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Types of kiwifruit orchardist

During 2004, 35 kiwifruit participants were interviewed (11 KiwiGreen Hayward - Green, 12 organic Hayward - Organic, 12 KiwiGreen Hort 16A - Gold). Using their responses we formed a profile of a typical kiwifruit orchardist (the 'core'), and then differentiated between Green, Organic and Gold to form different types of orchardist (Figure 1). These types, based on ARGOS data only, should not be generalised across the kiwifruit sector. They do not represent the best orchardist nor would any single person have all the characteristics of a type. Types are a useful way of comparing those who practice different systems and could be used, for example, to tailor communication and learning to appeal to different types. This work is ongoing and will be added to as the ARGOS programme continues.

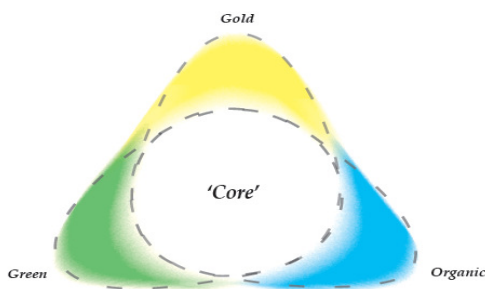


Figure 1: Orchardist types

The typical orchardist

The typical orchardist is a male who purchased his orchard with capital obtained in past employment. He does some mowing, pruning and/or spraying, as well as keeping

the books and organising labour, contractors and consultants. Contracted labour is often used for pruning, spraying, fertilising and harvesting. On-orchard work gives him a knowledge and awareness of the orchard environment. He feels confident about his orchard management. Financial viability is a major goal alongside a concern about the environmental impact of his practices. Constraints come from factors relating to the impact of the physical environment on yield, finances, and industry through its marketing, limiting management options and increasing bookwork. Risk is managed by mitigating the impact of frost, wind and spray drift and by having alternative sources of income. The orchard supports the community by providing many employment opportunities.

A primary motivation for being an orchardist is lifestyle. It is seen as 'family friendly'. The typical orchardist enjoys his work - being outside and engaging in physical work - and the autonomy of self-employment. This lifestyle is felt to be under threat from urban-oriented values. Non-orcharding neighbours are perceived to lack understanding and acceptance of standard orchard practices. Orcharding neighbours are seen to be the source of useful feedback and comparisons.

The typical orchardist links environmental health to birds' presence, the limited use of orchard sprays and soil health. He routinely relies on tests and recommendations from consultants and/or packhouse employees.

The typical Green orchardist

The Green orchardist is most like the typical orchardist, is content with his situation and is confident about his management practices. He considers KiwiGreen practices to be 'environmentally friendly', but is concerned about the impact of hydrogen cyanamide (e.g., Hicane™) on health. He relies on established production methods for kiwifruit, rarely engages in experimentation nor sees the need for further capital investment in the orchard.

The typical Green orchardist likes a tidy orchard and takes a pride in it, seeing a tidy orchard as a way of managing risk, an indicator of environmental health, or providing feedback that his management practices are correct. Threats to production are thought to originate from factors outside the direct control of the orchardist, for example, the climate, or the bush gullies.

For the Green orchardist, the orchard is often seen as a way of managing an 'active' retirement in which the work he does can be slowly decreased and replaced by contractors or a manager while he can continue to live on the property. There is a sense in which he (along with the Organic orchardist) is 'here to stay'.

The typical Organic orchardist

The Organic orchardist practices a philosophy of looking after the environment that surpasses good management practices and incorporates broader ideals about stewardship of the land. He wishes to create a 'haven' on his orchard which benefits, not only him, his family and neighbours, but also animals, both wild and domestic. He links his sense of wellbeing closely to his enjoyment of his orchard. The limited management tools he can use as an organic grower are seen as constraining.

An Organic orchardist is more prepared to admit to having problems with his orchard management practices. He is less confident, complaining that there is inadequate research on organic methods. Hence, he is likely to experiment. He wishes to demonstrate that kiwifruit can be grown just as well using organic methods.

The Organic orchardist recognises that there are natural limits to productivity and feels he is working *with* the vine to produce

kiwifruit. Quality is regarded as an intrinsic part of his product. One of his major goals is to increase his orchard's productivity and is he is very concerned about the possible impact of his neighbour's orchard practices on his orchard and the environment. He hopes he is providing a quietly restrained model of environmentally friendly practices.

The typical Gold orchardist

The Gold orchardist is the most willing to spend on capital investment and is likely to complain about costs. Costs, rather than just orchard gate returns, are regarded as essential to the assessment of financial wellbeing. As such a Gold orchardist has a more sophisticated understanding of his finances. If kiwifruit production provided less returns than expected he would probably sell, grow a more lucrative crop, or seek another challenge. He is very competitive with other Gold orchardists but also compares returns with Green. He is likely to be growing Hayward Green kiwifruit as well.

Lifestyle is very important to the typical Gold orchardist but it is seen as a commodity on which a dollar value can be placed, and is related to the area in which he lives and its attractions. Hence, the land value of his property is also very important to him. He is less likely to live on the orchard than other types, and, therefore, has less personal knowledge of the orchard environment.

The challenge of growing Gold kiwifruit appeals to the Gold orchardist. He expects to be rewarded for taking on the financial risk of planting a new variety. As a result, he is more likely to experiment with vine management and complain about not getting the vines pruned the way he wants. He talks frequently about how little is known about growing Gold kiwifruit and how the demand for better taste should come with well researched instructions.

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