

*A weekly
summary of
all that's news
in the
primary
industries*

AgBRIEF

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AGRIBUSINESS

Frenzy Continues At GDT

Dairy prices jumped 4.2% at the latest GDT auction to hit their highest level in almost nine years, stoking speculation that milk prices to farmers could hit new records. The GDT price index reached 1516, just shy of the all-time record of 1573 set in April 2013. The average price for whole milk powder gained 4.2% to US\$4503 a tonne, the highest level since 2013. Whole milk powder has gained 16.5% over the last three auctions and is sitting 25% higher than at the same time last year. The average skim milk powder price jumped 6% to US\$4,295/t, butter rose 5.1% to a record US\$6,686/t, cheddar gained 3.5% to hit US\$5,881/t, lactose rose 3.4% to US\$1,609/t, while anhydrous milkfat advanced 1.2% to US\$6,889/t. (Stuff)

Cropsy Oversubscribed

Cropsy Technologies proved the potential of its crop vision system after raising \$1.5 million in an over-subscribed capital raise. Co-founder Leila Deljkovic says this couldn't have been achieved without the support of early trial partners and customers. The agtech start-up addresses the frustrations growers face every season with pests, disease, and managing crops on huge scales. With its scalable AI-enabled and GPS-tracked insights, Cropsy can monitor every plant with high-definition image capture, empowering growers to know their crop and make better, more efficient decisions. The hardware attaches to an existing tractor, watching every plant as workers go about their daily tasks – enabling growers to achieve new levels of

performance, sustainability, profitability, with no extra effort. (Waikato Herald)

Big Chiil In Superhub

Another major tenant has been confirmed for the Ruakura Superhub on Hamilton's eastern border. Big Chill Distribution has announced plans for a 13,000 sq m cold store facility. It is the first large-scale tenant confirmed for the superhub's 35-hectare industrial precinct. Stage one of the superhub covers 92 ha. Big Chill's Mike Roberts said establishing a cold store facility at Ruakura offers many advantages. "If you look at the Golden Triangle, that area everybody in the logistic scene talks about, we've seen for ourselves that growth of volume. Ruakura is really ideally placed there, and then you have the Waikato Expressway which, for me, nailed it." The superhub is bordered by the soon-to-be completed Hamilton section of the expressway. "The expressway will reduce the transit time back into the Auckland market so Ruakura is going to be a game changer for us. And if we want, we can export containers across to the Port of Tauranga." PBT Express Freight Network will begin operating from the superhub precinct in August, while Waitomo Group has been confirmed as the first retail and service tenant and will run a full-service flagship Waitomo Fuel Stop. (Stuff)

Pamu Half Profit \$41m

Pamu has announced a net profit after tax of \$41 million for the half-year ended 31 December 2021. Its EBITDAR was \$16 million compared to \$14 million in the half-year to December 2020. Pamu is currently

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forecasting a full-year EBITDAR of between \$83m and \$88m, compared to its original budget of \$73m, with the strong milk price a key driver of this increase. (AgBrief Staff Report)

\$90m GHG Alternative

The cost to run the alternative greenhouse gas system for the primary sector now under discussion could cost the sector as much as \$90 million a year. The He Waka Eke Noa split-gas emissions proposal roadshow is now well under way across NZ, with farmers having a chance to get under the hood of the two schemes presented, both likely to hit farm profits by between 4 and 6%. DairyNZ's Tim Mackle said the cost estimate of up to a \$90m a year was quite possible, but was also one that had been fully imputed into estimates of what the respective farm-based or industry-based schemes are likely to have on farm profits. He emphasised that neither the processor hybrid levy nor farm levy models were ever likely to be cheaper than the alternative option, that of being folded into the ETS. However, after 2030, this was likely to change. (Farmers Weekly)

a2 First Half Slump

The a2 Milk Company's first-half profit slumped 50% as it struggled in its key Chinese market. Profit fell to \$59.6 million in the six months to the end of December, from \$120m in the year-earlier period. Revenue slipped 2.5% to \$660.5m. The company said the outlook for revenue in the second half of the year has improved, and is expected to be significantly higher than the same period a year earlier, due mainly to growth in its China label and English label infant formula. However, the revenue improvement is not expected to translate into higher earnings as the company significantly increases brand and other reinvestments consistent with its growth strategy, it said. (Stuff)

Wool Impact Created

Wool Impact NZ is being established for the strong wool sector, with the aim of turning around the poor prices being paid to farmers. The move follows nearly four years of discussions between industry players and the Government to try and address the lack of performance across the sector. Chair of the interim Strong Wool Action Group Action, Rob Hewett, said its independent recommendation to establish Wool Impact NZ is based on feedback from 65 in-depth interviews with industry participants including NZ farmers, growers, manufacturers and exporters. "Wool Impact NZ will be a connector and convenor for the strong wool industry and will play a vital role in driving the ongoing development of the sector." (RNZ News)

