

The Hawke's Bay Fruitgrowers' Association



Centennial

Friday 4th June
Book Launch
Saturday 5th June
Centennial Dinner & Dance
Tickets available at
HBFA office
Phone 870 8541



ABOVE: The Hawke's Bay Fruitgrowers' Association trading premises in 1916 — a cottage in St Aubyn Street, Hastings.
TOP RIGHT: Purpose-built premises for the association in St Aubyn Street at the opening in 1926.
LOWER RIGHT: Today's Hawke's Bay Fruitgrowers' Association premises in Maraekakaho Road.

From small beginnings a fruit industry grows

JOHN HART

The Hawke's Bay Fruitgrowers' Association this weekend celebrates its first 100 years with the launch of a book and a centennial dinner and dance. The association has seen fruitgrowing in Hawke's Bay develop from tiny beginnings to one of the region's most important industries.

It has seen the Hawke's Bay industry gain international respect for its growing and management techniques, innovation and variety development. The first 100 years for Hawke's Bay fruitgrowers have been exciting, sometimes profitable and interspersed with colourful characters.

The next 100 years promises to see even more rapid change as the industry adapts to changes in consumer preference, marketing techniques and even more varieties.

When the first meeting of fruitgrowers was held in the Hastings Drill Hall in 1890, growers were worried about the threat to their crops from imported diseases and pests.

A century later, they have coped with many of these but still have serious fears for even more threatening pests and diseases.

The next century poses serious challenges from a world becoming suspicious of chemicals. The new generation growers need to perfect ways of maximising production while meeting market demands which can change from season to season.

Clive journalist Rose Manning was commissioned by the association to document the first century of fruitgrowing in a book to be launched at a function this weekend.

100 Harvests: A History of Fruitgrowing in Hawke's Bay, looks at the politics and personalities of the industry over the years.

It begins with the acquisition of land from local Maori and the earliest plantings of fruit trees by nurseryman Fred Sturm and missionary William Colenso.



Clive journalist Rose Manning's book *100 Harvests: A History of Fruitgrowing in Hawke's Bay* will be launched at a function this weekend. Rose was commissioned by the Hawke's Bay Fruitgrowers' Association to write the book.

While fruitgrowers struggled to find markets for the fruit, the Heretaunga Plains was obviously capable of growing, so Jim Wattle experimented in an old house with fruit preserving techniques.

His cannery went into production in 1934 and the impact on fruit growing in the region was huge. Plantings took off in the post-war years, especially with golden queen peaches, which still form a significant part of stonefruit growing in the region.

Hawke's Bay has developed a reputation for its ability to grow quality stonefruit. Hawke's Bay summerfruit is marketed and sought-after around the country.

In recent years, kiwifruit growers joined pip and stonefruit growers in the association and now play an important role.

Hard-working staff back industry

Fruitgrowing is a people industry and relies on dedicated hard-working staff, says David Mardon, president of the Hawke's Bay Fruitgrowers' Association.

"It is a very people-intensive industry and we rely on people for all the orchard activities, such as pruning, thinning, spraying, picking and packing. "Few industries are as labour intensive as the fruit industry. "Packing and grading needs skill, picking is hard work and the people involved in all this work are making decisions for growers all day." Over the years orchardists have employed many hard-working and dedicated staff, and recognised the important part they played in the development of the industry.

"Orchardists have employed people from around the world. You get to know a lot of people and strong friendships have developed as a result.



David Mardon is president of the Hawke's Bay Fruitgrowers' Association.

"Many of these friendships stretch around the world and have endured for many years." The fruitgrowing industry had run a good cadet scheme in the past and was trying to get it back on its feet.

RGA GROUP

The team at RGA thank the HB Fruitgrowers Assn for their huge contribution towards the industry over the last 100 years.

We look forward to working together on the new challenges that the future will bring.



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- ◆ Monthly Newsletter

HBFA looks after the above issues for all fruitgrowers and would like to encourage non members to join. If you are a fruitgrower and not a member, phone 870 8541 now or visit Linda at the Association's office, Williams & Kettle site, Maraekakaho Road, Hastings.

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The Hawke's Bay Fruitgrowers' Association held winter lectures as early as 1916, and financed and programmed early research orchards, as well as initiating field days. Pictured is 1997 new varieties committee member John Morton showing new summerfruit varieties to growers and consultants in Hastings.



