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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

[The Foundation for Arable Research has launched an NZ \\$2.6 million, four-year study to address rising herbicide resistance in the arable and vegetable sectors](#) [27 March, Farmers Weekly]. The programme aims to equip growers with more diverse and sustainable weed management tools to protect yields, profitability, and long-term system resilience.

[Biosecurity New Zealand has successfully concluded its response to an Oriental fruit fly detection in South Auckland, lifting controls after no further pests were found](#) [30 March, New Zealand Government]. A rapid biosecurity response prevented the establishment of the pest, marking the 16th successfully managed fruit fly incursion over the past 30 years.

[A recent \\$4 million Rural Wellbeing Fund announcement has supported a range of rural mental health initiatives, including \\$15,000 for 'Inside Out' workshops](#) [26 March, Farmers Weekly]. The free workshops offer practical tools to help rural women manage stress, anxiety, and overwhelm, reflecting the wider benefits of supporting women across rural families and communities.

[The vegetable industry has restructured to form New Zealand Vegetable Council, an umbrella organisation providing a single, unified industry voice](#) [25 March, Farmers Weekly]. The move seeks to reduce duplication, improve levy efficiency, strengthen advocacy, and support growers facing cost pressures and regulatory uncertainty.

In International news...

[British retailer, Sainsbury's has committed £5 billion \(NZ \\$11.5 billion\) to long-term farming partnerships across the UK and Ireland](#) to stabilise supply [31 March, Farming UK]. The investment will expand multi-year contracts to more than 2,500 farms by 2027 to provide growers with greater certainty amid rising costs and climate pressures.

[The European Union \(EU\) has rejected France's call to pause its carbon tax on fertiliser imports, signalling a growing divide between emissions targets and rising farm cost pressures](#) [30 March, Brussels Morning]. The decision reflects divisions between member states over rising costs for farmers and industry, with EU leadership prioritising long-term climate policy.

[Australia and Japan have launched the Japan–Australia Horticulture Exchange, an industry-led initiative to strengthen collaboration, knowledge sharing, and trade](#) [30 March, Mirage News]. Led by Hort Innovation, the initiative is designed to improve sustainability outcomes, accelerate innovation, and support market access.

[In the United States, the Trump administration announced a package of measures aimed at supporting farmers facing rising input and energy costs](#) [27 March, Fox News]. The plan includes regulatory adjustments affecting farm equipment and diesel emissions, expanded government loan guarantees, tariff-funded relief payments, and calls for Congress to pass an updated farm bill.

Spotlight stories

Innovation Spotlight: [Mushy bourbon sludge recycled into battery electrodes](#) [25 March, Popular Science]

Researchers at the University of Kentucky have demonstrated that 'stillage', the wet grain waste left over from bourbon production, can be recycled into high-performance carbon electrodes for energy storage. The process they developed allowed them to build supercapacitors that matched or exceeded commercial devices in energy density, with the stillage hybrid versions storing up to 25 times more energy than some conventional supercapacitors.

Technology Spotlight: [LeaderBrand rolls out cutting-edge laser weeder](#) [30 March, Farmers Weekly]

New Zealand fresh produce grower, LeaderBrand, has introduced AI-powered laser weeding technology at its Gisborne farm, becoming the first New Zealand vegetable producer to deploy the system at scale in salad-leaf production. The Carbon Robotics G2 Laser Weeder uses cameras, artificial intelligence, and lasers to eliminate weeds without chemicals or soil disturbance. Supported by Ministry for Primary Industries funding, the technology aims to improve supply consistency, affordability, and on-farm productivity whilst reducing emissions and enhancing soil health.

This week's headlines

[Wool Source Converts Strong Wool into Sustainable Screen Printing Pigments](#) [25 March, Rural News]

Christchurch-based ingredients manufacturer Wool Source has developed a patented process to convert strong wool into biobased pigments for screen-printing inks. The technology, offering an alternative to fossil-fuel-derived colourants, is being applied by outdoor brand Kathmandu in a range of 100% merino graphic T-shirts. Wool Source Pigments are renewable, traceable, and 97–98% biobased; emerging from efforts to create new, higher-value uses for New Zealand strong wool in commercial textile applications.

[MIA Dragon's Den 2026: Kiwi Tender 'tongue-soft' red meat for the elderly wins](#) [30 March, The Country]

A New Zealand 'tongue-soft' red meat concept has won the 2026 Meat Industry Association Dragon's Den competition. The proposed 'Kiwi Tender' range applies specialised tenderisation techniques, so grass fed beef and lamb is softer and easier to eat, without compromising flavour or nutrition. The innovation is aimed at elderly and unwell consumers, targeting a growing global market for easy-to-eat, high-protein foods and higher-value export opportunities.

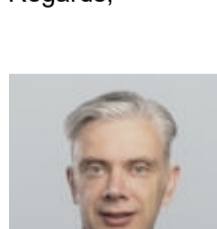
[UK-first £2.4m 'circular farm' aims to turn crops into food and clean fuel](#) [26 March, FarmingUK]

In the UK, a £2.4 million (NZ \$5.5 million) pilot project is testing a 'circular farm' model that integrates food production with low-carbon fuel generation. The three-year RePeat initiative will establish a commercial-scale demonstration farm combining crop production, renewable energy generation and environmental land management. Farm-grown biomass will be used to produce renewable dimethyl ether fuel, whilst heat and carbon dioxide generated in the process will be captured for reuse in controlled-environment agriculture.

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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