

# PNG ban hurts

The Papua New Guinean Government has banned the importation of selected Australian fruit and vegetables from August 11, 2015.

The Department of Agriculture said the ban was based on PNG's desire to support domestic producers of vegetables.

Australian fresh vegetable exports to the PNG market were worth \$3.8 million to the Australian vegetable industry in 2014-15.

Farmer body AUSVEG said Australian vegetables had been exported to PNG without major issue for a number of years.

"This is concerning given the unexpected nature and timing of the announcement," AUSVEG national manager export development Michael Coote said.

"The main vegetables that are affected by this ban include a range of staple lines including onions, carrots, potatoes and tomatoes, along with other vegetable commodities such as capsicum, lettuce and celery among others."

He said the timing of the ban would impact Queensland growers as they were currently in season, with southern producers likely to be affected later in the season.

## Check mites

Grain growers can access a free-of-charge service to determine whether redlegged earth mite populations within their crops are resistant to insecticides.

The resistance testing service is part of a three-year Grains Research and Development Corporation-funded investigation into resistance in RLEM.

While there are no confirmed cases of resistance in south-east Australia as yet, resistance to synthetic pyrethroids has been confirmed in large populations of RLEM in WA, where some populations have also developed resistance to organophosphates.



**Future's bright . . .** Jamie Craig, left, and John Karl, among the hibernating kiwi fruit vines. Mr Craig says kiwi fruit grow "like a weed" in New Zealand but "take a lot persuasion" in Australia .

# Kiwi link proves fruitful

By Geoff Adams

If you are eating Australian kiwi fruit or nashi fruit then chances are it was grown in the Goulburn Valley.

And the two men who created that situation have decided to ease out of the business.

Bunbartha Fruit Packers grows about 90 per cent of Australia's nashis and between 65 to 70 per cent of our kiwi fruit.

About a week ago, the big New Zealand fruit marketer Seeka announced it had bought Bunbartha Fruit Packers for \$22 million.

Business partners Jamie Craig and John Karl, former "kiwis" themselves, "accidentally" acquired the business that eventually became one of the largest kiwi fruit producers in Australia.

The orchards produce about 3500 tonnes of kiwi fruit and about 2000 tonnes of nashis a year, with extra tonnages in pears, apricots, plums and cherries, employ

up to 150 people at peak times, and pay about \$6 million in wages.

Over the years they have exported to China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand, Europe and the Middle East.

Mr Craig was a shareholder in a nashi fruit company 25 years ago when the opportunity accidentally came up. He took over as chairman and when the company bought a fruit packing shed from a receivership sale, also became the owner of a kiwi fruit orchard.

He enlisted the aid of Mr Karl, an experienced kiwi fruit grower.

"We watched and listened and saw guys going broke," Mr Karl said wryly, as few Australians have been able to master the art of growing the finicky fruit.

"We decided to give it a try and eventually we decided it was a goer."

They took over the orchard in 1990 and in the

early days produced about 600 bins.

In recent times, with the benefit of experience and some innovations, they have trebled that to about 1800 bins over the same area.

Seeka chief executive Michael Franks said the purchase of 500 ha of land would include water shares.

"The purchase will be made without a crop, with the first harvest of cherries to start in November 2015," Mr Franks said.

"There is potential in the transaction to expand the orcharding area over time."

Mr Franks was at Bunbartha last week to nail down the deal.

"Seeka's and Bunbartha Fruit Packers' businesses are strategically aligned and complement each other," Mr Franks said.

"Both sell to similar customers at different times of the year, and now have the opportunity to integrate



**Fine vines . . .** Some of the kiwi fruit vines are more than 30 years old.

selling and marketing operations."

Mr Craig and Mr Karl will be staying connected with the business, Mr Karl as a part time consultant, and Mr Craig as the national marketing manager.

Mr Karl wants to try his hand at growing walnuts and perhaps run a few beef cows.

The men put their suc-

cessful partnership down to each handling a separate part of the business — Mr Craig in marketing and Mr Karl in orchard operations.

They are happy with the prospect the new owner wants to further develop the business.

"Our 10-year plan has become their two-year plan," Mr Craig said.

"They have far more resources at their disposal."

"THERE'S NOTHING LIKE IT ANYWHERE!"

# HENTY

## MACHINERY FIELD DAYS

September 22, 23 & 24, 2015

Exelpet Dog Trials  
Natural Fibre Fashion Awards  
Machine of the Year  
Farm Gate Produce  
Entertainment Celebrity Guests

GATE PRIZE

2 Nights for 2 people  
in Melbourne at  
the Radisson on  
Flagstaff Gardens

ON FLAGSTAFF GARDENS MELBOURNE

Meet  
Courtney &  
Michael off  
MasterChef, at  
Farm Gate

Pre-  
register on  
line for VIP  
tickets

Chainsaw  
sculpting  
demos  
each day

ROADS • DRAINAGE • DAMS

RB SELLARS

a new world every day

Visit [www.hmfd.com.au](http://www.hmfd.com.au) for full details