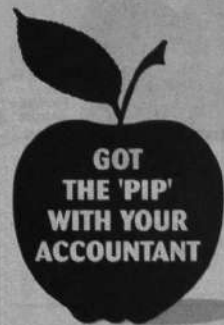
Association promotes a CLOSER BOND

DAVID MARDON
PRESIDENT, HB FRUITGROWERS' ASSOCIATION

The Hawke's Bay Fruitgrowers' Association (HBFA) has played an integral role in the development of the multi-million dollar fruit industry of Hawke's Bay today. It has lobbied on behalf of growers at national, local and board level on issues associated with production, marketing, employment, pest and disease control, research, local body planning and hardship through natural disaster. It has facilitated many forums where interested growers could meet and debate issues as diverse as the two-tier levy and the establish-

ment of a horticultural cadet scheme. The HBFA has been an educator almost from inception. It held winter lectures as early as 1916, has financed and programmed early research orchards, and has initiated field days. Since 1979 its scholarship programme has assisted horticultural students through tertiary training at various levels. The HBFA has also been the focus for competition and social interaction among growers. For more than 50 years it provided prize money and worked with the A and P Society to develop criteria for fruit classes at the autumn show and it staged the annual apple packing competitions.

In 1945 it established a social committee. The balls, picnics, grower trips, fishing competitions and blossom parade entries the committee organised over are legend. People have made the fruit industry what it is today and the HBFA would like to acknowledge the many individuals who have dedicated time and energy to helping their fellow growers. As we move into the next 100 years of fruit growing in Hawke's Bay, the need for such individual commitment will be as great as ever. For the association in the future, change is certain but the objectives remain the same — to foster and protect the fruit industry and to promote a closer bond among growers.



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The Hawke's Bay Fruitgrowers' Association has been the focus for competition and social interaction among growers. The annual packing competitions attracted many entries. Bob Galbraith (above) dominated the packing competitions for more than 30 years.



Mr G Flowers, top, was the winner of the 1965 apple packing contest. Two judges Mr I Brown (left) and Mr H Gardiner check his style.

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Hawke's Bay Fruitgrowers' Association Centennial 1899-1999



RIGHT: The Hawke's Bay Fruitgrowers' Association celebrated its 50th anniversary in 1949. From left, Mr A Osborne, Mrs JH Payne, Mr A Congdon, Mr JH Payne, Mr A Grieg, Mr CG Wilkinson, Mrs R Payne, Mr Ralph Payne.

Social activities were an important part of fruitgrowers activities. From left, Beryl Gay, Diana Buddo, Ngaire Eastwood and Melva Hayes take time out during a 1950 picnic.

FRUITGROWERS' BALL — highlight of the social scene

JOHN HART

Social activities were an important part of fruitgrowers activities for much of the century.

But the 1950s, 60s, 70s and 80s were particularly active, with annual balls, picnics and trips away.

The Hawke's Bay Fruitgrowers' Association went out of its way to foster social activity over the years.

The Fruitgrowers' Ball was a highlight of the social scene for many years and tickets were keenly sought after.

Fruitgrowers' picnics, at several locations around Hawke's Bay, were family events attended by thousands of people over the years.

The association used the social committee to introduce potential industry leaders to its activities. Young growers did an "apprenticeship" on the social committee, culminating in two years as chairman, usually moving on to the executive of the association.

Colin Wake did his two-year term as chairman of the social committee before moving on to take an active role in the association's affairs for many years.

A job on the social committee was sought after and many of those who were on it went on to prominent roles in the association," Mr

Wake said.

Hawke's Bay's social season had three main events in the 60s and 70s — The Hunt Club Ball, the Nurses' Ball and the Fruitgrowers' Ball.

"Ticket sales opened at 9 o'clock on a Saturday morning and they sold out in 20 minutes," Mr Wake said.

"There was always a queue waiting for several hours before tickets went on sale."

The balls were held at several venues, the old Top Hat hall room in Napier, the Cabaret Cabana at Awatoto and in later years, the Assembly Hall in Hastings.

Most of the balls were held in the days when liquor was barred at social events, but that did not stop supplies of liquor being carried in anyway.

Car boots always had plentiful supplies and suit and overcoat pockets were adapted to carry bottles of spirits, wine and beer.

Big Bands were in their heyday and the events were grand occasions.

Orchardist Graham Wake decided one year to create some more interest in the balls during his term as social committee chairman.

