

Grower Profile. Wai-iti Fresh.



What initially started as a Christchurch-based operation with a roadside stall in 1970 has now evolved into Wai-iti Fresh Ltd - a 240 hectare operation in North Canterbury growing vegetables, maize, lucerne for dairy support and vegetable seed crops.

However, one thing that has not changed is the family values of the business. Founded by Laurence and Christine Trott, Wai-iti Fresh Ltd was passed down to their daughter Emma McCracken and her husband Peter in 2006. Laurence and Christine are still involved with 40% ownership of the company while Emma and Peter are majority shareholders and manage the day-to-day operations.

Initially the family produced up to 20 crops, but now focus on onions, cauliflower, and pumpkin. The land is also used to grow maize and lucerne for dairy support but due to dairy economics, this season they reduced the maize area and added seed crops such as peas, radish and Swiss chard.

"We have picked our mix of crops for various reasons such as profitability, business structure, soil and climate, food safety, staff requirements and health and safety considerations," said Emma.

Currently the team at Wai-iti Fresh Ltd has six full-time staff and five of them have been with the company for at least a decade. The business is also supported by one part-time office administrator and additional labour is contracted as required.

Prior to taking over the day-to-day management, Peter and Emma worked in the business carrying out various roles including retail, greenhouse management, administration and sales. Peter and Emma have both gained university qualifications and are able to draw on more than a combined 40 years of experience in the horticulture industry.

"Peter and I had been involved in helping my parents run the business for many years, so we were prepared to take over the Wai-iti Fresh legacy," explains Emma.

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Emma McCracken
Wai-iti Fresh



The McCracken family have a long association with MG Marketing, including the extended family, with Laurence and Chris Trott being shareholders for over 35 years.

Like everyone in the industry, resilience against the elements is an essential ingredient for success.

"Without a doubt, like all horticulture operations, one of the key challenges for our business is what Mother Nature provides," said Peter.

"This affects what happens on the farm to what the consumer wants to eat that week and it's always changing. In 2006 we had an extremely wet winter, in December 2009 we had crop damaged by hail, and then in 2010 and 2011 we felt the Canterbury earthquakes and saw the impact on staff lives.

"2011 saw three different snow events on our property, in September 2013 most of the farms trees were blown over in a night of wind and the property was without electricity for five days. In 2014 we had our annual rainfall across March and April and May, yet by December 2014 we were at the start of a drought that still really hasn't lifted."

"There is very little that farmers can do about weather events and natural disasters, but prepare for all eventualities within the constraints of budgets and your willingness to take on risk.

"We have the support of a good accountant, we talk regularly with our bank manager, suppliers and MG Marketing team about what is going on in our business unit and farm," said Emma.

"We have had daily contact with members of MG Marketing for many years and we're able to share the joys and perils of growing vegetables with all of the MG team.

"You become friends over time — friends with a common interest in the shared challenges, excitement and, at times, frustration of living life as a member of the New Zealand Horticulture industry."

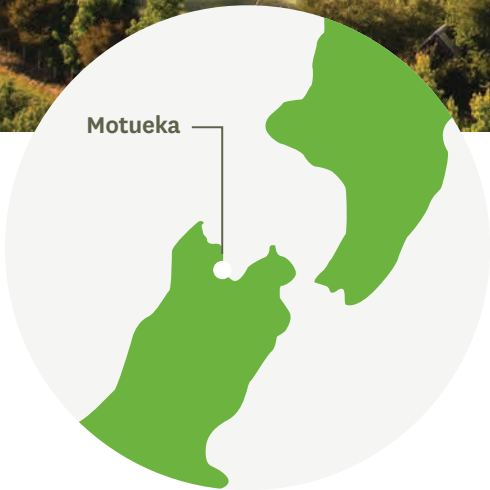
Wai-iti Fresh Ltd also holds strong ties with their local community of Swannanoa, a small North Canterbury farming village, in which they



- 01 Peter McCracken, Shaun Bowie (MG), Emma McCracken and Michael Breitmeyer (MG).
- 02 The humble onion is one of the three stable crops of the Wai-iti operation.
- 03 Peter and Emma McCracken are majority shareholders of this family business.



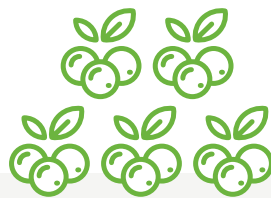
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Motueka

Grower Profile.

