

THE AHUWHENUA TROPHY TE KAWERONGO

JULY 2024

»» Wairarapa Moana ki Pouakani Incorporation triumph to win Ahuwhenua Trophy for Dairy

There was an outpouring of excitement when Wairarapa Moana ki Pouakani Incorporation (WMI) were announced as the 2024 winner by the Minister for Māori Development Hon Tama Potaka at the awards dinner held in Hamilton in May. Whānau rose up and joined the chairman of WMI Kingi Smiler on stage as the trophy was presented.

The function was attended by 860 people including the Prime Minister, Rt Hon Christopher Luxon, Hon Nicola Willis, Kiingi Tūheitia, Ta Tumu te Heuheu and Lady Susan te Heuheu, along with diplomats from the United Kingdom, Ireland, and the European Union.

There were representatives of central and local government, agribusiness leaders, sponsors of the awards, previous winners and whānau from all the finalists.

A replica trophy, a special gold medal and an historic replica certificate were also presented to representatives of WMI by the CEO of Te Puni Kōkiri Dave Samuels, the Acting Director-General of the Ministry for Primary Industries Glenn Webber and Minister Nicola Willis.

WMI is based at Mangakino in the central North Island and consists of 12 dairy units across 4,300ha, plus three dairy support units. It entered one of its 12 farms in the competition - Farm 4, and this was the winning farm. The property has a milking platform of 300ha, milking 980 cows and producing 416,000 kg/MS. All up WMI produce about five million kilograms of milk-solids from their 12,000 cow herd and are the largest supplier to milk processor Miraka Ltd.

The other finalist in the competition was Whakatōhea Māori Trust Board whose dairy farm is near the Eastern Bay of Plenty township of Opoitiki.

Minister Potaka described the Ahuwhenua Trophy as the most prestigious award in Māori farming that acknowledges and celebrates business excellence in NZ's important pastoral



and horticultural sectors. He says for Māori the award is a demonstration of success and pride but also a demonstration of identity which is inextricably linked into land, seas, forests mountains and rivers

"What we saw at the awards night was an expression of identity," he says.

Minister Potaka says there is a real conviction among Māori farmers and Māori practitioners that they have an intergenerational responsibility for the future of their land and that this will not be reduced by the ups and downs of the current economic climate. He says such views are also held by many Pakeha farming families who take a long term, intergenerational view of caring for their land and future generations.

Minister Potaka praised the high quality of all the finalists and looked forward to seeing more of their future success.

"I've seen first-hand the hard work, brilliance and innovation demonstrated by Māori farmers. It's a critical part of the Māori economy and is a powerful driver in ensuring we get the New Zealand economy back on track. It's about building economic benefits while ensuring kaitiakitanga – nurturing their whenua for future generations and inspiring others," he says.

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Outstanding year for Ahuwhenua

From the Chair – Nukuhia Hadfield

It has been amazing watching the 2024 Ahuwhenua Trophy for Excellence in Māori Farming and the Ahuwhenua Young Māori Farmer Award unfold and become another highly successful competition round. For the first time in several years, we have not had the disruptions of Covid-19 or the adverse weather events that have plagued the country and challenged our entrants and those organising the events themselves.



Right from the start when we called for entrants, through to the special day at Parliament when we announced our finalists and then followed up with their field days and finally the awards dinner, everything has run like clockwork. Making this a successful event requires great commitment, energy, professionalism and an agility to navigate unforeseen circumstances that somehow always seem to arise. But all of those involved, the entrants, finalists, judges, and the team organising the events have worked collaboratively and made it work.

I would like to especially thank our loyal sponsors, without whom we would not be able to run this competition. You are foundation stone on which we build this competition and continue to add to the legacy of Ta Apirana Ngata and Lord Bledisloe. We are also grateful for the support of the Ministers of Māori Development and Agriculture, and Te Tumu Whakarae mō Te Puni Kōkiri – our trustees who continue to support this competition through the good and difficult times.

