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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

[Multinational food manufacturer, McCain Foods has announced it will close its Hastings vegetable processing plant by January 2027 after a review found no long term growth under the current model](#) [24 March, RNZ]. The company will honour existing grower contracts, then source vegetables through other processors and supply partners within its wider McCain network.

[WoolWorks has scoured the first commercial consignment of NZFAP Plus Gold certified wool at its Timaru plant](#) [24 March, Farmers Weekly]. The achievement reflects the highest level of New Zealand's farm assurance programme, which independently verifies animal welfare, environmental management, people, and biosecurity standards for premium markets.

[Zespri Group expects to ship more than five million trays of RubyRed kiwifruit this season, up from three million trays last season](#) [20 March, Farmers Weekly]. The bigger crop allows the variety to be sold in Australia, Vietnam, and Canada for the first time, expanding distribution to 16 markets overall.

[Growing Future Farmers will pilot a two-year dairy training programme to connect young people with careers in the sector](#) [20 March, Farmers Weekly]. The programme will place nine students aged 16–21 on dairy farms, combining hands-on experience whilst completing their NZQA Level 2 and 3 study.

In International news...

[Australia and the European Union have signed a free trade agreement after eight years of negotiations](#) [24 March, Reuters]. The deal removes most tariffs and improves EU access to Australian minerals, whilst placing quotas on some Australian agricultural exports, including beef and sheep meat.

[Greece has reported its first foot-and-mouth disease outbreak in 25 years after a case was confirmed in a cattle herd on the island of Lesvos](#) [20 March, Agriland]. Authorities have implemented culling, movement controls, and zoning, whilst the United Kingdom has introduced import restrictions on selected dairy products.

[The US Department of Agriculture has launched its Trade Reciprocity for US Manufacturers and Producers \(TRUMP\) trade mission to Vietnam, to expand market access for agricultural producers](#) [Fresh Fruit Portal, 23 March]. The mission follows a 45% increase in US agricultural exports to Vietnam in 2025 and includes industry meetings and engagement with Vietnamese officials to strengthen bilateral trade.

Spotlight stories

Partnership Spotlight: [Syngenta Partners with QuantumBasel to Advance Agricultural Research Through Quantum Computing](#) [21 March, Machine Maker]

Swiss agribusiness Syngenta has partnered with Switzerland's first commercial quantum computing hub, QuantumBasel, to explore the application of quantum computing in agricultural research. Initial work will use quantum computing to model complex molecular interactions, with the aim of accelerating innovation in crop protection and agricultural product development. The collaboration represents an early step in integrating advanced computing into agriculture.

Protein Spotlight: [As Protein Drinks Take Off, Solar Foods Unveils A Version Made with CO2](#) [19 March, Green Queen]

Finnish food tech company Solar Foods has unveiled a concept ready to drink protein beverage made with Solein, its CO₂ derived protein, as demand for convenient, high protein products continues to rise. Solein is produced by fermenting microbes fed with carbon dioxide, hydrogen, and renewable energy, requiring no farmland and minimal water. The low-sugar beverage contains 12–21g of protein per 250ml serving and has a significantly lower carbon footprint than other animal- and plant-based proteins.

This week's headlines

[Synlait, Nestlé partner with farmers on emissions](#) [19 March, Farmers Weekly]

Synlait Milk Limited and Nestlé have partnered with 40 Canterbury dairy farmers to cut on-farm emissions, deploying technology that can reduce methane from effluent ponds by more than 90% whilst also improving farm efficiency and biodiversity. The initiative includes early use of EcoPond technology, deeper use of digital tools, and the planting of up to 90,000 native trees, supporting both companies' emissions targets and on-farm productivity improvements.

[Tesco is first UK supermarket to start ditching barcodes after 50 years](#) [19 March, The Mirror]

British retailer, Tesco is trialling GS1-powered QR codes on selected own-brand fresh produce and meat lines, enabling customers to access additional product information such as storage instructions and recipes. Industry standards body, GS1 claims nearly half of British retailers have upgraded checkout systems to support QR-based identification, which can store and display more data than traditional barcodes. The move reflects growing consumer demand for more information about the products they buy.

[University of Essex's fruit-picking robot wins national award](#) [22 March, BBC]

The University of Essex has received national recognition for its Sustainable smArt Robotic Agriculture (SARA) project, which uses AI-enabled robotics to address labour pressures in horticulture. The technology can pick, weigh and package strawberries, automating repetitive harvesting tasks, and is already in commercial use. The technology was commended for its productivity gains whilst reducing waste, emissions, and reliance on manual labour.

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,



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