Mill Creek Orchard.



8.5h orchard



65 tonne harvest last season



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A lot has happened at Mill Creek Orchard since Donald and Nicola Heckler purchased the Motueka property seven years ago.

Donald is from a long line of Otago farmers and growers while Nicola was a Physical Education teacher originally from Greymouth. The pair met at university and have two young children who attend the local primary school.

When the family purchased the orchard only 1.2 hectares was dedicated to blueberries with the rest of the land used for pears and apples. With blueberries growing in popularity the decision was made to expand the area to 8.5 hectares with a further 3.5 hectares set to be planted this coming winter.

Their efforts are clearly evident with their first harvest in 2009 yielding eight tonne while last season produced significantly higher volumes.

“Blueberries are a highly desirable fruit with huge global growth,” said Donald. “We have a big focus on our varieties and are not afraid to run trials and then consolidate.

“There were 16 varieties when we started and after some experimentation we’re now working with just ten. Climatic conditions in the Motueka Valley are ideal for blueberries with low humidity, few extreme temperatures and a good winter chill.

“We also benefit from a fantastic water supply from the Motueka River which flows mainly through the national parks – one of the healthiest rivers in the country.”

The Heckler’s have lofty goals, expecting significant growth in the next five years. Donald said one of the prime factors for growth has been setting clear expectations with the team and putting people first.

“We have three key permanent staff and as the season builds up we increase to up near 50 workers. The people buy into our strong focus on quality, presentation and drive to be the best.

“We are big on professionalism and take staff welfare seriously. This is particularly evident with the international standards we measure ourselves against for health and safety.”

While Mill Creek Orchard continues to grow every year, they’re also mindful of maintaining healthy growing practices, and have continued to future-proof their operation for future generations.

Though some methods have been modernised, Donald and Nicola have a strong emphasis on minimising their carbon footprint. Efforts include introducing around 60 hives with locally sourced wild bees to promote pollination. They also focus on using beneficial mycorrhiza – a symbiotic association composed of a fungus and roots of a vascular plant that has beneficial effects on plant growth and productivity.

While it’s clear that Donald and Nicola are innovative operators, they carry on some of the old family traditions, staying involved in the local country school community, coaching sport and other community events.

Did you know?



Blueberries are nature’s antioxidant powerhouse and contain higher antioxidant levels than just about every other fruit and vegetable. Antioxidants prevent cell damage that occurs from everyday wear and tear. It is believed a diet high in antioxidants helps avoid such health problems as cancers and heart disease. It also promotes good eyesight, urinary tract health and brain function. Often referred to as ‘brain berries’, several leading scientists suggest eating half a cup of blueberries a day to protect and promote brain function.

— Blueberries New Zealand

Shareholder Profile.

Jack Parish.

Market Gardeners never really retire the saying goes. That is true of Jack Parish – the 86 year old retired market gardener still manages 50 acres of land where he tends to a handful of cattle and grows his own veges. And if you ask how he manages to do it all, he’ll tell you he’s doing just fine.

- 01 Tractor or no tractor was a regular topic of conversation between Jack Parish and his dad but it wasn’t until 1946 that mechanical power took over from the team of draught horses on the Parish property.
- 02 Jack Parish remains an MG Marketing shareholder and still takes an interest in the co-operative.



“I was the one who said we should get a tractor but he didn’t believe in tractors. His theory was that you can do all the numbers but during the depression time every grower who bought a tractor went broke — he could reel them all off so he didn’t want to do that.”

Jack Parish
MG Marketing Shareholder

Born as the son of a Christchurch market gardener in 1930, Jack attended Harewood School in Christchurch before starting a carpentry course at Papanui Tech.

Jack grew up on the family property and loved it. He says it was very hard work, with long hours, but also rewarding. He enjoyed working outdoors and how the job changes with the seasons.

The lure of a flight in a Tiger Moth prompted Jack to join the local Air Training Corp and as a young man living near the airport dreamed of being a pilot. As it turns out, the scheduled flight was cancelled due to strong Canterbury winds and the rest is history.

“I was always interested in the airforce and if you were in the ATC you got a 15 minute flight in a Tiger Moth. I thought, by crikey I want some of that,” said Jack. “I joined the ATC and it came around to October and we were due to take the flight but the day was a howling Norwester and we couldn’t fly,” he laughed.