Physical Fielddays Planned

Organisers are forging ahead with plans to hold a physical National Fielddays this year, despite the uncertainty hanging around event management with Omicron. Chief executive Peter Nation is optimistic it will go ahead as planned on June 15-18 at Mystery Creek. "The demand and planning is well-advanced, but the complexity now is – and we haven't made this decision – what will Fielddays look like for June or some other date?" Nation asked. That decision is still a work in progress. He is thankful that the Govern-

ment has revised and extended its event transition support payment scheme, meaning Fielddays will now be covered in June. The scheme was introduced to give event organisers certainty when organising large-scale events. (Farmers Weekly)

Phillips Retiring

Environment Southland chief executive Rob Phillips is retiring after 10 years in the role. He will retire in May but continue with his governance roles, including as co-chair of the BioHeritage Challenge and as Environment Southland's appointed representative on the board of Predator Free Rakiura. (Farmers Weekly)

O'Sullivan Steps Down

Campaign for Wool chair Tom O'Sullivan has resigned from his position as a Strong Wool Action Group board director, with the intention to form Wool Action NZ announced. The three remaining SWAG directors in the transition team are chair Rob Hewitt, David Ferrier and John Rodwell. (Farmers Weekly)

TRADE

China FTA Upgrade Soon

An upgrade to NZ's FTA with China comes into force in April, with new rules making exporting to China easier and reducing compliance costs by millions of dollars a year, according to Trade and Export Growth Minister Damien O'Connor. Highlights of the upgrade include tariff-free access for 99% of NZ's \$4 billion wood and paper trade to China, once fully implemented. From January 1, most NZ dairy products to China were entitled to duty-free access for the first time as a result of ongoing implementation of the 2008 FTA, O'Connor said. Free trade negotiations are also progressing with the EU for access to a market of 450 million people. Last month, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership came into force. "Our trade agenda has very good momentum, with our primary industry exports forecast to hit a record \$50 billion this year alone." O'Connor said goods and services exports between China and NZ reached \$20.1 billion in the year ended June 2021. (NZ Herald)

Abbott Recalls Infant Formula

Abbott Laboratories NZ is recalling specific brands and batches of infant formula product for special dietary use imported from the US because of possible Cronobacter and salmonella contamination. The affected product is subject to recall in the US following four illnesses reported to be linked to the formula. While there is no product on shelves to recall in NZ, it is possible that a small amount of product could have been purchased by individuals online. (AgBrief Staff Report)

\$10 Milk Price?

A third consecutive 4% rise in GDT prices has market analysts, dairy companies and futures traders sharpening their pencils to see if a farm gate milk price of \$10/



kg milksolids can be delivered. Whole milk prices rose 4.2% in the latest GDT auction, skim milk powder was up 6% and butter was up 5.1%. The GDT price index has risen 14% since the beginning of 2022 and is up 19% since the start of the current season. With three more months to run and no end in sight to strong global dairy demand, forecasters are talking about the prospect of a \$10 farm gate milk price. The NZX milk price estimate rose 11c to \$9.45, with an assumption of 5% increase in commodity prices built in. Bank economists are considering how high the current record prices can stretch. (Farmers Weekly)

GST-free Marketplace

Kiwi SMEs should benefit from the launch of the country's first GST-free export marketplace. The new export model is designed to remove the barriers and costs faced by local SMEs wanting to export their products by using the same fulfilment process as their domestic customers. Kiwi retailers wanting to join the new multi-store marketplace can upload their product ranges to the Jetkrate platform. When an overseas customer makes a purchase, the retailer sends the product by courier to a local warehouse that can also consolidate the customer's other purchases from NZ businesses together in one shipment. The international shipping costs and any customs duty are paid by the customer and Jetkrate manages all export paperwork. The marketplace is entirely free to join and there are no additional time, resources or costs required for the retailer to ship offshore than just supplying a domestic customer. (AgBrief Staff Report)

Charters Bypassing Ship Delays

Lengthy cargo delays have forced NZ's key exporters to charter private ships to ferry meat and produce to foreign markets. Affco has chartered its third ship to get exports valued at \$120 million to overseas ports. Half the space in the first export vessel chartered was taken up by pip fruit exporters. Affco's Mark de Lautour expects the cargo disruptions will continue for three more years. Chartering private cargo ships is not a cost saving but ensures produce gets to market. Turners and Growers' Simon Beale said the company arranged for four charter vessels after Covid hit. Co-operating with Affco to share a ship worked out well since it allowed them both to utilise space to markets where they exported limited volumes. The worst market to get to is currently the west coast of the US, with ships sitting off Long Beach for up to 40 days before they can get a berth, Beale said. (RNZ News)

