

# ZealNews

**Z e a f r u i t   C o m p a n y   L i m i t e d**

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**The Editor**

**Public Impressions Ltd**

**Prue Younger**

**021 2765484**

**Zeafruit Company Limited  
Management Team**

**Lance Eagle:** Marketing

Ph. 07 5491 263

Mobile 0274 371 078

**Keith Pyle:** Technical & Investment

Ph. 07 5520 215

Fax. 07 5520 214

Mobile 0275 675 259

**Terry Peachey:** Logistics

Fax. 07 5491 291

Mobile 027 276 3550

**Lance Smith:** Procurement

BOP/Auckland

Mobile 0274 782355

**Peter Hoogerbrug:** Procurement

Gisborne

Ph. 06 863 2157

Fax. 06 863 2155

Mobile 0274 484 433

**Juan Ferrere:** Technical &

Investment

Ph. 06 86842 89

Fax. 06 86821 55

Mobile. 021 2220275

**Sharon Johnston:** Grower Liaison

Mobile. 027 2302247

**Carolyn Price:**

Mobile. 021 472708

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**Office:** Ph. 07 5491 263

Fax. 07 5491 291

## The Perfect Snack

Some food manufacturers would argue that they market “the perfect snack”, we beg to differ!

Why? Because we believe not only do we have a healthy snack but we have one that is naturally great tasting, convenient and fun to eat! Yes I’m talking about the humble “NZ easy peel mandarins” Now that’s “the perfect snack”

We can influence consumer’s minds when purchasing a snack if want and best of all while other snack foods try to look healthy and taste great, our snack has that by default!

It is interesting see the increased attention food manufacturers and even fast food chains are paying to the “healthy choice” option. The current McDonalds TV advertisement depicting a little girl being asked to choose between fries and fresh apple slices is a perfect example. This shift in attitude and direction can only be great for our industry as it will lift the overall awareness for the need to make a real healthy choice.

Zeafruit right from day one has continued to push the benefits of NZ mandarins in front of the consumer with some interesting results. Marketing is not just about sending your fruit off to your distributor and asking “how much mate?” This year NZCGI is also helping to promoting this great snack. Zeafruit supports and encourages this work and will continue to assisted wherever we can.

This season Zeafruit advertised in two major publications, Essentially Foods and Grocers Review. Grocers Review is circulated to all supermarket owners and managers in the country. By agreeing to advertise we were able to convince the editors to include some free editorial space for NZCGI.

Check these out on pages 6 & 7 of this issue

## The Technical Side

Keith Pyle



### Minimising Alternate Bearing

Alternate or biennial bearing can be a problem in all citrus varieties with lemons the least susceptible and the late Encore mandarin the most susceptible. Fluctuating fruit loads and size from year to year is simply not good economics and needs attention.

The problem is worse in late hanging varieties like the Encore and Valencia oranges. However extreme cases have been seen in Satsumas and navel oranges. The problem occurs when the reserves of the tree are exhausted by a heavy on crop, which results in low starch (energy) reserves in the roots. These reserves are needed to initiate and support flowering. If they are not adequate, the tree “decides” to take a year off, and simply doesn’t flower or produces very little flower, but produces copious vegetative growth. The tree seems to “know” that fruit production is what drains reserves above all else. In an off year excellent fruit sizes are produced but low fruit number. After a year off, the trees come back completely revitalised with an excess of accumulated starch which contributes to an excess of flower on the vegetative shoots produced in the previous year. A large on crop of small fruit (low prices) is produced which drains the starch reserves and the cycle is repeated.

The solution is not easy but management strategies before and during an on crop can make a large contribution. The aim of such management strategies must aim at achieving a better balance each year between a predominance of “white blossom” with low levels of green leaves in an on year and a “green flush” with little blossom in a off year.

The ideal is to have a mixture of the two—the best fruit size and lower fluctuations of crop levels come from mixed “green and white” inflorescences. The following are some strategies derived from local and international research.

#### 1. STRATEGIES BEFORE AND DURING AN ON CROP

- Do **not** apply winter foliar urea if expecting a heavy flowering as this can stimulate more flowering.
- If possible apply winter GA (only registered on harvested Satsumas) with a wetting agent- mid to late June. This reduces the blossom of an on crop and converts some of the flowering inflorescences to vegetative ones which will flower in the following off year. NZCGI trials with this approach are in progress on navels. Concerns with marking of fruit and delaying colour will be assessed. In trials done on Encores in 2000 this approach did not work.
- Prune more heavily before an expected on crop ie after harvesting the off crop. This stimulates more vegetative sites for the next off crop and effectively thins the flowers before they have emerged.
- Apply adequate soil N in September to encourage a balance of vegetative growth and flower. Urea foliar spray at 50 to 75% leaf expansion will help vegetative flush which feeds the on crop and provides flowering sites in the next off crop flowering. Include zinc and other foliar nutrients with this spray.
- Apply multiple sprays of magnesium nitrate or magnesium chelates on the new flush. Magnesium is key ingredient of chlorophyll which manufactures starch in the leaves which is then transported to the roots. Deficiency in magnesium thus exacerbates alternate bearing.
- Consider flower thinning if very heavy. Ways of mechanising this with light hand held hedge trimmers or vine trimmers should be possible. If done early enough

the cut surfaces can give rise to an early summer vegetative flush some of which can give flowers the next year.