The Ahuwhenua Trophy and the Ahuwhenua Young Māori Farmer Award are a splendid recognition of what has been done by Māori farmers today and that this high level of excellence that has been achieved will not slip away as enthusiastic and talented young people take up the baton for the future.

From this newsletter you will see how much has been achieved by so many in such a short time and just a reminder, our attention will shortly turn to the 2025 competition for sheep and beef.

The winners view



Kingi Smiler, Chair of WMI, said after winning the competition he was both elated and relieved, adding it was a tough competition being up against Whakatōhea Māori Trust Board. He says he takes a lot of pride in winning and it is a reward for all the WMI whānau, as they have a very dedicated team who do a lot of work around strategy, planning and execution, and it is this teamwork that makes these things happen.

“Personally, I like a challenge, and meeting that challenge requires attention to detail. It’s great how our team works together and in doing so, that they have managed to achieve this award,” he says.

Meanwhile Nukuhia Hadfield, Ahuwhenua Trophy Chair, congratulated both finalists saying they exhibited the qualities that make us proud to be farmers and proud to be Māori. She says both have carried on the fortitude of their tūpuna to change their iwi and hapū outcomes from adversity to success and now to excellence.

Nukuhia also praised the finalists in the Ahuwhenua Young Māori Farmer award saying they join the impressive alumni of past finalists and winners whose enthusiasm, competence and commitment to agricultural/horticultural industries is clearly evident.

“This gives me the confidence to feel that the sector is in good hands and will evolve in new and innovative ways to the betterment of Aotearoa and the Māori people,” she says.



For Finance Minister, Nicola Willis, it was her first experience of attending the awards evening and she praised the event saying that it was wonderful to see the dairy industry celebrated in this way. She says she was particularly impressed with the finalists in the Ahuwhenua Young Māori Farmer Award.

“The Māori economy is huge and has been growing very fast and is of massive potential. It’s grown from \$16 billion to \$70 billion in only 20 years and is making a huge difference to the whole of the economy of the country,” she says.

Minister Willis says it’s great to see post settlement iwi making sound investments, creating more value and employing more people and says she expects to see even more of that in the coming years.

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Young Māori Dairy Winner Announced

Emotions spilled over when 29 year-old Ben Purua was named as the winner of the Ahuwhenua Young Māori Farmer Award for Dairy. There was spontaneous waiata and haka as Ben, the Farm Manager at Waimakariri Lands Ltd, near Tirau stepped forward to accept his award from Dr Charlotte Severne, the Māori Trustee and Chief Executive of Te Tumu Paeroa.

The other two finalists in the competition this year were Hannah Speakman and Shayden Gardiner. This the second time Ben has entered the competition, where he was a finalist in 2021.

Dr Severne praised all the finalists and says the country needs more young people like them to enter the primary sector. She also presented each of them with a \$7,500 scholarship that they can use to further develop their careers.

Ben Purua thanked his whānau and friends and paid a special tribute to his wife Nikki whom he says has been his greatest supporter and who encouraged him to enter the competition again. He says missing out the first time was hard, but it was a learning curve and he took the opportunity to see where he could improve.

"Farming has been my saviour. I don't know where I would have been today without it. It saved my life, saved my family and I hope I can now help other families to break the cycle," he says.

Lead Judge Matiu Julian of Primary ITO says every year choosing the



AHUWHENUA YOUNG MĀORI FARMER AWARD



Ahuwhenua Young Māori Farmer/Grower ambassador is always difficult. By entering the award, the finalists quickly realise they are a part of a long history of Māori endeavour, resilience, and tenacity. "The whole competition is about personal development and we take the finalists into new spaces, where they get to meet a whole new whānau who enable them to grow, connect and learn," he says.

Matiu Julian says over the past three years, Ben Purua has grown exponentially, and now wants to support his community and be a representative of the Ahuwhenua community. He will join an impressive alumni group of young leaders who are advancing the Māori agribusiness sector into the future.