Unbeknown to most, he organised a stripper from Auckland who performed for surprised guests at the Cabaret Cabana. The word went

round the district and the demand for tickets the following year was even greater.

The largest number to attend one of the fruitgrowers' balls was 476 at the Assembly Hall in Hastings.

By the late 1970s, balls had gone out of fashion and the fruitgrowers' ball became a victim.

The fruitgrowers' picnic was a popular social event for many years and was held at various locations, including Eskdale and the banks of the Tukituki and Ngauroro rivers.

Children from the Hillsbrook children's home at Havelock North were invited guests for the day.

The picnics featured the usual three-legged races, sack races and the keenly contested tug-o-war.

"Special tug-o-war boards were produced and brought out every year and it was a great occasion," Colin Wake said.

"The boards are probably still tucked away behind someone's packing shed."

The growing districts — Pakowhai, Twyford and Havelock North — competed against each other in the tug-o-war events.

The annual picnic also died in the 1970s and there have been many calls since for it to be reinstated.

A centennial year picnic is being investigated for later this year.

The social committee also had the job for several years of providing suppers at fruitgrowers' meetings but the practice died out as a result of lack of enthusiasm.

The Fruitgrowers' Association entered a float in the annual Blossom Festival most years and it was the social committee's job to produce it.

But trips away, some lasting three or four days, were popular during the 50s and 60s. Most combined some aspect of fruitgrowing with social activities.

"As growers became more affluent and got better cars, they took their families away and the trips stopped," Colin Wake said.

Social activities now are confined to an annual fishing competition. It is organised by several growers who also own boats.

The event has become popular amongst fruitgrowers and most years involves about 30 boats and over 100 contestants.

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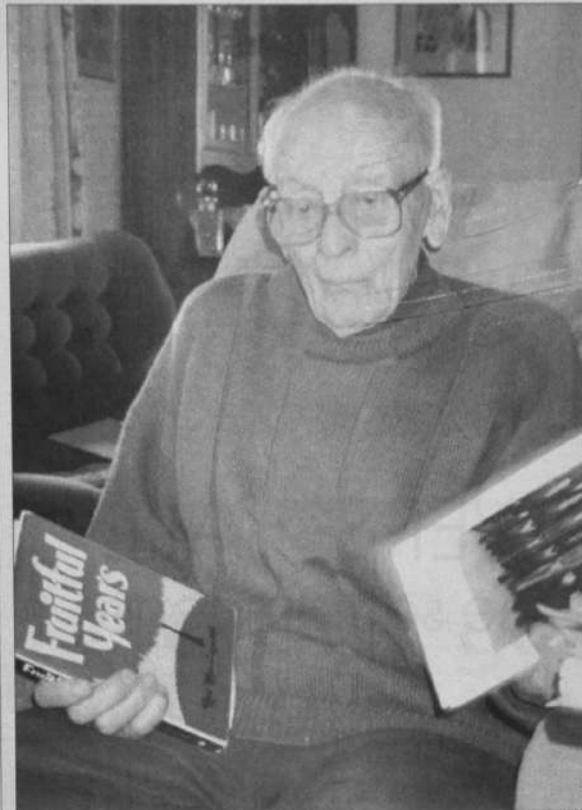
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**Hawke's Bay Fruitgrowers' Association
Centennial 1899-1999**



1974 president of the Hawke's Bay Fruitgrowers' Association, Fred Horrocks speaks at the 75th jubilee dinner.



Mr Horrocks looks through pictures of past events in the fruit-growing industry.

Orcharding not always first career choice

JOHN HART

At 89, there's not much happening in Hawke's Bay fruit growing that Fred Horrocks doesn't know about.

As the oldest member of the Hawke's Bay Fruitgrowers' Association (he's also a life member) Fred Horrocks can look back at a lifetime of growing fruit and active involvement in the politics of the industry. "Fruit growing has never been easy and I don't suppose it ever will be. But it has been an important part of Hawke's Bay's development over the years," he said.

Fred Horrocks was introduced to orcharding at the age of 20, when his family arrived from a vastly different way of life in the north of England. His father had been an engineer in the cotton spinning and weaving industries. His job involved installing machinery in mills around the world, then staying on to make sure the plant ran properly.

The family was in Mexico when Fred was born in 1910. Seven years later they fled the country as a major uprising broke out.

They made their way back across the Atlantic in an unescorted freighter, avoiding the German submarines responsible for destroying many British ships.