India Talks Need Kick Start

Alliance Group chair Murray Taggart wants to see NZ follow fast behind Australia in rekindling its own FTA talks with India. Alliance has been a trailblazer for the NZ meat industry in India over the last few years through its partnership with meat marketer Quality NZ, which it owns with a group of former NZ cricketers. Australia and India last month swapped offers on reducing tariffs on goods traded between the two countries. NZ, which kicked off negotiations for its own free trade deal with India in 2010, has not

AVERAGE EXPORT MEAT SCHEDULE PRICES

This week, ending February 26, 2022 (last week's in brackets)

15.0kg YM	125.25	(126.00)	124.50	(124.50)
17.5kg YX	141.95	(142.80)	141.10	(141.10)
19.0kg YX	158.65	(159.60)	157.70	(157.70)
21.0kg YX	175.35	(176.40)	174.30	(174.30)
MUTTON (\$/hd)				
25kg MX2	145.00	(147.50)	145.00	(145.00)
BEEF (\$/kg)				
P2 Steer	5.95	(6.00)	5.90	(5.90)
M2 Bull	5.90	(5.95)	5.85	(5.85)
VENISON (\$/kg)				
AP Stag 60kg	7.75	(7.55)	7.75	(7.55)

Prices are gross operating prices and are exclusive of levies.

AVERAGE EXPORT DAIRY PRODUCT PRICES

	Last week, ending February 19, 2022	4 weeks ago	3 months ago
Fonterra predicted payout			
\$/kg Milksolids	8.00	8.00	8.00
Butter (NZ\$/Tonne)	9760	9220	7800
Skim milk Powder	6460	5940	5250
Wholemilk Powder	6760	6140	5690
Cheddar	8580	8010	7120
Casein	19530	19280	17800

Prices above are indicative only. They are compiled from an assessment of sales made worldwide on a one-off basis in US\$. Quota market sales and contracts are excluded. The prices have been converted to NZ\$/tonne FOB at current exchange rates.

MAIN O/S MARKETS, CURRENCY, INTEREST RATES, WOOL & WHEAT

	Last week, ending February 19, 2021	4 weeks ago	3 months ago
UK CKT Lamb Leg (£/kg)	6.90	6.90	6.85
US Bull Beef (US\$/lb)	3.22	3.19	3.16
US Dollar (for NZ\$1)	0.666	0.668	0.702
Aust Dollar (for NZ\$1)	0.930	0.935	0.962
UK Pound (for NZ\$1)	0.491	0.495	0.522
Euro (for NZ\$1)	0.586	0.591	0.618
INTEREST			
90 Day Bill Rate (%)	1.21	1.07	0.85
2 Year Swap Rate (%)	2.55	2.34	2.31
5 Year Swap Rate (%)	2.91	2.71	2.68
NEW ZEALAND WOOL PRICES			
WOOL PRO Wool Prices			
Fine (21 microns)	1066	1066	1066
Medium (29 microns)	425	425	425
Coarse (35 microns)	270	250	265
2nd Shear(37 microns)	265	248	250
Lamb (30 micron)	240	240	240
W H E A T			
ASW NZ\$/tonne	524	524	531

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held a negotiating round in six years. "For sheepmeat we see no reason why India could not be in 20 years like China," said Taggart. However, the Government needs to play its part in getting trade talks moving again. (Farmers Weekly)

LIVESTOCK

On-farm Calf Euthanasia On The Way Out

Fonterra will require all non-replacement calves to enter a value stream from June 2023 onwards. It will effectively ban on-farm euthanasia of calves happening without humane reasons, to make sure every calf born is accounted for. The value streams are dairy-beef finishing, bobby calf collection for veal production and the petfood industry. The new obligations for the 2023-24 season are foreshadowed in this year's Terms of Supply notice issued to all suppliers. However, dairy farmers who calve at different times of the year, when calf collections are not operating, are irate with Fonterra's move. Autumn calvers in Northland is one sizable group that haven't had collections running in all districts and will probably need to build larger calf barns and employ more calf rearers. One said the likely cost to his business would be in the tens of thousands of dollars, just to retain animals that have no market value, such as non-replacement jersey heifer calves. (Farmers Weekly)

