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Weekly news update from the KPMG Agribusiness Network

Welcome to this week's issue of Field Notes, a summary of Agribusiness news from across the sector, prepared by the KPMG Agribusiness network.

Week in review

In Aotearoa...

[Food manufacturer, Heinz Wattie's plans to close three factories in Auckland, Christchurch, and Dunedin, impacting around 350 roles](#) [11 March, NZ Herald].

The proposal also includes discontinuing the production and sale of frozen vegetables, coffee, and several dip brands.

[The Government will not proceed with its original plans to reinstate live animal exports by sea, after failing to secure Cabinet agreement](#) [11 March, RNZ].

The proposal faced strong public and expert opposition, including a petition signed by 57,000 people calling for the ban to remain in place.

[New Zealand and Chile have signed a new Strategic Agricultural Arrangement 2026-2030 to strengthen long-term cooperation across both nations](#) [5 March, Rural News].

The agreement builds on a two-way trade relationship worth NZ \$343 million and focuses on collaboration, capability, and climate resilience.

[Meanwhile, the Government is co-funding a new crane dredging barge to improve emergency access to New Zealand's smaller ports](#) [10 March, Beehive].

The NZ \$12.9 million crane will restore port access after natural disasters by enabling essential supplies to reach isolated communities; the equipment is expected to be operational by late 2027.

In International news...

[In the United States \(US\), the National Aeronautics and Space Administration \(NASA\) formed a new research partnership with the Science Centre for Marine Fisheries](#) [6 March, IntraFish]. The partnership will integrate NASA satellite data, into fisheries research to improve understanding of ocean conditions and support sustainable finfish and shellfish fisheries.

[The European Union's Court of Justice has fined Portugal €10 million \(NZ \\$19.6 million\) for failing to comply with conservation rules](#) [10 March, Agriland].

The ruling follows years of non-compliance with the Habitats Directives and imposes further daily financial penalties until Portugal meets its environmental obligations.

[The Philippine Statistics Authority has reported that fish production in the Philippines fell by 2.5% in 2025 compared with 2024](#) [March 9, Asia News Network].

The decline was driven by lower production output across all subsectors, particularly from aquaculture and small-scale fishing operations within coastal waters.

Spotlight stories

Sustainability Spotlight: [Nestlé Just Removed Chocolate... From Chocolate](#) [7 March, Future of Food]

Food manufacturer, Nestlé has begun using a cocoa-free alternative in one of its chocolate product lines in Germany. The Choco Crossies range now uses ChoViva, made from fermented sunflower and grape seeds, instead of cocoa beans. ChoViva has a lower greenhouse-gas emissions profile than conventional chocolate, reducing emission by over 80% depending on the product. The change coincides with record cocoa prices and a decline in global cocoa supplies linked to climate-related harvest losses.

Technology Spotlight: [John Lewis adopts AI shopping and TikTok Shop to match new shopping habits](#) [9 March, Startups]

British retailer, John Lewis is adopting AI-powered shopping tools as customers are now discovering and buying products through apps, AI assistants, and social media rather than traditional retailer websites. The retailer has enabled its products to be browsed and purchased via AI platforms such as ChatGPT and Google Gemini, where shoppers are seeking recommendations and ideas. It has also started a 90-day TikTok Shop pilot focused on curated beauty and gifting products ahead of Mother's Day, with users able to buy directly within the app.

This week's headlines

[Rogue Pet: Magic Valley Debuts Australia's First Lab-Grown Meat for Dogs](#) [10 March, Green Queen]

Australian cultivated-meat company Magic Valley has launched Australia's first commercial application of cultivated meat in pet food. The hybrid 'Training Bites' product combines cultivated pork with oat flour, apples, sweet potatoes, and brewer's yeast. The treats are released in limited batches, with 50g packs priced at A\$14.95 (NZ\$18.07); the first batch sold out within a week.

[Zanda McDonald winners announced](#) [11 March, Farmers Weekly]

The 2026 Zanda McDonald Award winners have been announced, with New Zealander Karn Dhaliwal and Australian Bryce Neyland named at the annual Impact Summit in Christchurch. Dhaliwal, a Waikato-based horticulture and cropping business owner was recognised for his leadership and contribution to the primary industries. The Trans-Tasman award supports young professionals aged 21-35 and includes a tailored professional development programme and a cash prize of AU \$10,000 (NZ \$12,100) for further education, media coaching, or ongoing networking opportunities.

[EU unveils artificial intelligence tool to detect contaminated food](#) [11 March, Agriland]

The European Commission has launched TraceMap, a new artificial intelligence tool designed to detect food fraud, contaminated food, and foodborne disease outbreaks, available to national authorities. The platform analyses data from existing food safety systems to identify risky operators and consignments, monitor supply chains, and recall non-compliant products quickly.

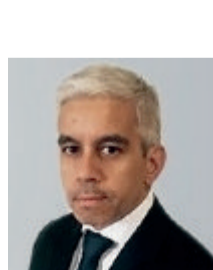
At KPMG, we believe that the future success of New Zealand depends on our ability and willingness to add value to our primary produce and take it to the world. Keeping informed on the latest news and discussions is just one of the ways to make this happen for New Zealand's most significant contributor to prosperity.

If others in your organisation would find this publication useful, please forward this email on to them. They can then [subscribe](#) to our weekly newsletter.

Regards,



Ian Proudfoot
Global Head of Agribusiness



Andrew Watene
Head of KPMG Propagate™



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KPMG New Zealand:
18 Viaduct Harbour Avenue
PO Box 1584
Auckland 1140
T: +64 9 367 5800

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