A dairy industry perspective

The chair of DairyNZ Jim Van der Poel was one of many farming leaders present on the night. He says you could feel the passion in the room and what the awards meant to the people and their family and friends.

He says an example of this was Ben Purua and



says his story is amazing and he deserves great credit for the way he's turned his life around. He says you could see how much that meant to him and his whānau.

"We need to share Ben's story, not just with the dairy industry, but with the wider public because it is so amazing how he had made good after some terrible times in his life," he says.

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The road to the final

The year began with the announcement of the finalists in the competition at the historic Grand Hall at Parliament.

This was hosted by the Minister for Māori Development, Hon Tama Potaka along with the Hon Todd McClay who is also a trustee of the competition. More than 100 guests attended, including politicians, diplomats, government officials, Māori and agribusiness leaders and the finalists themselves.

Minister Potaka told the gathering how pleased he was to see such a high calibre of Māori dairy farms featured as finalists this year. He said the finalists genuinely exemplify excellence in the dairy sector and, through their innovation and hard work, are inspiring the next generation of Māori farmers.

“Māori farming is a critical anchor of the Māori economy and a powerful driver of the Aotearoa economy. I’m particularly proud of the way so many Māori farmers balance economic benefit with sustainable environmental protection,” he said.

Nukuhia Hadfield said once again the competition has attracted incredible entrants from around the country. She said the dairy sector, like all primary sectors, faces huge challenges such as global financial disruption, war, rising costs and some major markets that are taking longer than expected to recover from the Covid pandemic. She said our Māori dairy farmers are not immune from these challenges, but this has not deterred them from entering this year’s competition

“This year’s finalists, along with the other entrants in this competition, show the strength and determination of Māori dairy farmers to successfully overcome adversity and get on with the daily task of producing their products in a truly sustainable way. Aotearoa should be proud of what they do and the Ahuwhenua Trophy competition ensures that their efforts are recognised and celebrated,” she said.



THE FIELD DAYS

One of the highlights of the competition, the public field days give finalists an opportunity to showcase their properties and for people to see firsthand why these particular farms have been selected.

This year events have been well attended with 250 - 300 people coming to WMI and to Whakatōhea, and visitors were clearly impressed with what they saw.

At the WMI field day visitors were taken on a walking tour of the farm to hear further information from farm staff and advisors. One of the advisors was Dr Gavin Sheath who has had a stellar career at AgResearch as farm systems scientist. He told visitors that a key to the success of Farm 4 was the good systems that are in place and the support for these at a management level.

He said his role has been to reposition Farm 4 into a highly efficient property but which has a low impact on the environment. “For example, we worked out that winter cropping was using too much nitrogen so they eliminated winter cropping and ended up halving their use of nitrogen”.

Kingi Smiler, WMI Chair said it was a fantastic day with a great turnout. He said the WMI trustees, senior management and farm team did very well, and with lots of questions during the presentations it was very informative.

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The road to the final.... continued

A week later at Whakatōhea Māori Trust Board's farm held an equally successful field day. After being welcomed on at Terere Marae, guests heard presentations from trustees and Whakatōhea staff and were later taken by bus to the dairy farm to see stock and hear further information about their farm systems. Among the guests on the day was the Minister for Māori Development, Hon Tama Potaka.

He described the field day as outstanding, saying it was a day to celebrate Māori farming and Māori business, as well as New Zealand's primary sector. "This is something that Māori are massive contributors to and will continue to be in a growing and expanding form over time," he says.



Whakatōhea Māori Trust Board

During the farm tour it was the turn of farm advisor Mark Johnson and farm manager Josh Collier to explain some of the details about the farm and the challenges it has faced in the past year. Incessant rain has been a major impediment causing ponding in paddocks damaging pasture making it hard for staff and stock.

He said in the end the cows gave up and just didn't want to eat the grass because it was so full of water and lacked nutrition.

