



# Celebrating Market Access Solutionz's significant contributions to horticulture

by Elaine Fisher

As Market Access Solutionz celebrates two decades of service to New Zealand horticulture, many of its significant achievements have been acknowledged by industry leaders.

Established to solve market access challenges for New Zealand's primary sector and help it thrive and grow, MAS has met and continues to exceed the goals it set 20 years ago when it was founded by Stephen Ogden and Nikki Johnson.

Today Stephen is managing director of MAS and Nikki, who left the company in 2016, is Strategic Projects Manager - Northern Hemisphere Supply at Zespri International.

In keeping with its founding principles, the Wellington-based company's team of six continues to provide independent technical services in biosecurity, food safety, crop protection, export market requirements, plant health research management and industry management.



**Peter Silcock, former CEO of HortNZ** remembers when Stephen and Nikki left their roles with what was then the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) to set up MAS.

"It took a leap of faith and determination to form MAS, but Nikki and Stephen could see the need for the industry, and particularly smaller product groups, to have access to independent advice.

"The formation of MAS was a big step forward in terms of market access and biosecurity technical capability and MAS has played a significant role in increasing horticultural exports from New Zealand."

**James Kuperus, CEO of Onion NZ** says MAS assisted New Zealand onion producers to maintain trade with the European Union when its pest and disease requirements changed two years ago.

"We were looking at quite significant trade losses. However, MAS was able to find a practical and pragmatic solution for inspection which enabled us to maintain our trade."

The expertise and breadth of knowledge MAS has built across many industry sectors in two decades is invaluable, James says. "MAS has been a steady hand for our sector. It has evolved and adapted to ensure it keeps pace with, or even ahead of market trends.

"Stephen has incredible experience in the sector and with the Ministry for Primary Industries. The work he has done in the last 20 years for the horticultural sector is exceptional. This anniversary is a great time to acknowledge the work of Stephen and his team."

**Marie Dawkins, former CEO of Summerfruit NZ** says MAS played a significant role in helping New Zealand cherry growers gain access to Japan and Korea.

"Summerfruit, as a small organisation with a limited budget, was not in a position to have a person in house to work on market access research. When MAS was formed Summerfruit was one of its first clients.

"One big success was getting cherries into Japan without fumigation. Stephen pretty much designed the assurance programme and worked closely with growers and packhouses to ensure it was managed correctly."

MAS also helped gain access to Korea for New Zealand cherries and worked successfully on regaining access for apricots to the EU.

"Stephen led the hard-won battle to maintain a pre-clearance programme for Summerfruit to be exported to Western Australia. He worked with growers and packhouses to keep the programme viable and workable. Both would have been a lot more difficult without the work of the MAS team.

"MAS drove research to get agri-chemicals registered for minor crops or to retain those which might otherwise be removed. For a relatively small sector, Summerfruit has punched above its weight and has some considerable successes. Stephen has been a part of making that happen."



Nikki Johnson, Hon Jim Sutton (Minister of Agriculture 10 Dec 1999 to 19 Oct 2005), Stephen Ogden at the MAS 2002 launch function

**Wayne Hall, Citrus NZ Chairman** says MAS has become a 'one stop shop' for the industry. First Nikki, then Rebecca Fisher and now Peter Ensor have taken the role of Citrus NZ executive manager, offering a wide range of management and consulting services to the industry.

That work includes the introduction, eight years ago, of the successful early season testing programme for Navel oranges. "MAS and Citrus NZ work alongside growers and supermarkets to ensure consumers enjoy great tasting fruit."

MAS has helped Citrus NZ develop a strong relationship with supermarkets. "We now meet regularly with representatives of both Woolworths (NZ) and Foodstuffs for positive discussions about the industry and the growing season and we encourage retailers to come to our conferences to talk about their business."

Organising Citrus NZ conferences is another role for MAS which also carries out research work. This is headed by Sally Anderson, MAS Scientific Services Manager. "Overall, the MAS team provides us with a comprehensive service."

**Helen Gear, Executive Officer Plant Market Access Council (PMAC)** says MAS, with its 20 years of experience, is fast becoming horticulture's institutional knowledge keeper in Wellington.

"MAS has areas of experience not found in other sectors. It is particularly good at providing services to smaller sectors which don't have the ability to employ someone full time, ensuring they keep up with the rapidly changing world and increasingly complex market access requirements."

MAS has represented Summerfruit NZ on the PMAC board and currently represents Citrus NZ. "MAS is particularly valuable on the board and working groups because it has views across more than one sector, bringing valuable knowledge and perspective."

Helen says MAS makes another less formal, but still valuable contribution to the industry through the social events it hosts twice a year.

"These are opportunities for representatives of government departments and industry leaders to get together socially, fostering important relationships."

**Stephen Ogden, MAS Managing Director** says horticulture's industry organisations provide incredible support for growers, and it is a privilege for the MAS team to work with them to deliver the services and support that help create a robust primary sector.

"We are proud of our achievements to date and will continue to evolve to meet the new challenges of the next 20 years."

Standing L-R - Lisa Wong, Stephen Ogden, Peter Ensor, Sally Anderson Seated L-R - Stephen Salter, Chrissy Williams