- Consider chemical thinning with ANA when fruitlets are at 12-15 mm average fruit diameter. This has shown to have a marked effect on reducing alternate bearing because it reduces the heavy crop load early, before too many starch resources have been consumed in early fruit set.

- Hand thin an on crop early.

- COUNT your fruit set using a 1.8 m circumference 13mm irrigation piping hoop which is 0.5m<sup>2</sup> and count 0.5m in to the canopy. Tangelo, grapefruit and oranges should have an average of 8 to 12 per hoop, mandarins 15 to 20. If more thin some more.

- Pay extra attention to nutrition in an on crop. Give extra side dressings in December/ January. Magnesium, Calcium, Potassium and Nitrogen are critical in an on crop. One of the Ravens-down citrus mixes is ideal for this. In Gisborne soils don't apply extra potassium to the soil because there is already a copious oversupply which causes the magnesium suppression problem, but a foliar potassium nitrate at 2kg per 100 litres is reported to enhance fruit size and provide a good tonic for trees carrying a heavy crop. Potassium is used in great abundance by a developing crop from 8 weeks after flowering. An on crop also requires other practices to be optimum.

Harvest a heavy crop early, and apply a foliar tonic after harvest.

## 2. STRATEGIES BEFORE AND DURING AN OFF CROP

- Apply a winter foliar urea ( 1kg low biuret urea in 100 litres) before an expected off crop blossom. This applied between mid and late June has been shown to stimulate extra flowers. It can be followed up with another spray at full bloom.

- Light pruning and thinning should be carried out in an off year- ie after an on crop.

- Magnesium nutrition is still critical.

- Harvest later than for a normal on crop.

Follow these strategies and you can make a difference. What you see in a crop set pattern is the result of what you and the weather did approximately one year earlier so planning, anticipation and reading the trees is needed.

**Keith Pyle**

26 June 2006

# Diary this date 7th & 8th September 2006

## New Zealand Citrus Growers Inc. Annual Conference Gisborne

The aim of the New Zealand Citrus Growers Inc. Conference 2006 is to ensure that participants are informed of the latest developments in the industry, and to bring participants in the citrus industry together as a community working towards a common future.



## Northland Report

So much for an uneventful season with no unexpected surprises.

### Satsumas:

From day 1 of the Satsuma harvest, when cyclone Wattie arrived, it's been rain, rain and more rain. Since starting harvest on 15/04/06, Northland has had only 6 fine days. Please don't tell the tourists. This led to problems with clear rots and cell breakdown in the fruit but also appalling conditions in the field causing problems in the packhouses with mud adhering to the bins and filthy fruit to try and grade.

Fruit on average was in the higher range of the sizes i.e. 65 mm+. This as well as rot issues made it impossible to pack out the export expected. This was disappointing to all concerned as sea freight had to be cancelled as well as airfreight deadlines were hard to meet.

In saying that, fruit quality blemish wise, was good although more needs to be done in understanding how to achieve higher brix levels and a spray that can be used for greenhouse thrips that is acceptable to the Japanese.

Harvesting finally finished on 11/06/06.

This region has grown from 7 Satsuma growers last season to 14 this season and from procuring 750 tonnes of fruit to 1435 tonnes. Of this, only 10% was suitable for export.

One huge thank you to everybody that made the season flow as it did.

The packhouses did a wonderful job. It was nice to hear "not a problem" when the weather interfered with harvesting projections and packhouses had to contend with unpredictable bin numbers.



The quality of the fruit packed drew one comment from a grower "If you have no complaints from the market, you are grading too hard". Thank you to Status and Alcom.

Turners transport again came to the party with "we can do that" Thanks Willie. You guys got us out of a few tight corners when packing exceeded capacity.

Steve, to move the volumes of fruit you did given the stop, start nature of the season and the volume of local market fruit. Congratulations. The promos that were set in place certainly paid off and fruit prices held up well. Although the growers will agree more improvement in this area would be welcome.

Speaking of growers, thank you for your support in my first season with Zeafruit. It didn't take long to get back into the swing of things since my days with Produce Markets.

I learnt a lot through the season to stand me in good stead for the next.

Looking forward to next season already. Yeah right!!!

### Other crops:

**Lemons** have started already with nice clean fruit. Yen Bens being the staple diet in the north. A steady supply into the market at steady prices would suit everybody's needs.

**Clementine's** are almost through the first pick. Those growers that made the effort are certainly being rewarded with an excellent line of good quality fruit.

**Navels** and **Richard Specials** are colouring nicely. Two new growers have been added to the Zeafruit growers list this season.

**Limes** have all but finished for the season. I'm looking forward to an even more coordinated approach next season.

Cheers from the winterless north  
**Carolyn.**

## BOP Report

Satsuma picking is now well underway in BOP. Some satsuma quality issues are showing themselves due to the wet/cold weather we have had by the abundance.

