

# ELECTION MANIFESTO 2026



## BACKING A SMALL INDUSTRY WITH BIG POTENTIAL

Summerfruit is a small but high-value horticultural sector that supports regional economies, export growth, and the supply of healthy food to New Zealanders.

Policy and regulatory systems are largely calibrated for scale. For smaller sectors like summerfruit, these systems often create disproportionate cost and delay innovation, which erodes profitability. Unlike larger sectors, summerfruit does not have the scale to absorb inefficient systems or regulations.

To remain competitive, summerfruit growers need a policy environment that enables rapid innovation, fair cost structures, efficient workforce access, and the confidence and capability to invest.

With the right settings, the sector can continue to deliver high-value production, regional employment, and positive health outcomes for New Zealand, while contributing to national horticulture export growth objectives.



## WHAT SUMMERFRUIT NZ IS ASKING FOR

To support a small but high-potential sector, Summerfruit NZ is seeking:

- Reform of the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms (HSNO) and Agricultural Compounds and Veterinary Medicines (ACVM) Acts to improve access to crop protection tools
  - A stronger and fairer biosecurity system, with all those who benefit contributing to the cost of running the system
  - An efficient, affordable plant import pathway that enables innovation
  - More certainty around water access and storage
  - Workforce and visa settings that reflect seasonal realities
  - Investment in skills and education pathways
  - Partnership on a national fruit and vegetable behaviour change programme to improve health through increased consumption
  - Improved market access and more timely responses to non-tariff barriers.
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## OUR PRIORITIES

### 1. Reform HSNO and ACVM to enable faster access to crop protection tools

Summerfruit growers require timely and affordable access to modern crop protection tools to remain productive and internationally competitive. Delays or gaps in access directly affect productivity, increase production risk, and reduce the viability of growing certain crops.

The current regulatory system is too slow and too costly for smaller industries, and the commercial case for registering products in New Zealand is often marginal.

#### **We call for:**

- Faster and more efficient approval pathways
- Greater use of trusted international data and regulatory harmonisation
- Fit-for-purpose settings for minor crops and small industries
- A system that reduces cost and duplication while maintaining safety

## 2. Strengthen biosecurity and fix the plant import pathway

Summerfruit relies on imported varieties and rootstocks to remain globally competitive. An efficient, science-based and affordable plant import system is essential – but it must be underpinned by a strong and trusted biosecurity system.

Concern is increasing about the rising risk of biosecurity incursions and the financial exposure this places on growers. As a Government Industry Agreement (GIA) signatory, Summerfruit NZ contributes to the system and carries a share of response costs. However, non-signatory beneficiaries create an inequitable model, where some sectors carry a disproportionate share of risk and cost.

At the same time, the germplasm import pathway is becoming a barrier to innovation, with rising costs and complexity slowing the introduction of new varieties and rootstocks. We recognise that work is underway to reform the plant import system. However, for summerfruit, it is critical that this work improves timeliness, reduces cost, and enables practical access to new plant material.

### **We call for:**

- Increased investment in border resilience and early detection systems
- A fairer funding model, where all the sectors that benefit from the GIA framework contribute to the cost of running the biosecurity system
- Action to address non-signatory beneficiaries under the GIA framework
- Reinvestment of additional revenue into strengthening the biosecurity system
- Reform of the germplasm import pathway that improves efficiency, reduces cost and enables timely access to new plant material, while maintaining robust biosecurity protections
- Caution around further cost-sharing in a system that is already constraining innovation.



### 3. Provide certainty to invest in water, land, and technology

Growers need confidence that they will have access to the natural resources required to produce high-quality fruit – particularly water – as well as a regulatory environment that supports long-term investment.

We recognise the need to use resources efficiently, but productivity, sustainability and economic viability must be balanced.

Improvements in water allocation, land use and the environment require growers to invest in new systems, technology and operating models. For the summerfruit industry, the pace and cost of change can be a constraint.

A partnership approach between Government and industry is essential to ensure change is achievable, timely and does not undermine production capacity.

This is particularly important as the sector is expected to contribute to the growth ambitions set out in the Aotearoa Horticulture Action Plan (AHAP). Delivering on these targets will require both enabling policy and targeted support to build industry capability and efficiency.

#### **We call for:**

- Policy settings that support long-term investment
- Secure access to water for growing food and support for water storage
- A regulatory environment that enables orchard development and redevelopment
- Stronger support for technology adoption to improve productivity, resilience and adaptation
- Targeted financial incentives and co-investment to support on-farm efficiency improvements and enable delivery against AHAP growth targets.

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### 4. Make workforce and visa settings work for a short, intensive harvest

Summerfruit has a short, high-intensity harvest period that creates unique workforce pressures.

We support improvements to the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme, but these must be practical, efficient and responsive to grower needs. At the same time, future productivity gains depend on access to specialist technical capability to support technology adoption.

For the summerfruit industry, the economics often do not support full-time specialist roles. However, targeted, short-term access to expertise would unlock significant productivity gains and support knowledge transfer to New Zealand workers.

**We call for:**

- RSE settings that are efficient, practical and provide certainty, while reducing administrative complexity
- Visa settings that reflect horticulture's operating realities
- Employment and leave legislation that recognises the realities of seasonal and casual horticultural work, avoiding disproportionate compliance costs and unintended impacts on labour availability
- Targeted adjustments to enable access to specialist technical horticulture roles during harvest
- Increased investment in education, training and skills pathways.



## **5. Back a national campaign to promote fresh fruit and vegetables**

There is a significant opportunity to improve public health outcomes by increasing fruit and vegetable consumption.

Summerfruit growers already invest levy funding to raise awareness, but meaningful behaviour change requires a coordinated, large-scale effort. Increasing fruit and vegetable consumption is one of the most cost-effective interventions available to improve long-term public health outcomes.

### **We call for:**

- A Government-led campaign promoting fresh fruit and vegetables, in partnership with the industry to lift consumption
- Stronger alignment between health, education and food policy
- Recognition of the long-term health and economic benefits.

## **6. Improve market access and responsiveness to non-tariff barriers**

As an export-focused sector, summerfruit relies on access to international markets to grow and remain competitive. Maintaining and expanding market access is critical, particularly as the sector looks to increase export value.

For the summerfruit industry, there is growing concern about the ability to secure new market access and respond effectively to non-tariff barriers (NTBs), due to prioritisation and resourcing constraints within the system. Delays in progressing access requests or resolving technical barriers can directly limit growth opportunities and reduce competitiveness.

This challenge is evident in markets such as India, where trade agreements create potential opportunities, but non-tariff barriers and technical requirements can limit the practical ability to export. Without timely progression and resolution of these issues, market access remains theoretical rather than commercially usable.

To support sector growth, including delivery against the AHAP, it is important that smaller industries are not disadvantaged by system prioritisation settings.

### **We call for:**

- Improved prioritisation frameworks that recognise the needs and opportunities of smaller export sectors
- Sufficient resourcing within the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) to progress market access applications in a timely way
- More responsive mechanisms to identify and resolve non-tariff barriers
- A partnership approach between Government and industry to advance market access opportunities.

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## **CONCLUSION**

With the right settings, the summerfruit industry can invest, innovate and grow. Reducing regulatory friction, compliance costs and inequitable cost-sharing will enable the sector to remain competitive, support regional communities and contribute to a healthier and more prosperous New Zealand.