



# PICK OF THE CROP

September 2009

## New season, new crops, new challenges

As the sound of diesel engines again fills the air in anticipation of a productive season, growers can be forgiven for feeling a bit 'edgy'. Events of the last season conspired against most for various reasons, be it drought, pests, the market, or the dollar.

So what will this season bring? Certainly weather patterns could mean plenty if we believe the experts. Volatility in the weather was once touted as a symptom of climate change but recent patterns suggest the opposite!

Instead, to survive in growing, the key factors are better planning, better communication, and more profitable crops.

Skeltons' aim of helping you grow better crops has been strengthened with recent additions to our field teams in the Waikato, Wairarapa, Gisborne, Horowhenua, and Manawatu regions. Technical advisors are just that – technical, prescribing best practice options for sound results with reliable crop protection products.

More and more these days growers may require the skills of someone to advise impartially and reliably, as the range of products available escalates at an increasing rate.

Skeltons' advisors have support from fellow colleagues dealing in pastoral agriculture, which gives us a good feel for the total growing environment of the country.

So, the ultimate challenge this season? Well apart from achieving good yields, it has to be controlling a new visitor from America called 'psyllid' whose damage now stretches the length and breadth of the North Island.

\$Millions have been lost and \$millions are being spent on securing future crops via growing techniques, research and training. Will it be enough though? Only time will tell.

*The Skeltons team*



## Onions emerge early

With new onion plantings in, it is essential to start out with and maintain a weed-free crop. Key to a good start is **Stomp** and subsequent flag sprays including **Chlorpyrifos** for maggot control.

Good news for growers this year with the registration of **Switch** for neck rot, **Aramo**, the new grasskiller cleared for UK supermarket use, a new formulation of **Frontier**, and perhaps a year or so until new thrip chemistry. Improved formulations for downy mildew control, round out a strong package this year.

**Ascend** still provides the basis for strong late season thrip control, even at the lower rate of 150 mls per hectare (providing pressure is low). **Proteus** slots in prior at strategic points, following the now widely used blocking strategies that safeguard the insecticide programme.



Onion growers can take heart from the research and development taking place and future new releases that will help ensure a clean crop while achieving those all important low residues markets now demand.

New Zealand growers have access to the best genetics, varieties to complement the different areas, and a passion for overcoming issues that arise. Let's see that passion continue this year.

*More overleaf*

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## Potato industry treads a careful path

With the worst fears realised of lost yield, lost crop, and depressed prices, the potato industry goes into battle mode this spring due to the menace that is the Potato/Tomato psyllid.

By now most growers are all too familiar with damage done via this dangerous Zebra Chip spreading vector.

Ongoing work continues to explain the perplexing relationship between the other issue; phytoplasma. As if that wasn't enough, researchers have plenty to establish when it comes to seed viability and 'liberabacter' damage thresholds (if there are any).

Control wise overseas experience has shown the importance of the 'neonictanoid' family as an 'in-furrow' application using 'imidacloprid' and 'thiamethoxam'. New Zealand growers do not have the choice available currently like their US counterparts so will be forced into older chemistry once again for 1 more year at least.

Organophosphate (OP) usage had been declining prior to the discovery of psyllid with predator build up; growers have to wind the clock back, regardless of choice. OP spraying must target nymphs and adults on a weekly basis irrespective of weather conditions; coverage will be vital in a good programme.

Monitoring will play a part but a more calendar-structured approach must be taken to get an upper hand in this all-important battle.

Research now reveals little room for error in controlling the population at an early crop stage, so any ovicidal or chemical options with high systemicity must be preferred as the product of choice. New chemistry awaits on the horizon – good things take time they say!

So with spring in the air and crops to plan for, the important thing for everyone is to have open forum discussion, attend workshops and generally collaborate across the industry as a whole. There is no room for bias or commercialism with this one. Growers' livelihoods depend on it.

## Asparagus, indicator for season ahead

The crop of asparagus has always been a very good indicator for the future of the season. This season will be no different.

Good early season control of weeds with **Roundup** then cultivation (not deep) is essential and destroys stemphyllium spores that will infect spears later.

Phytophthora control is critical using **Ridomil EC** prior to spear emergence with two applications of **Phosgard** over the fern giving the best result for growers currently.

A pre-emergence herbicide such as **Krovar** or short term residuals like **Linuron**, **Karmex**, and **Sencor**, has provided consistent results for many years and used alternately, will continue to do so.

If growers are concerned about herbicide strategies it is best to discuss with your Skeltons technical advisor.

## Seed highlights for 2009/2010

<b>Broccoli</b>	Seminis <i>Iron and Tradition</i>	For high quality attributes
<b>Cauliflower</b>	Syngenta <i>Highfeild</i> Syngenta <i>Summer Love</i> Seminis <i>Devina</i>	For high clubroot resistance Widely adaptable
<b>Lettuce</b>	Seminis <i>Constanza</i> Seminis <i>Stallion</i>	Excellent summer, autumn variety with downy mildew resistance to race 23 Summer iceberg with downy mildew resistance to race 25
<b>Pumpkin</b>	Terranova <i>Salanova - Vivanto</i> Terranova <i>Endurance</i>	Incised leaf 'one cut ready' Excellent storage, easily packed
<b>Spinach</b>	Terranova <i>Marabu</i>	Smooth leaf, dark leaf
<b>Sweetcorn</b>	Terranova <i>Springfield, Twin Falls</i> Seminis <i>Obsession</i>	Main season with rust resistance