Chinese Lobby For Live Cattle

A Chinese state-owned enterprise with ties to Southland and the Waikato has lobbied the Government to continue with live cattle exports, but Agriculture Minister Damien O'Connor says there are no plans to back-track on the ban. The Primary Production select committee is currently considering the Animal Welfare Amendment Bill, which amends the Animal Welfare Act 1999 to ban the export of livestock by sea. China Animal Husbandry Group, which owns an 18% share of infant formula producer Matura Valley Milk near Gore, and a 68.88% share of Bodco near Hamilton, made a submission seeking the continuation of exports of breeding cattle to China. Junlebao Dairy Group (Hebei Le Yuan Dairy Farming Co. Ltd) also made a submission asking for the export trade not to be banned. It says it has imported breeding cattle from NZ and Australia for seven years, including 20,000 holstein heifers from NZ, and it hoped to import a further 60,000 cattle in the next five years. MPI data shows 134,722 cattle were exported by sea in 2021, all to China. (Stuff)

Natives As Fodder?

Multiple potential benefits from planting native shrubs for use as sheep fodder are being researched as part of the Hill Country Futures Programme. The project, led by Massey's Dr James Millner, was launched in 2019. It currently has three trial sites for a range of native shrubs, looking at palatability, digestibility, protein content and other nutritional characteristics as well as the Maturanga Maori for a range of species: Houhere, Papauma Karo, Karamu, Whauwhaupaku, Mahoe and Taupata. The non-native Salix Kinuyanagi, a browse willow, has been included and can be compared with the natives. Millner says farmers with steep erosion-

prone land may be interested in getting it into woody vegetation. The native shrubs selected are known to be heavily browsed in areas where there are deer and goats, suggesting they would be palatable to sheep. (Rural News)

Wagyu Programme At Alliance

Alliance Group has launched a Wagyu beef programme to farmers as it tries to capture greater value for its products. The new programme has farmers offered a supply contract premium above the ruling schedule at the time of processing for qualifying stock that meets the requirements: carcasses must meet certain marbling, pH levels, fat colour and meat colour specifications to achieve the premium, which starts at 40c per kg and ranges as high as \$3 per kg above the schedule price. (Farmers Weekly)

Market Reacts To Rain

The store lamb market immediately responded to recent widespread rain with prices lifting at least \$10/head. AgriHQ's Suz Bremner says the North Island store lamb market through January is especially lacklustre both in price and numbers sold through the yards due to seasonal summer dry conditions. But that changed overnight earlier this month when most of the country received up to 200mm of rain, for some areas the most significant rain in a year. Store lambs at a recent Fielding sale averaged 31kg and sold for an average price of \$3.80/kg according to AgriHQ data. At Stortford, lambs averaged 30kg at \$3.85/kg. Store lambs at the Temuka sale averaged 28kg and sold for \$3.88/kg and the Canterbury Park yarding averaged 26kg and sold for \$4.08/kg. (Farmers Weekly)

Banned From Owning Stock

A farmer who failed to adequately feed cattle, treat animals for worms and tend to ill and injured cattle, has been banned from owning or managing animals for a decade. In the Dargaville District Court, 75-year-old Michael William Goodwin was fined \$6500, ordered to reimburse veterinary costs totalling \$2252.40 and prohibited from owning or exercising authority over cattle and sheep for 10 years. (RNZ News)

Bull Survives 80km Swim

A young bull washed away from a paddock above Maruia Falls during the recent Buller floods survived being swept 70km to 80km downstream, and was found alive and well on the edge of a Westport farm. Maruia farmer Tony Peacock said the 18-month-old bull was grazing on a terrace above the Maruia River, in the Shenandoah area, with 37 others when it got caught by the rising floodwaters, along with two herd-mates, in the second flood to hit the region this month. Peacock estimated his Hereford bull had been carried up to 80km on the watery trip, which included being swept into the Maruia River, over the 10m-high Maruia Falls, surviving the confluence with the Buller River, going under O'Sullivan's Bridge, and the long twisting journey through the Buller's rocky upper and lower reaches, and then avoiding being swept out to sea at journey's end. "I think he will get legend status now and be put in a paddock to retire with some cows." (Greymouth Star)



HORTICULTURE

Organic Agreement A Big Win

Organic wineries are hoping a new agreement with China will help boost sales to the country. Waipara-based winemaker Greystone said the agreement was a huge win, as prior to this certified organic exporters had to jump through hoops to gain the appropriate organic recognition, including changing labels. Nik Mavromatis said growers couldn't say they were organic unless they flew over an inspector from China and covered their fees. "That was going to cost us \$20,000 a year, with licences needing to be renewed every year. Add in the additional labelling costs and stock management, and the MRA marks a big win for all organic wineries in NZ." The Organic Exporters Association of NZ said exports of certified organic produce to China are currently worth \$93 million but were likely to grow due to the reduced compliance costs and the increased certainty the arrangement provided. (RNZ News)

