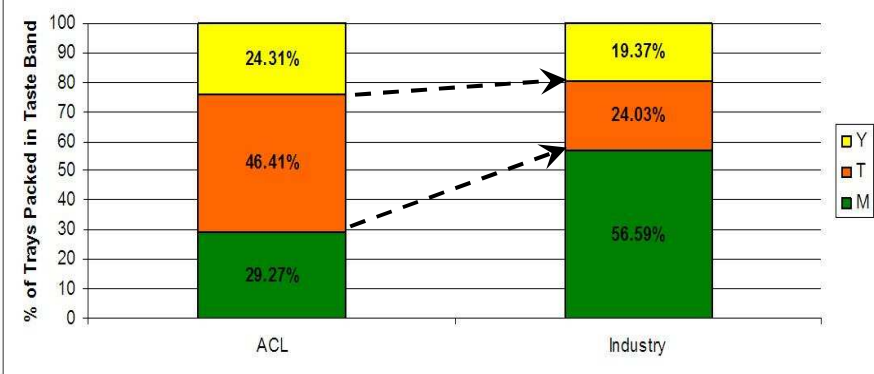
## Dry Matter

Aongatete's dry matter performance up to May 26th is shown in graphs 2 and 3. As you can see Aongatete are ahead of the industry averages for Y, T and R band fruit and significantly below the industry average for M band fruit which is an excellent result.

Graph 2 Industry and ACL Gold Dry Matter Distribution by Percentage of Trays Packed as at 25 May 2011



Graph 3 Industry and ACL Hayward Dry Matter Distribution by Percentage of Trays Packed as at 25 May 2011



## NZKGI Draft Levy Proposal

In August, NZKGI will be asking growers to support changing the organisation's funding authority to a commodity levy.

NZKGI has proposed moving to commodity levy funding to ensure the grower organisation is:

- Future-proofed
- Independent
- Directly accountable to growers
- Mandated by a grower vote

Being funded by a commodity levy was one of the original intentions when NZKGI was established. The decision to move to levy funding was made before the Psa outbreak. NZKGI has decided to continue on the original timeline, as apart from receiving information and casting a vote, the levy process will not place additional demands on growers.

The move to levy funding is not an increase in NZKGI funding, it is the same money taken in a different way. Throughout February and March NZKGI consulted growers on the following draft proposal:

- One cent or less per Class 1 tray supplied for export to markets other than Australia.
- No new money for NZKGI, just a change in the way it's funded.

Of the responses returned from growers, 91% supported the proposed levy basis. The strong support for the draft proposal will guide NZKGI as the final proposal is worked through with MAF.

More information about the levy is available on the NZKGI website [www.nzkgi.org.nz/levy](http://www.nzkgi.org.nz/levy).

## New Varieties

Our Grower Services and Horticulture Teams are able to assist growers who are interested in converting their orchards to the ZESPRI new varieties G3 (Gold), G9 (Gold) and G14 (Green).

If you are contemplating a conversion project we recommend you contact your Grower Services Representative to run you through our simple financial analysis spreadsheet with you. Our CFO Simon Penness developed this model so you can assess the costs and benefits of new variety conversion on your orchard and make a better-informed decision about whether it will work for you. Our Grower Services

Team can also assist with advice on new variety licence application.

Our experienced Horticulture Team is available to help with sourcing budwood and with preparing your vines for grafting. For Growers who already have converted to new varieties, our Horticulture Team has formed a specialised unit who are trained to assist with laying down cane and winter pruning to optimise early growth and production. We anticipate this specialised unit will be booked up quickly so please be in early to reserve their services.

If you are interested in looking at the opportunities that conversion to new varieties might offer, please contact your Grower Services Representative.

## New Variety Tender Maps

GPS-iT are currently scheduling in all their surveying for New Variety Tender applications and plan to be in your area in the next few weeks.

If you have an orchard which you would like surveyed for the proposed ZESPRI New Variety Tender, please contact GPS-iT on 07 573 6077 by Monday 30<sup>th</sup> May for a guaranteed survey map in time for tender.

## REMINDER: ZESPRI New Variety Tasting for Growers

9.30 – 11.30am Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> June  
Resource Centre, Beach Road, Katikati  
For more information please visit the ZESPRI Canopy website.

## Final Return for 2010/11 Season

The ZESPRI Board have approved the final return for the 2010/11 season. Total fruit and service payments (excluding loyalty) reflect an increase of \$4.8m to \$858.9m from the 2010/11 Season February Forecast. The loyalty premium remains unchanged from the 2010/11 Season February Forecast at \$24.4m (\$0.25 per class 1 tray supplied) bringing total fruit and service payments to \$883.3m.

For more information or if you have any queries please contact your Grower Services Representative or ZESPRI.

## Final Progress Payment Date

The final Progress Payment for the 2010/11 Season is scheduled to be paid on Monday 30 May 2011. The payment will be based on the 2010/11 final return. The approved May progress payments and final return will be published in the May 2011 ZESPRI Kiwiflier.

## Staff Profile: Takdeer Singh

Takdeer is 24 and moved to New Zealand three years ago from the Punjab region in India. He was raised on a small 3ha farm where his father grows wheat and rice.

When Takdeer first came to New Zealand he studied and gained his Level 4 National Certificate in Horticulture - an expensive exercise as he is not yet a New Zealand citizen. Initially Takdeer worked for kiwifruit orchard contractors; he says he moved to Aongatete as the remuneration is better.

Outside of the packing season Takdeer works exclusively on the Dawson orchards with Orchard Manager Stephen Roberts. During the packing season Takdeer has worked approximately 60 hours per week as a packer but says he is looking forward to getting back onto the Dawson orchards to start training the new varieties.



One month ago Takdeer married Rachel (a kiwi) who works as a QC at another packhouse in Katikati; the newlyweds live on Tuapiro Road.

## At least someone enjoyed the rain...

Aongatete's caring bus driver Ralph Watkins took all of our RSE pickers to spend the day shopping and sight-seeing in Tauranga last Thursday.



Aongatete Coolstores Ltd  
2380 State Highway 2 | RD2 | Katikati 3178  
Phone (07) 552 0916 | Fax (07) 552 0671

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## Innovative thinking...

**Delivers consistently higher OGRs to our Growers.**

Our technical experts provide leading edge development and implementation of new technologies. We utilise Near InfraRed (NIR) camera sorting technologies which aids us in segregating softs and tracking dry matter.

- ✓ Friendly personalised service
- ✓ Innovation in everything we do
- ✓ Forward-thinking technical support
- ✓ Precision focused
- ✓ Advanced horticultural services
- ✓ Postharvest optimisation

**For better returns and advice Ph 07 552 0916**

enquiry@coolstore.co.nz  
www.coolstore.co.nz

