



AHUWHENUA ENTERS 90TH YEAR OF COMPETITION

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Photographs: Alphapix

The Ahuwhenua Trophy - Excellence in Māori Farming Awards celebrate excellence in the dairy, sheep and beef, and horticulture sectors on a rotational, three-year basis. The Ahuwhenua Trophy, now entering its 90th year, was first awarded by Tā Āpirana Ngata and Lord Bledisloe in 1933 and has remained hugely prestigious ever since.

The inaugural Ahuwhenua Horticulture Trophy was awarded in 2020, and the 2023 competition will see Māori excellence in horticulture celebrated for the second time.

We had the privilege of speaking with the 2020 Ahuwhenua Horticulture Trophy finalists to find out how the Ahuwhenua competition supported their businesses and communities. With the backdrop of COVID-19 and the uncertainty that lockdowns brought to the well-being of communities, 2020 presented its unique challenges for the competition. The lockdowns not only impacted the hosting of Ahuwhenua 'field days', a highly anticipated component of the competition, they also delayed judging. Nonetheless, the competition forged ahead, and the judges were able to visit all three orchards and meet the trustees at each.



All finalists are strictly judged on eight key criteria:

- ✓ Governance and strategy
- ✓ Social/community Ngā Tikanga Māori
- ✓ Commitment to sustainability and the environment
- ✓ Kaitiakitanga (guardianship)
- ✓ Finances and benchmarking
- ✓ Customer focus
- ✓ Human resources and health and safety
- ✓ Innovation



Norm Carter and Akura Brown accepting the 2020 Ahuwhenua Horticulture Trophy on behalf of Hineora Orchard

Hineora Orchard - Te Kaha | Winners of the 2020 inaugural Ahuwhenua Horticulture Trophy

We met with Norm Carter, Chairman of Te Kaha 15B Trust, the Trust responsible for Hineora Orchard, for a kōrero. Hineora Orchard is a Māori freehold land block located in Te Kaha in the Te-Whānau-a-Apānui rohe (region) of the Eastern Bay of Plenty. The total block is 11.78 hectares, and its primary operation is 8.13 hectares of SunGold kiwifruit. Te Kaha 15B is one of six Trusts in Te-Whānau-a-Apanui working collectively to enhance and grow their economic assets to give back to owners and their community. This has seen over 20 years of investment in kiwifruit.

There was a large amount of information to be collated for the competition and at times, Norm reports wanting to "give up". However, the Trust persevered with the competition, which they then went on to win. Upon reflection, Norm believed it "helped them to strengthen their knowledge of their business operations and helped strengthen their overall strategy." "A highlight was winning the competition and the opportunity for the shareholders and community to come together at the function and celebrate success for Māori in horticulture", said Norm.



Hon. Nanaia Mahuta with Otama Marere Trust at the finalist announcement in Wellington

Otama Marere - Paengaroa | Finalist

We also met with Homman Tapsell, Trustee of Otama Marere Trust, who was proud of the achievement and recognition of the work achieved by the collective trustees, and proud to tell the story of Otama Marere.

Otama Marere orchard is located in Paengaroa in the Bay of Plenty rohe (region). The total land area is 45.01 hectares of predominantly flat land. As well as its kiwifruit operation, lower, wetter parts of the block have also been planted in wetlands. The orchard area is made up of:

- 11.87 hectares of Green kiwifruit
- 2.21 hectares of SunGold kiwifruit
- 7.08 hectares of Organic SunGold kiwifruit
- 2.10 hectares of GEM Avocados

Homman believes the competition is “a good representation for Māori growers, a great way to get whānau involved in the process, and a useful tool for succession planning.” A key takeaway for Homman and his trustees was being able to collectively refine their operation by identifying different parts of the whenua and its rich history. “The Ahuwhenua competition helped us with our whakapapa connection to the orchard”, said Homman.



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Ngāi Tukairangi Trust at the 2020 Ahuwhenua field day they hosted on their orchards

Ngāi Tukairangi Trust - Matapihi | Finalist

We also met with Riri Ellis, Chief Executive Officer of Ngai Tukairangi Trust, to hear about their Trust’s experience of participating in the 2020 competition. Ngāi Tukairangi Trust is located on the Matapihi peninsula of Tauranga Moana. The trust has several kiwifruit operations:

- 36.1 hectares SunGold
- 12.70 hectares of Green Kiwifruit
- 6.90 hectares non producing SunGold and a trial kiwifruit variety
- 60.0 hectares SunGold in Hawke’s Bay

Riri said “The competition process was challenging and required time and resources. However, the field day was a great success, and a key highlight of the overall competition was the bringing together of whānau and creating that cultural connection for all who attended. The footage created by the Ahuwhenua committee was great too, and will be kept as a resource for our whānau.”



Maatutaera Akonga accepting the 2020 Ahuwhenua Horticulture Young Grower Trophy

Maatutaera Akonga - Young Grower Horticulture Winner 2020

Maatutaera Akonga from Hawke’s Bay won the inaugural Ahuwhenua Young Māori Grower Award for 2020. Maatutaera is the Senior Leading Hand at Llewellyn Horticulture, and manages 80 hectares of apples. ●