Rath Faces GST Charges

A former New York property developer turned Canterbury businessman, Colin Rath, is facing \$1.5 million in GST fraud charges. He is facing 39 counts of dishonest GST returns with the intention of obtaining a financial advantage. The alleged offending spans from 2017 to 2021. The charges relate to his North Canterbury-based businesses, Waipara Winds – trading as Fiddler's Green – a restaurant and vineyard, which also grows hemp and olives, and the now-disestablished New York Grape Escape. In 2018, Rath received Overseas Investment Office permission to purchase his 27-hectare property at Waipara. He arrived in Auckland on an entrepreneur work visa with his family in 2016, after a two-year journey on his \$950,000 yacht. (Stuff)

Village Press Re-designing

The Village Press olive oil company in Hastings says it will redesign some of its labelling after an investigation found one of its top brands was not wholly NZ-made and featured misleading packaging. Chief executive Scott Wright said the company recently started blending NZ olive oil with Australian olive oil for its First Press product. "Being a NZ company that makes the finished blend of oil, and then filters, bottles and packs the oil at our Hawke's Bay site, we put NZ on our label. "Upon the feedback from Consumer magazine, we have started work on label redesign where we shall be clear about the source of origin versus where the final product is blended and made." He said historically, the First Press oil had been a wholly NZ oil but recent massive supply chain disruptions, among other supply issues, meant they had to blend it with an Australian extra-virgin olive oil. (Hawkes Bay Today)

NZ Needs More Walnuts

NZ is crying out for more walnuts, posing an opportunity for an exciting emerging industry. Andrew and Jo Horsburgh say walnuts are an emerging industry, viable, sustainable, with good market prospects and very low carbon emissions. Andrew is

Walnut NZ co-op chair. "At the moment, we are getting two tonnes to the hectare, but demand is there and we have aspirations to get four tonnes." Walnut orchards have low inputs compared to many land-uses, and low emissions to the environment in terms of greenhouse gas emissions and nutrient losses. "We don't have figures for sure yet, because the walnut industry is new, but based on the data we are using, it is reasonable to assume that walnut orchards will remove more CO2 than they emit," said Plant and Food's Steve Thomas. The industry group, established in 2011 to assist growers to grow walnuts, has 80 members, most of whom have orchards in Canterbury, with a few in Hawke's Bay, Wanganui and Wairarapa. It produces 350 tonnes of walnuts annually off 574ha across orchards ranging in size from 50 to 4000 trees. (Farmers Weekly)

RubyReds First Harvest

The inaugural commercial harvest of Zespri's new RubyRed variety signals the start of what may prove to be a record-setting crop for the year. The harvest of RubyRed for markets in Singapore, Japan and China marks the culmination of over a decade's work finding a suitable coloured hybrid variety and will be followed by early harvest SunGold crop next month. Zespri's Carol Ward said expectations for the RubyRed will remain near last year's relatively small 250,000 tray harvest, given the youth of plantings and time needed for plants to reach full cropping potential. (Farmers Weekly)

Cyclone Hurts Bay Orchards

Cyclone Dovi caused flooding, downed trees and cut power to homes in the Bay of Plenty where orchardist Hugh Moore said some avocado trees were completely uprooted by the wind, while others had lost branches full of fruit. He said both new season fruit and the last of this season's crop have been impacted. Orchardist Mark Hume said it was a significant wind event. Young gold kiwifruit orchards had all the poles knocked over. NZ Avocado's Jen Scoular said that, sadly, the large volume of fruit that has fallen on the ground will not be salvageable, partly because of food safety, but also because much of it would be bruised. (RNZ News)

Kiwifruit Valuation Appealed

Gisborne District Council is appealing a recent decision by the Land Valuation Tribunal that saw it miss out on increased rates from golden kiwifruit growers. In December 2020, authorities in Gisborne decided licences to grow gold kiwifruit – which already cost hundreds of thousands of dollars per hectare – constituted an increase in the value of the land, justifying the rise. On February 1, the tribunal ruled in favour of the growers – a decision that applied to all within the Gisborne district. The council appeal is backed by the Valuer-General. The council is disappointed the tribunal had decided to treat gold kiwifruit orchards the same as other kiwifruit orchards, despite these selling for higher values. (The Country)