Back in Bolton, near Manchester, a young Fred Horrocks finished his schooling and went to work in a solicitor's office. He passed his early law exams but found law wasn't for him and moved to an accountant's office.

His father, meantime, had been working in Peru. Back in England in 1930 work was hard to find.

It was then he noticed an advertisement in a Bolton newspaper. It had been put in by a former Bolton man, working in Hastings, New Zealand. It was for a land agent, and offered an orchard in Omaha Road for sale.

"Within three weeks we were on our way, on the Rangitikei," Mr Horrocks said.

"We looked at several properties around Hastings and eventually settled on the one we saw advertised in Bolton."

But the orchard income figures supplied before the sale were false and the case ended up being decided by the Supreme Court in Napier. The Horrocks family won.

The times were tough and with the Depression approaching there wasn't too much money in orcharding.

The Omaha Road orchard was advanced for its time, with a packing shed and Fordson tractor with steel tyres. Spraying was done by hand. The chemicals were mixed in a vat in the shed and piped to various points around the orchard. The spray hose was connected and the trees sprayed individually. "But it was very difficult. We had a

major setback in 1938 when a 16 degree frost hit in October and wiped us out."

Mr Horrocks had been working on the orchard for his keep, but with a wife and son to support he was forced to find work wherever he could.

That included cutting thistles, hay-making and working for a grocer.

"Eventually I got eight weeks work at Tomcra and I thought I was made," he said.

But he was thrown in at the deep end in 1938 when his father died suddenly and he took over the orchard.

At the outbreak of war in 1939, Mr Horrocks volunteered for the Air Force, was accepted then told he had to stay home and produce food.

"We were producing fruit that no one wanted, and trying to produce vegetables for Waities without irrigation. The business was virtually bankrupt."

Then things started looking up. The demand for stonefruit increased, there was a contract with Watties to produce golden queens and towards the end of the war the Americans started buying fruit for their troops.

But with a wife, three children and a widowed mother to support, more income was needed and Mr Horrocks began contract spraying and cultivating.

As the years progressed, he leased and bought more land in conjunction with youngest son David, who died suddenly at the age of 44.

Throughout, Mr Horrocks had been active in the Hawke's Bay Fruitgrowers' Association. He became a committee member in 1948 and went to his first national conference representing Hawke's Bay in 1950 and didn't miss a conference until 1965.

For many years Mr Horrocks was vice-president of the Hawke's Bay Fruitgrowers' Association before becoming president.

He had a long involvement with many aspects of the industry as it worked to get its marketing and distribution structure set up.

He spent six years as a member of the price-fixing authority set up to establish a seasonal price for apples and many years on the employers industrial committee.

He cut his active involvement in orcharding in 1980, but then spent the next five seasons working for the Apple and Pear Board and assessing hail insurance.

Mr Horrocks still keeps up-to-date with developments in the industry but won't be drawn on how he sees the future.

"We've been asking ourselves that question for years," he said.

But he does still have a soft spot for some of the older varieties of apples, which have largely disappeared.

"Give me a Jonathan or Ballarat any day. At least you know where you stand with them."

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Product sectors work well

DAVID MARDON
HAWKE'S BAY FRUITGROWERS' ASSOCIATION

A few years ago I got badly off-side with the association president, Russell Robertson and vice-president Fred Horrocks over an article I sent to the *Orchardist*, a publication received by all fruit-growers in the country.

I had always admired the depth of debate the Nelson delegates took to the annual conferences and felt Hawke's Bay was always lacking in comparison.

The reason, I believed, lay in the fact that because of geography, Nelson had many small associations whereas Hawke's Bay had just the one. Again, geography played a role.

For many years 90 percent of the fruit grown here was within a five-mile radius of Hastings.

Having been to a conference in Nelson and after discussing the differences with some Nelson growers, I wrote to the *Orchardist* with the idea that

perhaps Hawke's Bay should break into maybe three associations.

This, I felt, would involve more growers and give more meaning to the local conference that was held each year.

I could see the benefits Nelson enjoyed, with plenty of debate over issues of the day. With our one association we had less grower debate.

The article was duly published, much to the dismay of the association leaders. They were most upset.

In later years, under the chairmanship of Colin Wake, we created product sectors within the association, pipfruit, summerfruit and kiwifruit.

This move was a very good substitute for my earlier idea. It brought more growers around the table and more debate was the result.

Over the years since then we have also held shed meetings where growers found it easier to get to their feet and speak.

