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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,

The New Zealand government has rejected a second Australian request to access its unused Chinese beef quota, after Australia exhausted its 205,000-tonne allocation in June [28 October, Farmers Weekly]. New Zealand intends to retain its 206,000-tonne quota, with exporters still looking to increase beef volumes into China and preserve future market access.

Ngāi Tahu Holdings has agreed to sell its remaining Sanford stake to Japanese seafood company Umios Corporation for NZ$72 million [27 October, Newstalk ZB]. The deal will lift Umios' ownership to 15.5% when it settles on 2 November, while Ngāi Tahu retains significant seafood interests through Ngāi Tahu Seafood.

The Dairy Companies Association of New Zealand (DCANZ) has released its priorities for the next government, covering trade, infrastructure and energy, food regulation, nutrition policy and biosecurity [27 October, Dairy News]. Dairy export earnings more than doubled to NZ$28.3 billion between 2015 and 2025 with little milk-supply growth, and DCANZ says supportive policy could help sustain this growth in value.

In international news,

Australian supermarket Coles has partnered with AI-powered search platform Coveo to help customers find products faster across its online grocery range [27 October, Inside FMCG]. The platform combines shopper intent and behaviour with product data to deliver more relevant search results and recommendations.

Perfection Fresh Australia, Australia's second-largest fresh vegetable supplier, has admitted fixing prices for broccoli, cauliflower and iceberg lettuce supplied to Aldi in New South Wales on 11 occasions between 2019 and 2020 [26 October, ABC News]. The company has agreed to a A$12 (NZ$14.8) million penalty, subject to Federal Court approval, while the ACCC's case against the other suppliers and individuals continues.

The UK Government is expanding its Grain Verification Scheme to Latvia, using chemical testing and machine learning to trace grain suspected of being stolen from Russian-occupied Ukrainian farmland [26 October, FarmingUK]. The scheme compares samples against nearly 3,400 geographic reference points, helping authorities identify the likely origin of suspicious grain shipments.

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) has announced proposed funding of US$57.4 (NZ $101) million for 147 meat and poultry processing projects across 40 states, pending congressional funding [27 October, Global Agriculture]. The tentative awards would help independent processors expand capacity, giving ranchers more local processing options and increasing competition in US meat supply chains.

Malaysia's Johor state government has warned that prolonged regional haze from Indonesian wildfires could affect plant growth, livestock health and fish production [19 October, The Straits Times]. The haze has affected several Southeast Asian countries, with five areas in Johor recording unhealthy air quality, although no agricultural disruption had been reported in the state at the time.

Spotlight stories

Innovation Spotlight: Planet A Foods Unveils One-Ingredient Cocoa Powder Alternative to Cut Costs & Capture GLP-1 Market [27 October, Green Queen]

German food-tech startup Planet A Foods has launched Cocoa Booster, a single-ingredient cocoa powder replacer that the company says can cut formulation costs by up to 50%, depending on the application. It says the ingredient contains around 69 g of fibre per 100 g, nearly twice that of cocoa powder, and is targeting demand for nutrient-dense foods, including among GLP-1 users eating smaller portions. The first products using Cocoa Booster are expected on shelves in Q1 2027, as manufacturers seek alternatives amid volatile cocoa prices.

Indigeneity Spotlight: Indigenous knowledge fuels 'food forest' trial [24 October, RNZ]

Lincoln University researchers are trialling a 'food forest' inspired by indigenous growing practices used globally for thousands of years, layering edible plants to support food production and biodiversity. Applying a te ao Māori lens, the research explores how these systems could reconnect communities with food and whenua. The plot combines fruit trees, bushes and tubers with native nitrogen-distributing plants such as matagouri and kākābeak, helping address a lack of local information on establishing food forests and their production potential.

This week's headlines

The rise of protein nationalism [26 October, Eurasia Group]

Eurasia Group, in collaboration with KPMG, has released a report on "protein nationalism", where governments use control over protein production and exports as a strategic lever. Rising protein demand, tariffs, supply-chain disruption and extreme weather are driving the trend across meat, dairy and alternative proteins. The report forecasts that China's shift towards protein self-sufficiency and eventual export competition could threaten protein exports from countries including New Zealand.

Fact, fiction or future [October 2026, KPMG International]

KPMG International has released a paper exploring how GLP-1 weight-loss drugs could reshape the global food system as users eat less and change what they buy. It highlights increased spending on fresh food, protein sources and supplements alongside reduced spending on snacks and sugary drinks among US users. These shifts could change demand for ingredients and how food is sourced and produced, although the scale and pace will depend on affordability, access and adoption across markets.

WoolWorks: NZ's biggest wool scouring factory rises from the flood [27 October, The New Zealand Herald]

WoolWorks' Awatoto plant near Napier has recovered from Cyclone Gabrielle, with New Zealand's largest wool scour now capable of processing around 165,000 kg a day during peak season. Around 85% of WoolWorks' scoured wool is exported to China, India, the US and Europe for products including carpets, bedding and building materials. Despite declining sheep numbers and high energy costs, the company reports renewed demand from Europe and India as Chinese demand for New Zealand greasy wool eases.

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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