His father, Herbert, a veteran from the World War I, needed a younger, fitter man to run his team of five draught horses. The oldest of three boys, Jack, left school to work with his father on their property on Russley Road in Christchurch.

“My father had trouble from injuries in the first World War so said that I had to leave school and work the team at home.

“I was about 15 and a half and after we got the crop in that year he said I could go back to school but it was already the end of the year so that was the end of it.”

Jack’s father is of an easily recognisable type of his era – thrifty, hardworking, self-sufficient and never wanting to owe anyone anything.

Jack remembers trying to convince his father to invest in a tractor after relying on a team of horses for decades.

“I was the one who said we should get a tractor but he didn’t believe in tractors,” said Jack. “His theory was that you can do all the numbers but during the depression time most growers who bought a tractor went broke – he could reel them all off so didn’t want to do that.”

“Times were tough and the money required for a tractor was considered a huge risk. Anyhow, in 1946 or 47 everyone would have him on about not having a tractor and he got that sick of it he went up to the horse sales in Rangiora and called in at Horrells.

“The joker in there was a quick thinker and a fast talker and my old man must have been in a weak spot that day and picked up a tractor for 500 pounds. After that, I drove the tractor, of course, and reduced the number of horses to three before dropping to two.”

Jack’s father passed away in 1964 leaving Jack to manage the operation.

“I automatically took over, I had to, didn’t I,” Jack commented.

“We worked like hell them days. If you were going to the market you’d get up about half past four and get rid of the produce before the buyers arrived by about seven o’clock.

“One change I made straight away was getting rid of oats and grew less hay. People were moving away from using draught horses although there were race horses. Those jokers were tough to sell to because they never had the cash. We used that land to grow peas and other things.”

It was a different way of doing business and Jack reckons there are about a quarter of the growers in business these days.

“There were a lot more growers those days and it was survival of the fittest,” said Jack.

“They used to open between 7.00pm and 8.00pm

twice a week to take produce for the next day.”

As a grower during that period Jack did it all and said it was all about grafting hard.

“It was hard yakka them days, seven days a week. Sometimes we’d take three loads to the market in one day.

“You’d start early in the morning and go until late at night. We had a 1926 National Chev that had a big canopy over it with no doors – this was before the second World War. We got it from Wardell’s who were grocers and had used it as a delivery van.”

When Jack was growing up there were four markets in town and they were all opposite each other.

“We went to them all but went to Market Gardeners a lot. Early on in the MG business Ron Dinee was the manager at the time,” said Jack.

“He helped me sign up as a shareholder and that’s where it started. I remember Ron Dinee really looked after me. He was always there to meet me and make sure the produce was sold as good as possible.”

Jack’s property was positioned next to Christchurch Airport and when they decided to expand in 1971, Jack was able to negotiate the sale of his land for a fair price.

However, the hardy perennial still keeps abreast of activity at the cooperative he joined over 50 years ago and even attended the MG Marketing Annual General Meeting in Christchurch last November.

He still holds the MG shares he purchased more than half a century ago. He agreed his life as a farmer has kept him in good shape and strong.

Apart from issues related to years working in the sun the hard working octogenarian’s only grumble is his sore back from years of manual labour.

“I’m not sure there’s any secret to a long life – just hard work and lots of outdoors,” Jack added.

Standpoint.



As the new year is well underway, I want to thank our growers and customers and reflect on the year ahead. I hope our shared efforts last year leave you encouraged and ready to make the most of 2016.

This coming year will again be about working together with our growers and customers to provide the best service possible and get the best results possible.

We see high confidence levels in our management team and employees because over the years we've demonstrated that we can

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overcome challenges of a changing market, pressure on growers, competition for business and the unpredictable nature of seasonal weather patterns.

Our co-operative has a clear strategy built around the pillars of resilience, partnerships, value, growth, capability and co-operative behaviour and we are committed to its execution.

In terms of meeting our goals – it's more of the same from the team at MG. We will continue to invest in our people and leverage our strong marketing, sales and distribution capability to drive further growth.

Last year we invested heavily in learning and development for our sales staff and branch management. The coming year will again further enhance the skills of our sales staff while also having a particular emphasis on up-skilling our logistics team.

Oversupply remains a challenge at times and it is difficult to strike the right balance. The MG team can play an important role by working

constructively with growers and retailers to minimise seasonal peaks and lulls. Our sales and procurement staff have market knowledge and expertise to support both ends of the supply chain to ensure the accurate information flows in a timely manner.