Processing Tongans Difficult

Poor internet access in Tonga because of last month's eruption and tsunami is putting massive pressure,



stress and strain on seasonal workers trying to come to NZ for the pipfruit harvest. The problems are further compounded by Tongans having to self-isolate when they arrive due to a Covid-19 outbreak in the island kingdom. It takes hours for one application. NZ Apples and Pears' Terry Meikle said bringing the workers in is proving a challenge. "We're still close to 1000 workers down. We're talking four or five plane loads that are going to have to be caught up, so we're pushing against the timeframe with the season about to get into full gear." (RNZ News)

Good Southern Harvest

Whether it is blueberries, silage or baleage, harvesting has been plentiful in the south with fine weather this summer. Blueberry Country Southland's Kowie du Plessis said it is the best harvest ever in the seven seasons of commercial picking at the Otautau orchard. Du Plessis expected that when final tallies are done, 125 tonnes of blueberries would have been harvested from 100,000 fruit producing bushes this season, compared to 92 tonnes in 2021 and 36 tonnes in 2020. About 200 commercial pickers in total were employed for the seven-week season. Among them were people who started the summer picking cherries in Central Otago. (Stuff)

SOIL, WATER, LAND, ARABLE

Urgent Changes Needed In Conversion

Urgent changes to government policy are needed to control the conversion of sheep and beef farms to pine trees for carbon farming, according to a discussion paper funded by councils and farmers. The paper argues that short-term land-use decisions are being made to the detriment of long-term land-use flexibility, rural communities and export returns. Under NZ's ETS, polluters can offset their carbon emissions by planting trees, but the system has been criticised for failing to provide enough incentives for them to reduce their emissions, and for not taking into account the impact on productive land and rural communities. "NZ's recent history of reducing gross fossil fuel emissions has been poor and there is a risk that the current unconstrained offsetting regime will continue to accelerate highly productive food-producing land going to forestry." Councils don't have tools available to place controls on the planting of trees in their local areas. "The challenge is to manage compelling market dynamics with land-use flexibility, property rights and community vibrancy." (Stuff)

No Water Plan Before Elections

It's unclear whether court hearings into Environment Southland's proposed Water and Land Plan will be finished before this year's local body elections. The council and some submitters are about to head into five weeks of court hearings about the rules and policies of the plan, after the majority of parties involved in negotiations agreed mediation was unlikely to be successful. (Stuff)

30-40 Farms Badly Damaged

Assessments of stock losses and flood damage suffered by farmers in the Lower Buller Gorge, Inangahua, Reefton, Shenandoah and Maruia are

underway. Federated Farmers' Bede O'Connor estimates at least 30-40 farms had been significantly damaged by a combination of flooding and slips. Others suffered when streams, tracks and culverts blew out. For some farmers, it is the second time in seven months they have lost roads, tracks, fences and feed, and had paddocks covered in silt. Farms on both sides of the lower reaches of the Buller River were not as badly affected as last July, but heavy silting covers paddocks in the Nine Mile and on land beside the river. Farmers everywhere were reporting extensive damage to farm infrastructure, particularly in and around the Inangahua and Reefton area. After six days of being cut off because of slips and dropouts on the Karamea Bluff road, dairy farmers were finally able to truck their milk out, convoys of vehicles being allowed to cross the damaged hill road three times a day. (Otago Daily Times)

New App On Nassella

A new free web app has been designed to help farmers, landowners and regional councils manage nassella tussock that has resisted eradication efforts in NZ for over a century. It is unique in that it is the only weed in NZ to have had its own Act of Parliament, the Nassella Tussock Act 1946. The new AgResearch app provides a tool to visualise a range of grubbing strategies. The app deploys a population model that counts the number of nassella tussock plants in summer and winter in each of seven different life stages of the tussock and keeps track of their contribution to the total tussock population over successive years. It enables the user to see how different frequencies, intensities and seasons of grubbing will affect the future number of nassella tussock plants on a block of land and on an adjacent block of land. (Rural News)

MBIE To Visit Farms

Some dairy farms will be visited by MBIE officials later this month to assess their compliance with minimum standards of employment and tenancy, after an increase in complaints about the sector. Teams from its Tenancy Compliance and Investigations Team will visit farms after the ministry says the number of complaints relating to dairy sector employers breaching minimum employment standards doubled from 14 to 28 between 2020 and 2021. The key objective of the visits is to ensure better compliance in the dairy industry across minimum employment and accommodation standards. This will include looking at employment agreements, record keeping, and ensuring payments of at least the minimum wage. (Stuff)

Ahuwhenua Delayed

The 2022 Ahuwhenua Trophy competition has fallen victim to the current risk of the Covid-19 Omicron variant. Chair Nukuhia Hadfield says it is regrettable, but necessary. The judging panel had only just started to access entrants to select the finalists, but the management committee deemed it unwise to continue and decided to put the competition on hold until it can be safely reconvened. She noted that



entries for the Ahuwhenua Young Maori Farmer Award remained open until closing off on February 11. The committee says it will look to modify the dates of this programme to align with the senior competition. (Rural News)

