

19 March 2026

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

[The Grocery Commissioner warned supermarkets their margins must not increase if food prices rise, and prices should fall as soon as costs ease](#) [18 March, RNZ]. The conflict in the Middle East is likely to increase pressure on food prices, but the supermarkets have not yet passed on additional costs, and the commissioner expects margins to remain stable or decline.

[A Christchurch fish processing company, Ikana New Zealand Limited, has been fined NZ \\$20,000 after pleading guilty to nine Biosecurity Act charges for illegally receiving live green-lipped mussels from a controlled zone](#) [16 March, Scoop News]. The Ministry for Primary Industries said the breaches involved more than 239,000kg of shellfish and posed potential reputational risks to New Zealand's shellfish industry.

[Horticulture New Zealand has released its 2026 election manifesto outlining policy priorities to support growers to double horticulture's farmgate value by 2035](#) [16 March, Rural News]. The manifesto focuses on strengthening biosecurity, water security, reducing regulatory burden, workforce development, and infrastructure investment.

[The New Zealand Merino Company has rebranded as Zentera Wool Company, aligning its identity with its global wool portfolio](#) [17 March, Farmers Weekly]. The change reflects its transition into a multi-origin procurement business sourcing wool from New Zealand, Australia, and South Africa.

In International news...

[British retailer Asda has won a High Court case brought by plant breeder Nador Cott Protection, ruling it did not infringe plant breeders' rights by selling Tang Gold mandarins](#) [15 March, Express]. The judge found the variety was not an 'essentially derived' version of a protected mandarin which gave retailers clarity on how to apply plant breeders' rights to fruit and vegetable sales.

[India and Pakistan are offering naval escorts for their nationally flagged vessels transiting through the Strait of Hormuz](#) [16 March, The Maritime Executive] India has deployed warships to the Gulf of Oman to escort LPG and oil tankers, whilst Pakistan has launched a naval operation to ensure safe passage for essential goods.

[Retailers in Western Australia say fresh fish prices are expected to rise by 40% following the state's demersal fishing ban](#) [16 March, ABC News]. Merchants report reduced supply since the January 1 ban, which has driven price increases and, in turn, reduced consumer demand for fish.

Spotlight stories

Innovation Spotlight: [Topic raises \\$105M to scale gene-edited bananas](#) [13 March, The Next Web]

British agri-biotech company Tropic Biosciences has raised US \$105 million (NZ \$181.4 million) to scale the production of its gene-edited banana varieties. The funding follows the commercial launch in 2025 of the first new banana varieties in more than 75 years, including non-browning bananas and fruit with extended shelf life. Tropic is using CRISPR-based gene editing and its proprietary GEiGS technology to improve tropical crops without adding foreign DNA.

Partnership Spotlight: [FAO Museum Joins Forces With Siena's WOW Agrifood](#) [12 March, Mirage News]

The University of Siena has opened the WOW Agrifood Museum in partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The museum focuses on agrifood systems and their future, using immersive spaces and digital tools to showcase solutions developed by researchers and Italian companies. The collaboration builds on earlier exchanges around museum design and public engagement, linking cultural heritage with scientific innovation. The partnership aims to engage new audiences, including students and young innovators, and encourage reflection on sustainable food and agriculture and the future of agrifood systems.

This week's headlines

[Kiwifruit enzyme could transform tough meat cuts](#) [12 March, Farmers Weekly]

Researchers from New Zealand's Riddet Institute and Massey University indicate kiwifruit enzymes could improve the value of tough meat cuts. The research found kiwifruit enzyme pre-treatment could reduce cooking time, improve tenderness, and enhance digestibility. The trials were conducted using brisket and found sous vide cooking time reduced from 20 hours to around 30 minutes. Meanwhile, sensory testing found consumers preferred the treated meat, describing it as juicier and more succulent, with no off flavours compared to traditionally prepared cuts.

[GrainCorp Ventures backs PlasmaLeap fertiliser technology](#) [16 March, Bulk Handling Review]

In Australia, GrainCorp Ventures is among several partners who have invested AU \$30 million (NZ \$36.4 million) in PlasmaLeap to scale their low-emissions fertiliser technology. The technology is developing local modular reactors that can produce ammonia and nitrate fertiliser using air, water, and renewable electricity, enabling on-farm or regional production. This localised model is expected to reduce emissions and improve fertiliser supply-chain efficiency.

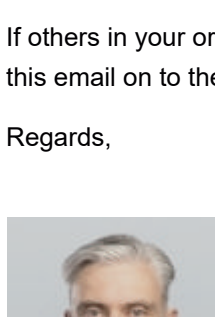
[Unibio plans world's largest single-cell protein plant in Saudi Arabia](#) [16 March, AgFunder News]

Danish gas fermentation firm Unibio, in partnership with Saudi Industrial Development Group has announced plans to build the world's largest single-cell protein plant in Saudi Arabia. The facility will use natural gas as feedstock to produce an initial 50,000 tonnes of microbial protein annually, with plans to expand capacity to more than 300,000 tonnes, expected to be largest facility when complete. The project aims to reduce Saudi Arabia's reliance on imported animal feed as food security becomes a higher priority. Construction is expected to start in the second half of 2026, with commercial production targeted for 2028.

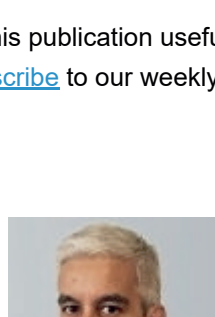
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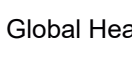
Regards,



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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