But Mark Johnson said things have picked up and like most farms in the district grass growth is phenomenal. He said maize yields are hitting close to 25 tonnes per hectare over the 19 ha's planted and now the critical thing is managing grass growth. He says the other positive side is the investment in new infrastructure on the farm, such as a new dairy shed.

The CEO of Whakatōhea, Dickie Farrar said the field day was fantastic with people coming from afar to learn about the farm and the history of Whakatōhea. She said she

found it inspirational seeing all the hard work of her staff coming together, as well as to understand the tremendous effort that goes into the running of the competition, including the judging process.

Dickie Farrar said Whakatōhea learned a lot from the competition process, including by attending the field day of the other finalist, WMI.

Reflecting on the field days Trophy Chair, Nukuhia Hadfield said the two finalists in the competition ran excellent field days which attracted very good numbers of people. She said one of the highlights of the field days for her was having the three Ahuwhenua Young Māori Farmers finalist present and hearing the enthusiasm and passion they spoke about the industry. Nukuhia says there is a need to harness and encourage that enthusiasm.



Wairarapa Moana ki Pouakani Incorporation

WHERE TO NOW

When one competition ends, planning for the next one starts almost immediately.

Entries for the sheep and beef competition close Friday 13 December, and first round judging will take place during late January/early February. The finalists will be announced in late-February. The field days for the finalist will be in March/April and awards dinner will be held in Palmerston North on Friday 6 June 2025.

Details of the Ahuwhenua Young Māori Farmer Award for Sheep and Beef will be announced later in the year. Check our website [Home | Ahuwhenua Trophy](#) to get the latest details.

Finally, a big thank you once again to our very special sponsors who make this event possible.

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SPONSORS & OTHER NEWS

A special thanks to all our sponsors which make the Ahuwhenua Trophy Competition and the Ahuwhenua Young Māori Farmer/Grower award. It is with their generous support we are able to stage the competition and all the amazing events which make up this prestigious award.



Ben Purua.
Photo Alphapix

A CHAT WITH BEN PURUA

Huge congratulations to Wairarapa Moana ki Pouakani Incorporation and Ben Purua! The FarmIQ team were thrilled to attend the awards evening in Hamilton and were incredibly inspired by the winners' stories of innovation, overcoming adversity and turning passions into successful businesses.

FarmIQ's own Russell MacKay recently sat down with Ben Purua on our Better Together podcast, learning more about how Ben got into farming. Ben's speech at the awards evening was truly moving, and his journey through hardship and tough times, to his current success as a farm manager is humbling.

Ben is a man who has made mistakes, but also owns them and is now helping other men make sure they don't go down the path he was once destined for. You can listen to the podcast here: <https://thebettertogetherpodcast.buzzsprout.com>



Ko te pae tawhiti, whāia kia tata; ko te pae tata, whakamaia kia tina.

Fonterra congratulates finalists, Whakatōhea Māori Trust Board and Wairarapa Moana ki Pouakani Incorporation along with Ben, Hannah, and Shayden.

Our farmer owned Co-op is a long-time proud Ahuwhenua Trophy sponsor, and our farmers are at the heart of everything we do, including over 240 pāmu Māori. We have a new capital structure which provides more flexible shareholding options and tools like farm insight reports, digital tools on-farm and a network of 60+ Farm Source stores where farmers can turn their money into more with a rewards programme.

Bill Akuhata (Tūhoe) brings 13 years manufacturing experience into a dedicated role supporting pāmu Māori to get the most value of being part of the Co-op, alongside Farm Source teams across the motu.

Our Co-op's aspiration is sincere integration of Te Ao Māori and we have invested in building connection, focusing on three strategic Pou; Tāngata (People), Taiao (Environment) and Tuakiri – (Identity). We employ over 1,500 kaimahi Māori across the motu, who affiliate to 62 iwi. We continue to explore ways of partnering with Māori and supporting communities through programmes like Kickstart Breakfast, Feeding NZ Communities, Hapori & Sustainable Catchments.



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