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# Reducing Agrichemicals Fact Sheet

## New Zealand Grown Onions

Across New Zealand's horticultural sector, we are constantly striving to improve our agronomic practices. More efficient and cleaner practices have downstream benefits for consumers and our local growers. They also help us uphold our international reputation as suppliers of premium, high quality produce.

Our local growers are always looking for new ways to holistically and sustainably manage their onions crops: from planting to growing to harvesting. We focus on reducing agrichemicals throughout the onion lifecycle, with better irrigation management, plant nutrition and soil care.



## Trusted Quality Onions

New Zealand onion growers have an industry-wide residue monitoring programme in place. We provide proactive biosecurity updates and conduct continuous research and trials for more efficient and environmentally friendly onion growing practices. What's more, our community of growers and industry work closely together to deliver a premium product, working collectively to achieve consistent premium quality.

**READ PAGE 2 - FOR MORE ON REDUCING AGRICHEMICALS**

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# NZ Onion Growers use Cleaner Agronomic Practices



## IRRIGATION MANAGEMENT

Efficient irrigation practices are important for maintaining crop health and minimising wastage. Our growers use a range of tools such as soil moisture monitoring, drip systems, and precise scheduling to ensure plant needs are met while preventing overwatering, which can lead to nutrient leaching. Effective and efficient irrigation is critical for onion growth and plant resilience.



## PLANT NUTRITION

Plant nutrition is imperative for strong onion growth and reducing plant stress. Maintaining plant health has a positive impact on lowering the onion crop's vulnerability to pests and diseases. Regular soil testing helps inform the correct application of nutrients - too much leads to run off, too little puts plants under stress. Our growers use a mix of slow-release and organic fertilisers, using data to ensure optimised application timing and nutrient efficiency.



## SOIL STRUCTURE

Healthy soil structure improves aeration, drainage, and root development, creating onion growth conditions that naturally suppress disease and reduce the need for agrichemical intervention. Practices such as reduced tillage, cover cropping, and maintaining organic matter help build resilient soils that support sustainable, long-term onion production.



## THRIPS MANAGEMENT

Effective thrips management combines regular plant monitoring combined with reducing weed hosts, and timing irrigation to disrupt thrips movement. Integrating resistant onion varieties, biological controls, and using selective sprays only when thresholds are reached helps minimise chemical use while protecting yield and quality. The damage thrips cause to plants creates an entrance for pathogens into the plant and needs to be mitigated.



## DISEASE MANAGEMENT

Sustainable disease management in onions relies on crop rotation, good paddock hygiene, and optimal spacing to improve airflow and reduce the moisture conditions that favour pathogens. By integrating resistant varieties, timely monitoring, and targeted fungicide use only when necessary, growers can significantly lower agrichemical inputs while maintaining crop health.



# New Zealand Onion Sector Projects

Onions New Zealand and local onion growers and exporters, work collaboratively to ensure they're producing a safe onion crop for domestic and international customers. Collectively, the New Zealand onion sector has worked to invest in food safety programmes to meet the specific food safety regulations of our import partners.

## 1. Best-practice irrigation for managing *Stemphylium* Leaf Blight in onions

Drip irrigation reduces splash and wet leaves, which can minimise the SLB infection and risk of spread. Grower resources have been developed to highlight the best time of day for irrigation, irrigation methods, adapting to rainfall and water needs throughout the onion crop growth stages.

## 2. Onion Agronomic Trial, Pukekohe Research and Demonstration Farm

Research project using multiple onion plots to measure disease prevalence in poorly managed agronomic conditions: poor groundwork, poor thrips control, poor irrigation and poor soil nutrition. This trial proves that better agronomic practices can reduce the prevalence of disease. On site grower workshops are educating our industry about the benefits of growing better, healthier plants, not just relying on chemistry.

## 3. AI-driven Spore Trap

Exploring technology driven solutions to allow real-time detection and tracking of airborne plant diseases. This tech allows growers to tailor treatment programmes specifically where and when they are needed, rather than applying blanket treatments.

By purchasing New Zealand grown onions, you can be sure that you are buying a high quality, safe product. We take the safety of our food and the reputation of our produce very seriously.

NZ ONIONS  
LAST LONGER

New Zealand produced onions can be stored for up to nine months after harvest.

NZ ONIONS  
TASTE BETTER

New Zealand grown onions have a complex flavour profile which is internationally recognised.

THE  
SUSTAINABLE  
CHOICE

Our onions are lifted from the soil and lay out in the sun to dry naturally on their growing beds.

GOOD FOR YOU  
AND YOUR  
FAMILY

Onions are recognised for their nutritional value and count toward your 5+ a day of fruits and vegetables.

**NEW ZEALAND GROWN ONIONS - TASTE THE DIFFERENCE TODAY!**

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