Kiwifruit sector remains active

BY TONY LEICESTER, KIWIFRUIT SECTOR CHAIRMAN, HAWKE'S BAY FRUITGROWERS ASSOCIATION

This time last year we had just finished picking kiwifruit, which had suffered badly from the effects of the drought, with small size and low yields.

However Zespri came to the rescue and did an excellent job marketing and selling our fruit for prices up 25 percent on the previous year, giving an average return of \$5.55 per tray.

Remember, average production costs before debt servicing and interest are around \$31 a tray, so growers averaging 6000 trays per hectare land a net return before tax of \$15,300 per hectare. Who said there wasn't money in growing kiwifruit?

We have all just finished picking this year's crop which some, who have been growing for 15 to 20 years, say is the best crop harvested in 10 years.

It started back in November last year with great pollination, 10 days earlier than normal and rain through January which

gave fruit a tremendous boost at a critical stage of development.

Size this year is 3.5 counts bigger than 1988 and yields per hectare up around 900 trays, every kiwifruit grower's dream.

The kiwifruit sector within the association continues to remain active with meetings held generally after the KGI (Kiwifruit Growers Incorporated) so our local representative, Brian Calcina can inform the local growers what is happening at a national level.

John Evans, also a local kiwifruit sector member, keeps the region's perspective to the forefront on the operations and standards committee.

We now look forward to our marketer Zespri doing another excellent job in selling our fruit to an under-supplied world market which has been eagerly waiting for New Zealand's Zespri kiwifruit to arrive on their supermarket shelves.

With the dollar lower than this time last year and the competitive advantage through our single-desk structure, we look forward to achieving returns even better than last year.



Brian Calcina is the local representative of the KGI (Kiwifruit Growers Incorporated) and informs local growers what is happening at a national level.

A reservoir of experience

JEREMY DWYER
MAYOR OF HASTINGS

In reading some background material for this contribution to a distinctive milestone for both the Fruitgrowers' Association and the Hastings district, I came across an arresting observation in Mary Boyd's book *City of the Plains*.



Jeremy Dwyer

She writes: "By 1931, 2500 of the 3000 acres planted in commercial orchards were fruit-bearing and about 80 to 100 acres were being planted a year. Fruit growing remained a precarious occupation, for, quite apart from the natural hazards of blight, pests, frost, gales and hailstorms, there were serious marketing problems."

Such was the description of the industry in 1931 — the year of the quake. Has anything much changed

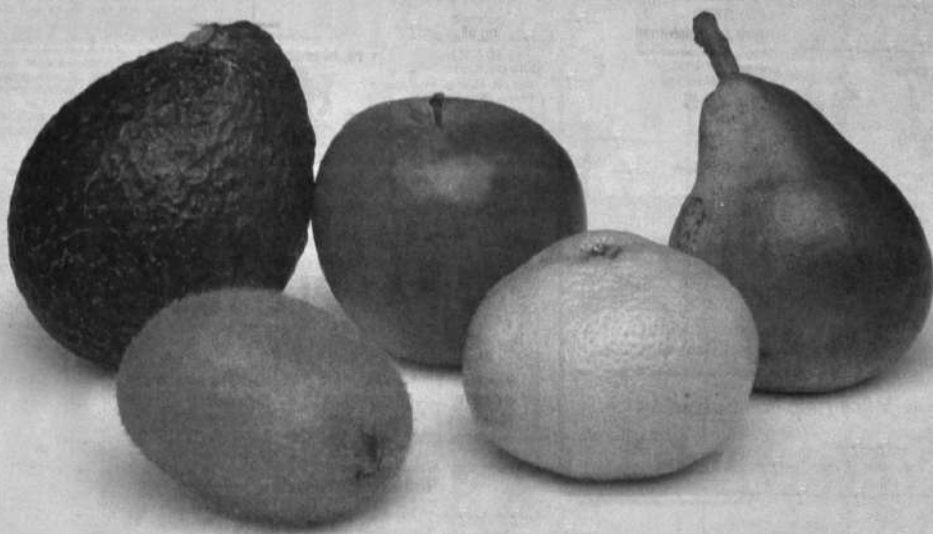
in the 68 years since? In 1899, the Hawke's Bay Fruitgrowers' Association was established to promote growers' interests with a strong committee of growers and about 30 members.

In this year, the association celebrates a century, and we should both congratulate and salute its role and the contribution of the sector, and of its families and businesses.