More Than Water

Te Mana o Te Wai – the vital importance of water – is a concept that's central to the Government's fresh-water reforms but it's important not to view it in isolation, according to rural leader, Mavis Mullins. She said it is important to understand that nurturing and protecting all life, whether it's water, soil, stock, preparedness for climate change or looking after the people who rely on the land, is all connected and should not be viewed separately. Until recently she chaired Te Atihau-Whanganui Incorporation, one of the largest Maori land blocks collectively owned in Aotearoa, that is involved in manuka honey, Ruapehu Angus, single-source lamb, milk and wool. About three years ago, it started to work on a Taiao strategy "because as wonderful as the aspirations of Te Mana o te Wai are, it isn't just about water". Mullins said the Taiao strategy has high-level markers that centre on how life is connected. As well as production, it looks at inputs, waste and waste management and continuing to improve through collective wisdom and creativity. "It then comes down to farm systems, investment decisions, value and innovation, because as has been noted, if you're standing still, you're going to get run over," she said. She acknowledges talk can be cheap, so to make it a reality the incorporation has produced a 75-page plan to outline a five-year strategy to make those goals a reality. "Te Ao Maori and Matauranga have never really been applied in full effect to show the power that place and practice can have." (Farmers Weekly)

Persistent Rain Affects Crops

Weeks of persistent rain have left arable crops sodden and led to farmers describing this season as the harvest from hell. Federated Farmers' Colin Hurst said some growers are calling it the worst harvest season they can remember. "Wheat crops are turning black in Mid and North Canterbury which is likely to cause a shortage of good quality grain to turn into flour. One farmer said that clover crops around Methven now resemble hay crops and the heads have largely disappeared into the foliage, with sprouting of those crops happening." In Hawke's Bay the harvest of vegetable crops like sweetcorn, beans and squash has been interrupted by the wet weather and in Waikato and Taranaki the cyclone has knocked over maize crops. (RNZ News)

Identifying Risks For Winter

Environment Southland staff will be out and about in the region this month identifying potential winter grazing risks to help farmers prepare for the upcoming season. Environment Southland, with support from DairyNZ and BLNZ, will take a look at cultivated forage crop paddocks from the air and by land, to identify areas that may pose issues for water quality this winter. The land sustainability team will then follow up directly with those farmers identified with higher risk paddocks to ensure there is a strategic grazing plan in place and offer advice on managing the issues with those paddocks..(Otago Daily Times)

Bad Season For Onions

The NZ Onion Company says this season is shaping up to be the worst in 30 years. Managing director Mike Blake says Europe is halving the amount of onions it usually takes from NZ. The company exports 15,000 tonnes of onions each year and Blake says he expects that to reduce by 30% this season. The first of this season's onions left NZ earlier this month. "The cost of freight has increased by as much as 100% to different parts of the world." He says the only way to offset that is to increase the price or to return less to the growers. "As a result of NZ asking for a higher price, the packhouses and supermarkets in Europe have decided to go as long as they possibly can with their own production and reduce the import season. Instead of having a four or six week programme (selling NZ onions) they are only going to have a two or three week window." (RNZ News)

INDUSTRY

Omicron Challenging For Westland

Omicron is going to be challenging for Westland Milk Products, according to chief executive Richard Wyeth. One of his main challenges is dealing with a situation where some staff are not vaccinated against Covid-19. Wyeth says that while the number of vaccinated staff is relatively high, it is lower than the national average. He says this could potentially rule out mandating all staff to be vaccinated. Wyeth says as soon as the Government went to the red traffic light setting, WMP continued to run its factory in bubbles and also encouraged those staff who could to work from home. He's also been encouraging staff to get vaccinated. Wyeth says suggestions about bringing people such as drivers out of retirement to fill gaps caused by staff sickness is not as simple as it sounds and creates its own set of challenges. (Rural News)