It's a good time to undertake forward planning with the team at MG who can provide useful feedback from the various markets, so you're ready to respond to any signals or trends that are occurring.

Finally, I wish you all the very best for a productive and enjoyable late summer and early autumn.

Peter Hendry

Peter Hendry
CEO



There was an overwhelming response with over 200 applications. A shortlist of the 15 most suitable applicants from across the country were interviewed before the final selection was made.

01 Monika Patel.
02 Alex Hendry.
03 Eroni Leilua.



Graduate programme.

The MG Marketing graduate programme has been introduced to attract the next generation of talented employees to MG Marketing and encourage new talent into the business.

The graduates don't necessarily have to be from a university but need to display the behaviours and attitudes that are valued by our business. Last year we worked with tertiary institutions to select three new graduates who have now commenced work at MG.

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The three successful candidates for 2016 were chosen because of their strong affinity with the rural sector and their motivation to succeed at MG.

Other important criteria when making our decision was their ability to communicate well with people at all levels and a passion for learning.

2016 MG Graduates

Monika has produce in her blood and her father is a third generation owner of Shires, a 93-year-old fruit and vegetable shop in Dannevirke. Growing up in this environment has given Monika a vast knowledge of produce and a strong passion for the industry.

Eroni, who is a success driven individual with a double degree under his belt and a vast number of sporting achievements, was also a clear choice. He's a well-rounded individual who we knew would be a great fit within MG.

Alex is an internal applicant who has worked as a part-time store-person at MG for the past four years whilst completing his tertiary studies. MG Christchurch branch pushed for Alex to be considered for the programme based on his proven performance and potential to develop further within the produce industry.

A full graduate programme has been developed and includes one-on-one mentoring with senior staff, exposure to all parts of the business and provides the new graduates with the opportunity to network with a wide range of people in the industry.

MG encourage all growers to use GDA.

The online Grower Delivery Advice (GDA) is helping more MG growers to create efficiencies in their business. The discrete, internet-based system allows growers to electronically log consignments with an MG branch ahead of produce arriving.

"The system is individually customised and procurement staff are more than happy to spend time showing growers the ropes," said National Procurement Manager, Ian Reisima.



"Most of the large operations are enjoying the benefits, with some saying it has revolutionised the way they complete day-to-day administration. But it's not just for the larger businesses and we're on a real drive to get the small to medium size growers onboard.

"It's all about making tasks easier and saving time so our growers can spend time on tasks that make a real difference to their business."

If you are not using GDA talk to MG Marketing about the benefits it could bring to your business.

MG Bakersfield.

MG USA Limited – Bakersfield, California



MG Marketing run a trade office in the USA for produce procurement from North American sources with the operation playing a vital role in the success of our import programmes.

Based in Bakersfield, California, the trade office assists with the critical role of sourcing out-of-season products for the MG and LaManna operations.

"Our role is to provide efficient procurement services and supply the best fruit products available for the MG group," said Doug Trask, General Manager, MG USA.

"Like our counterparts in New Zealand and Australia, a big part of our job is to maintain and establish good healthy grower relations to strengthen MG's ability to provide good quality and value. This includes working closely with MPI to clear products for export from the US and Mexico with a strong focus on continuity of supply and food quality.

"Whether for established or new produce lines, the same insistence on supply consistency and product quality standards are strictly applied.

"The US team help meet MG's demand for imports and strengthen the company's position against competition."

The office unit is also diversifying its business mix with sales of Australian citrus into US supermarkets and working with MG's JV export partner, TeMata Exports, in the development of US produce sales into Asia. Essentially the office is looking to link its resources with the opportunities developed by the entire group.

"The business partnerships developed in the US deliver excellent value and increase profits for MG grower-shareholders," said MG Marketing International Business Manager, Kerry Wells.

- A TYPICAL DAY AT THE MG BAKERSFIELD TRADE OFFICE:**
- Meet with growers, inspecting fruit at pack houses.
 - Work with growers, providing market trends, availability and forecast for supply to the company.
 - Gather market intelligence and pricing for various geographies. General accounting and financial responsibilities.
 - Visit storage facilities, ports and work with all aspects of exporting fresh product.
 - Work alongside customs, shipping lines, freight forwarding and other logistic providers.

01 Pictured are MG USA's Doug Trask (right) and Nick Kelly, inspecting fruit at a Sunkist pack house.