

## **Hazelnut Growers Association of NZ – Chair’s Report for the Year Ended June 2025**

Peter Barrowclough – Chair

### **Governance and Operations**

I have worked closely with our new Executive Officer Chris, meeting weekly to support her work.

Chris has tackled many of the time-consuming tasks that committee struggled to get to, such as:

- Indexing past newsletters for easier access to historical information (to be published online soon).
- Improving newsletter content and following up with growers who weren’t receiving them.
- Undertaking plans to improve the website.
- Searching for grants.
- Attending and writing up the minutes of meetings.

Chris will report separately on the key projects she has led this year.

Along with Paul and your committee we have reviewed and updated our Constitution in line with the new Incorporated Societies Act requirements. We will be asking you to pass this at this AGM.

I have also held a pre-AGM committee debrief with a couple of committee members to reflect on our effectiveness and plan a refreshed strategy session with the committee within the next two months.

### **Research and Development**

We have established an R&D subcommittee to initiate and coordinate future research work.

Some members of that subcommittee met with a representative of the Walnut industry to learn from their successful SFFF grant process.

I have held multiple discussions with Dr Clive Kaiser (Lincoln University) regarding research collaboration, including a potential PhD project.

Unfortunately, costs to host the student were prohibitively high (hundreds of thousands), and we are still exploring ways to support this student within the limits of our resources.

Chris and I have continued to explore external funding opportunities to support R&D:

We have investigated options with MPI's SFFF scheme, but the funding landscape remains challenging.

I contacted Stats NZ to advocate for better inclusion of hazelnut data in national agricultural surveys. I was advised that they hold horticultural statistics surveys every five years and in one year in between. Yields are not included in that survey. They do have data on the area planted in Hazelnuts in NZ which is a little worrying.

| Row Labels | Hazelnuts (planted area) hectares |
|------------|-----------------------------------|
| 2012       | 433                               |
| 2014       | 425                               |
| 2017       | 278                               |
| 2019       | 207                               |
| 2020       | 194                               |
| 2022       | 149                               |

### Grower Engagement and Events

We held a small but very successful Summer Field Days in Central Otago. This was a valuable opportunity for growers from different regions to network and share insights. It also included a visit to the innovative electric cherry orchard near Cromwell. An orchard with an electric tractor and solar panels and batteries providing most energy needs. Interestingly they were getting a premium for their cherries based on the sustainability of their operation.

We have continued communication our efforts through our newsletters, sharing practical information.

### On-Farm Learnings and Trials

On my own orchard:

- I focused my winter work on removing years of built-up suckers.
- I purchased and trialed a sickle-bar hedge cutter to tidy canopies for easier harvest and future pruning trials.
- I also experimented with concentrated nitrogen sprays to suppress suckers as an alternative to herbicides and reported findings in the newsletter.

Anecdotally I have heard of a strong harvest across the country, with early yields and good volumes reported by many:

- My own orchard was up 50% on last year.
- I am still trying to determine whether this was due to improved management or just favourable seasonal conditions.
- Wet April weather did delay or complicate the harvest for some growers.

### Acknowledgements

I would like to sincerely thank the voluntary committee for their continued support and contribution throughout the year.

And I would offer special thanks to Chris for the real progress she has driven—getting things done that the committee alone never quite managed to get to.