The sector has been a productive and positive economic driver for generations; its people a resilient lot of citizens; its association a constructive voice on many issues beyond self-interest.

It is a sign of the maturity of the region that the fruitgrowers' association should be marking 100 years — a reservoir of experience, knowledge and successes that benefits us all.

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Hawke's Bay Fruitgrowers' Association Centennial 1899-1999



Ken Harvey, orchardist, retailer and now manager of Fruitpackers (Hawke's Bay) has seen a change in the fruit industry from a relaxed lifestyle occupation to a complex industry.

Orchard 'lifestyle' occupation' now more complex

With a lifetime in the fruit and produce industry behind him, KEN HARVEY believes the industry still has many challenges. Mr Harvey, orchardist, retailer and now manager of Fruitpackers (Hawke's Bay), looks at the past, compares it with the present and looks at what might happen in the future.

Orcharding has always been regarded as a lifestyle and enjoyable employment.

Working in the country, out in the sun, the birds, the bees, the trees and the green grass. What could be better? Work four days a week, golf on Fridays, nothing to do in the winter when the harvest is over. Get an orchard and enjoy life.

That is how it appeared to the outsider and to some extent 30 years ago it was like that. New Zealand apples were sought after, there was a shortage on world markets and there were no controlled atmosphere coolstores. The markets were actually waiting for our apples to arrive.

The varieties were Cox orange pippin, golden delicious, red delicious, granny smith and dlaughtery. Pack them up, send them out and play golf. The total crop was three million cartons and everything that could be produced, picked and packed could be sold.

The Apple and Pear Board was "mother" to the growers. They could get up in the morning and think "what will I do today?" Pick for export, local market or processing. All for the APB and all at kind prices.

Even processing fruit had gone as high as 20 cents a kilogram. Now it is hard to get that for local market fruit.

Everything was going well. What should everyone do? Easy, expand, buy more land and plant more trees.

The Apple and Pear Board was obliged to, and took everything, so orcharding was a licence to print money. There was a steady rate of expansion, good orchard land, became sought after, blocks needed to be 20 acres not 10, new varieties became available and the old disappeared.

The crop started going up from three million to four, five, eight 10, then to 12

and 14 with projections that it would hit 20. The industry was big, important and blooming.

During these years the industry had many long-serving and well-known families who had worked hard to develop the Apple and Pear Board. By their efforts and levies they had built up a lot of the assets. Their children were to become the next generation of growers. The corporates were quick to catch on to the new licence to print money. Apples grew on trees and the board had to take them.

The APB was obliged to take everything so orcharding was a licence for money

Ken Harvey
FRUITPACKERS' MANAGER

They were not interested in lifestyle, golf, trees or birds, just the money.

They came into the industry as old varieties were going out. They planted new varieties and were against cross-subsidisation of grower returns for varieties with less returns but they wanted to use all the assets that had been provided by the older long-term growers. There was a period of levies and challenges as the money people entered the industry.

This industry is very long term. As most of the corporate orchards reached a profitable stage changes were taking place — world markets were being sup-

planted by other countries and today, if they sold their orchards, they would be lucky to get back bare land price. Profits, if any, were very thin.

The industry had been full of characters and colourful people as well as stooges and four personalities. To get unity with such different points of view is an enormous task but some people have persisted and stayed involved for many years, giving great service.

Where are we now? Today it is hard-nosed commercial reality. No "mother" looking after everyone, local market opportunities not always available and returns can be poor.

Process grade fruit brings between two and six cents a kilogram. An orchard with 60 percent debt can require \$14 a carton export just to break even.

Last year's returns were under \$15 a carton. This has meant financial hardship for many growers.

The industry is now very complex. Fruit is packed in three colour bands — low, Extra grade and high — and three ESH's (Extra Submission Profiles), which means fruit is submitted on the basis of maturity and four markets.

Fruit can only be packed according to market, grade or colour. If you consider the combination of these with 10 count sizes (only one size per pallet), a packhouse can have up to 70 segregation types on any one day.

The grower is now faced with low returns, the value of his property has reduced by nearly 30 percent in most cases and some growers are struggling for equity. So ask any grower today, if they have a lifestyle occupation, and play golf on Fridays and the answer will be sharp and vocal.

This industry revolves around hard work. Crooks do not like working hard so the benefits are that the people you associate and work with are good people.

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Congratulate the Hawke's Bay Fruitgrowers Association on their centenary.

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