Growers who applied Calcium foliar sprays have been generally rewarded with satsuma rinds holding up much better.

Care must be taken with picking satsumas, gentle as you go and no picking when wet.

Lemons are starting to colour nicely and it seems we have not ended one season than we are into our next, this gives good steady supply throughout the year though.

Grapefruit has also started for local market, and August onwards for processing as well. Limes, still an oversupply of limes available. Green limes are being well received at good \$'s. That's the lot from our region.

Thanks to all.  
Smithy.



some blocks with excessively large fruit size. I can understand the irony and frustration for some growers when the Marketers say grow bigger fruit for local sales, but Grapefruit size Satsuma do present a challenge, especially where some lines have dry fresh at one end. Overall, prices did not fall as badly as the previous year which is due to greater consumption and a slightly less than bumper volume harvest. Please continue to maintain protection programs on later fruit and watch for frost risk on exposed fruit in prone locations.

**Lemon** de-greening is all but complete as most Meyers reach full colour. A steady harvest should see good values maintained and the Export safety valve will assist to manage any peaks. Yen Ben sales are steady and some limited de-greening may continue as necessary to match market demand.

**Valencia** have had a frustrating run, with a larger overall crop being held back by both local market sales and process capacity. Late hung fruit is not ideal as it runs risk of dropping off and penalises future production. Here's hoping for an improved position next season, but remember that marketing options are reduced if crops are not groomed for fresh sales options.

**Limes** have had better overall prospects this year as the early volumes were more in balance with market conditions together with colour holding better for longer.

**Navels** are not far away and fruit size is significantly up from last year. A better exchange position should help export prospects and our customers are still eager; as long as we can get the size and quality right!

Best Regards

Pete, Mo, Sharon, Juan

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## Gisborne Report

### Satsuma

Again the climate wheel turned against Gisborne Export prospects this year. The on set of wet weather in the early harvest period reversed the brix levels in the wrong direction. Even Northland struggled with combinations of wet conditions and large fruit size. We have now turned the corner on the selling season and prospects can but improve for the remainder of the mid and late varieties. Improved returns, for reducing overall volumes, will only be tempered by some blocks with excessively large fruit size. I



**EASY PEEL  
MANDARINS**  
Kids love em!

**A food and beverage lifestyle magazine produced exclusively for Foodstuff's New World and Pak n Save customers.**

In April New Zealand Citrus Growers Inc. distributed Satsuma mandarin information packs to various food writers as part of their initiative to help raise awareness and drive sales for the up coming season.

As a result Zeafruit was approached by Essentially Foods to support some free editorial content on mandarins by advertising along side and in the same edition.  
How could we refuse?



**THE PERFECT SNACK**  
Sweet, seedless and easy to peel, Satsuma mandarins are ideal for lunchboxes and snack attacks. One Satsuma mandarin provides about half your daily vitamin C requirements, has a low glycaemic index and is a good source of fibre and antioxidants.  
The New Zealand Satsuma mandarin harvest is now underway, with fresh fruit available in store.

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Check out the Zeafruit website  
[www.zeafruit.co.nz](http://www.zeafruit.co.nz)

**It's Satsuma Season!**  
 The 2006 Satsuma mandarin season is about to begin and it looks set to be a good year for both growers and consumers. Reports indicate their first pick ripening earlier than usual and some growers have scheduled their first pick for the week prior to Easter – ten days earlier than last year. This will allow growers to make the most of the short window for access into the Japanese market. Brad Davies, New Zealand Citrus Growers Inc's Mandarin Product Group Chairman, is confident that this season will also see more top quality fruit available.

"Preliminary maturity tests show very favourable brix:acid ratios which should result in high quality taste. Given this, we look forward to high consumer demand and repeat purchases."

With strong demand from offshore markets for smaller sizes, Satsuma mandarins are expected to have a good crop of larger fruit, perfect for the local market. Many growers expect to have a smaller crop of larger fruit, perfect for the local market. Many growers expect to have a good crop of larger fruit, perfect for the local market.

New Zealand Citrus Growers Inc is launching a Satsuma mandarin promotional campaign to coincide with the start of the 2006 season, displaying them are a perfect lunchbox snack for both young and old. For the longest shelf life, it is best to keep them cool (5-7°C) – and remember that mandarins can be delicate, so always handle them carefully.

**23 weeks of easy peeling**  
 Our Satsuma easy to peel mandarins are sourced from Kerikeri, Auckland, Bay of Plenty and Gisborne - giving you the longest possible season. Better fruit, better supply, better service.

**Zeafruit**  
 from field to fruit bowl  
 T (07) 5481263 F (07) 5481281  
 www.zeafruit.co.nz

**New Zealand grown Satsuma mandarins:**  
*the deliciously healthy snack*

**5+ @ DAY**  
 fresh fruit & vegetables

**New Zealand Citrus Growers Inc**

For back issues of Zeanews  
fruit.co.nz