

BAYLEYS

“NZ INC.”

brand getting closer

As New Zealand's consumer markets become more diverse and sophisticated in their tastes and needs, conversation here at home is growing about the need for a cohesive "NZ story" that compels them to continue choosing New Zealand food products.



The conversation has become more urgent over this year as this country's competitors have ramped up their own efforts to pitch their particular story to the same markets the New Zealand primary sector supplies.

The highest profile is Ireland's Origin Green initiative. Setting standards for sustainability and animal welfare, it is achieving major buy-in across the farming and processing sector winning the hearts and minds of the Irish public along the way.

But Bayleys' former national country manager Simon Anderson says New Zealand also has a story to tell about its food origins and production that is at least as compelling as Ireland's, and one that is already evolving throughout the provinces.

"When you look over the landscape of our primary sector you can see this. In Hawke's Bay we are seeing an extremely successful regional apple industry developing with some really innovative marketing and brands that are going from strength to strength. Alongside that is a high value artisan food product sector that is putting a local 'story' behind the products."

He also points to Marlborough's hugely successful wine industry, with Sauvignon Blanc enchanting taste buds around the world and drawing its own following of wine tourists and aficionados.

"Meantime Otago and quality Merino products go together, with some iconic brands like IceBreaker combining provenance with ethics, functionality and style."

Departing Massey University vice-chancellor and New Zealand food champion Steve Maharey, said the opportunity to create a "New Zealand story", wrap it in a quality standard mark and spin it off into other areas of the economy like tourism is significant.

"We often don't give visiting overseas tourists enough to spend their money on while here. We want them to be able to enjoy high quality food in regions like Marlborough, and then know they can also buy it when they get back home."

He, like many, is fully supportive of a collaborative effort to tell a story embodied in a certifiable quality mark about New Zealand's food, where it comes from, how it is grown and the people behind it.

“ We have a story to tell embodied in a certifiable quality market about New Zealand's food, where it comes from, how it is grown and the people behind it. ”

Similarly dry stock farmer and trade envoy Mike Petersen is confident a unified plan for a national brand is starting to come together.

This is after acknowledging he has spent years "banging on" about the issue. He is careful to point out that having products certified with a stamp of national integrity does not reduce the importance of also having a good product brand on top of it.

"But that stamp provides the foundation, and certifies the integrity of the product to the consumer."

He says New Zealand is unique in how it exports almost 90 percent of what it grows. But is also exporting to increasingly diverse markets, compared to countries like Ireland where the bulk of product is sold within a relatively homogenous European market.

With that comes a need for New Zealand to be able to make the message, or the "story" more adaptable to the markets being pitched too.

“ New Zealand is unique in how it exports almost 90 percent of what it grows. As we are exporting to increasingly diverse markets, we need to make the message or "story" more adaptable. ”

For example market research conducted by Caroline Saunders, Lincoln University professor of trade and environmental economics, has shown Chinese consumers rank animal welfare less than Indian consumers. Indian consumers rate animal welfare 15 percent more significantly than their Chinese counterparts.

"We have the tools and models developed to understand each market segment, so we can become very targeted and responsive to what consumers want to hear," says Petersen.

Petersen is hopeful the drive for a national integrity stamp will spread further, and fully expects to see something formulated within this year.

Simon Anderson says many New Zealand primary producers are already well on the way to fulfil the standards a "NZ certified" type mark would require.

"We are already lifting sustainability standards with water plans in every region, we have some of the best animal welfare standards in the world with (largely) free range livestock systems, and we have farmers absolutely committed to being the best in the world."