Optimism Among Deer Farmers

Optimism is starting to creep in as deer farmers greet a lift in venison returns. Unlike velvet, which has been going gangbusters, venison took a hit, falling to \$5.50 a kg this time last year. However, it has been defying seasonal fluctuations at nearly \$2/kg above this mark – albeit far off the giddy peak of \$11.30/kg in 2018. DINZ CEO Innes Moffat said deer farmers had seen a subtle improvement in prices after Christmas, from low levels. European customers had shown faith in the NZ venison business during Europe's lockdowns by placing orders without the certainty of sales. "The sales over the 2021 game season went well, so we are seeing a rising market and they are placing orders for the year ahead." This is being backed up by solid demand in North America as the foodservice market recovers, while work by exporters to create new accounts there are beginning to show promise. They also experienced significant orders at good prices from China for their New Year's celebrations. "Definitely farmers are in a positive mood," he said. The co-product market remains uncertain with skin production down, while trim and offal to Asia for



pet food production has yet to return to its previous base. However, velvet is up 10-15% from last year at about \$130-\$140/kg for A grade product. (Otago Daily Times)

Succession Planning for Farmers Market

Grow the Growers is a new initiative launched by the Otago Farmers Market in a bid to address a decline in the number of produce growers. While there has been much talk about it, those behind the wildly successful Otago Farmers Market are determined to actually do something to ensure continued accessibility to locally produced food. The Otago Farmers Market Trust is prepared to mentor and support either existing growers, or those thinking about it, to ensure succession planning at the weekly market in Dunedin. (Otago Daily Times)

Groundswell Delays Protest

Groundswell NZ has postponed its February protest in Wellington, and issued a statement, which is critical of the Government's treatment of protesters who are already there. Groundswell NZ had planned a third national protest, this time headed for Wellington in February, but co-founder Bryce McKenzie said recent adverse weather on both islands had put farmers under considerable stress. "We are reassessing the situation every day and we'll make the call when the time is right. The motive for our protest hasn't changed." (Stuff)

East Coast Expo On

It's all go for the East Coast Farming Expo, albeit with plenty of attention on ensuring everyone is kept safe. Held annually at the Wairoa A and P Showgrounds for sheep and beef producers, the event goes ahead with the support of the Wairoa Pandemic Planning Group and Wairoa Emergency Operations Centre and there are robust plans in place to run it within the red traffic light restrictions. (The Country)

Recycling At The Source

Toi Ohomai Institute of Technology has teamed up with local business Volcanic Creamery on a new venture to improve sustainability and reduce waste even more. By using glass bottles and a keg system in its Melting Pot Café, the Mokoia campus will prevent an average of 140 single-use milk bottles a week from going to landfill or recycling centres. That's more than 7000 bottles a year. Melting Pot's Kere Cassidy said the café started with banning plastic straws and cutlery, and then made the decision to completely remove takeaway paper cups. "Customers were welcoming the initiative with open arms. There are always clever alternatives. We have keep cups available for purchase, people can bring their own and dine in." Kere says the removal of plastic cups helped stop more than 62,000 of them from going to landfill. Toi Ohomai has now teamed up with Hamurana-based Volcanic Creamery, and will be using

glass bottles in its staffroom and different departments. A keg system will be installed in the Melting Pot Cafe next month, providing fresh milk on tap and reducing the need for bottled milk. With the milk-on-tap system, the milk comes in 18-litre reusable plastic milk kegs that Volcanic Creamery swaps for full ones. (Rotorua Daily Post)

FORESTRY

Vehicle Carrier Loads Triboard

A vessel normally used to transport cars and trucks has loaded approximately 5000 cu m of triboard from the Juken Mill in Kaitaia at Northport. The m.v. Istra Ace has sailed from South America and is destined for Japan. These vessels are usually configured with 10-13 decks for the loading of different vehicle types with axle loads from 1.2 tonnes to more than 22 tonnes. The Istra Ace is loading the triboard on the main cargo deck, which is designed for heavy loads, providing the vessel with a 'backload' to Japan rather than having to sail the entire route empty. Northport chief executive Jon Moore said this unscheduled call demonstrates Northport's ability to receive and handle car carriers and roll-on / roll-off vessels. "We have been talking to vehicle importers for some years now about how they could restructure and future-proof their business model using Marsden Point as a single hub for vehicle arrival, storage, preparation and distribution." (Friday Offcuts)

New Firefighting Agreement

Top of the South forestry companies and FENZ have taken a new step in their long-standing collaboration to make communities safer from vegetation fires this summer. OneFortyOne NZ, Tasman Pine Forests and PF Olsen have signed an agreement allocating funding, people resources, training and equipment to manage fire risk in the Nelson Tasman region. FENZ's Grant Haywood said the new agreement with forestry companies formalised and extended local arrangements that have existed for several years. From November last year, Fire and Emergency took over the management of all rural fire services in Nelson Tasman that had previously been contracted to the Rural Fire Network Ltd. Now RFN is working with the forestry companies and supporting the implementation of the new agreement. Another agreement between the forestry companies and FENZ also allows for the continued operation of the Richmond Hill Lookout for the 2021/22 fire season. (Friday Offcuts)



