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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 news,

[A new industry-led body, the New Zealand Honey and Bee Alliance, has been established to help strengthen the resilience and long-term performance of New Zealand's honey sector](#) [28 September, Farmers Weekly]. The alliance has identified priorities including improved data collection, production planning, supply chain coordination and varroa management.

[Farmer-owned co-operative Ravensdown has restarted phosphate mining at its Clarendon deposit in South Otago, marking the first domestic phosphate extraction in decades](#) [30 September, 1News]. The project could reduce New Zealand's reliance on imported phosphate, a key ingredient in fertiliser production, with imports valued at NZ\$26 million in July alone.

[The Government has released its revised Dairy Cattle Code of Welfare, introducing new minimum standards for calf feeding and stricter oversight of the transport of underweight calves](#) [29 September, RNZ]. The code, which takes effect in April 2027, has been welcomed by dairy and veterinary groups but criticised by animal welfare advocates, who argue that some protections remain voluntary.

[Dairy Goat Co-operative has secured investment from US agribusiness investor AGR Partners to accelerate growth across its dairy goat nutrition business whilst retaining its 100% farmer-owned co-operative structure](#) [29 September, Farmers Weekly]. The funding will support milk supply expansion, market development, research commercialisation and preparations for a return to the Chinese market.

[A world-first clinical trial will test New Zealand strong-wool bedding against synthetic alternatives, measuring factors including sleep quality, temperature regulation and comfort](#) [24 September, Farmers Weekly]. The three-year, NZ \$2 million programme aims to generate scientific evidence on wool's performance as a bedding material.

In international news,

[The United States and China have agreed to reduce tariffs on US\\$60 billion \(NZ \\$106.1 billion\) of goods, including several key agricultural products](#) [29 September, CNN]. China's list of tariff reductions covers more than 1,600 US products, offering improved access for exporters of grains, meat and seafood.

[New York City Public Schools have launched a pilot offering soy milk alongside dairy milk, with early results showing higher overall milk consumption and lower associated greenhouse gas emissions](#) [29 September, Food Service Director]. The findings are likely to inform future school nutrition decisions as districts look to balance dietary preferences, participation rates and sustainability objectives.

[Australia's National Farmers' Federation has secured a temporary agreement with the federal government to fast-track working holiday visa applications for backpackers needed on farms](#) [25 September, ABC Rural]. The move aims to ease harvest labour shortages caused by recent visa processing delays, though longer-term workforce concerns remain.

[Ireland's horticulture sector has launched HortLink, a new grower-led network designed to connect emerging talent, encourage knowledge-sharing and strengthen industry leadership](#) [25 September, Agriland]. The initiative includes a Future Leaders Programme focused on developing skills, industry networks and succession pathways to support the long-term resilience of Irish horticulture.

Spotlight stories

Innovation Spotlight: [Sound Agriculture launches seed-applied biological to preserve yields on high-ammonium corn acres](#) [24 September, AgFunderNews]

Agritech company Sound Agriculture has launched INFLECT, a microbial seed treatment designed to help corn crops maintain yields in high-ammonium fertiliser systems. The product uses beneficial bacteria and fungi to support root development and nutrient availability. According to the company, field trials delivered average yield gains of six bushels per acre, with yields improving at 92% of test sites. INFLECT was developed for farms using anhydrous ammonia fertiliser or heavy manure applications, where soil conditions can reduce microbial activity and limit nutrient uptake.

Experience-Led Retail Spotlight: [KFC debuts Open House restaurant in Texas to test new customer experiences](#) [24 September, CNBC]

In the United States, KFC has opened a pilot restaurant in Texas to test a significantly broader offer, including breakfast, table service, boba beverages, late-night trading and new side dishes. The site will act as a live testing ground for concepts that could be rolled out across the chain, with KFC using customer feedback and operational performance to determine what scales. The move reflects growing competitive pressure in the US chicken category, where KFC now trails rivals including Chick-fil-A, Popeyes, Raising Cane's and Wingstop.

This week's headlines

[NZ horticulturist to lead India Apple Action Plan](#) [25 September, Farmers Weekly]

New Zealand Apples & Pears Incorporated (NZAPI) has appointed experienced horticulturist Lachlan McKay to lead delivery of the Apple Action Plan, a key initiative under the India–New Zealand Free Trade Agreement aimed at improving the long-term productivity of Indian apple growers. A NZAPI delegation will visit India, including Himachal Pradesh, to engage with growers and progress plans for a proposed Centre of Excellence. During the five-year programme, McKay will work in-market to coordinate projects, build industry relationships and support the transfer of New Zealand apple-growing expertise to Indian producers.

[Lidl looks to tackle food insecurity and child health in 2030 plan](#) [25 September, Retail Gazette]

British supermarket Lidl GB has launched a new Better Futures commitment, aiming to support five million people across Great Britain by 2030 through programmes focused on food insecurity, community support, children's health and access to employment. The retailer will expand existing initiatives, including surplus food redistribution, community funding, nutrition education and employment pathways for people facing barriers to work. The programme brings Lidl's social-impact activities under a single measurable target, reflecting retailers' growing focus on community outcomes.

[Bayer leaves NZ off list for new herbicide](#) [29 September, Farmers Weekly]

Bayer, one of the world's largest agricultural and life sciences companies, has excluded New Zealand from the initial rollout of its new AI-developed herbicide, icafofin-methyl. The product, which has a novel mode of action, is intended to help farmers manage herbicide-resistant weeds and is being advanced for approval in Australia, the United States, Canada and Brazil. The decision reflects Bayer's focus on larger priority markets, despite herbicide resistance also emerging as a challenge for some New Zealand growers.

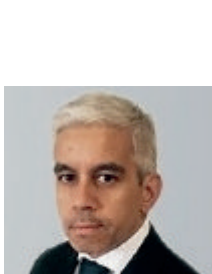
At KPMG, we believe that the future success of New Zealand depends on our ability and willingness to add value to our primary produce and take it to the world. Keeping informed on the latest news and discussions is just one of the ways to make this happen for New Zealand's most significant contributor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

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Regards,



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