

HUARAHI DEVELOPMENTS MAORI TRADE MISSION

A Maori trade mission recently returned from Japan and Malaysia, excited about prospects for horticultural exports.

Huarahi Developments, a joint venture company, combines the resources of the Maori people in the Bay of Plenty with the expertise of a well established and successful New Zealand company, TNL Group Limited of Nelson. Eight Maori trust boards or incorporations hold 60 percent of the shares in Huarahi with TNL holding the remaining 40 percent.

TNL Group Ltd is a large diverse company involved in freighting, tourism, minerals, horticulture and export.

Innovative approach

Huarahi was formed only 12 months ago but has purchased a processing plant at Taneatua which is being renovated for the current season's production.

Huarahi has entered into contracts with Maori growers and will provide planting materials and expert advice as well as purchasing and processing their crops. In keeping with its innovative approach, Huarahi sent a trade mission to see for itself the requirements of the market and to develop long-term trading associations.

The marketing of Huarahi produce is carried by TNL Export Limited, but it was intended to show the buyer by way of the trade mission the high degree of Maori grower participation in the company and also to promote the development of Maori leaders by exposing them to the opportunities and realities of overseas trading. The mission was partly financed by the Department of Maori Affairs with these aims in mind.

Long-term needs

As expected, a fine rapport was developed between members of the mission and representatives of the Japanese and Malaysian companies visited. There was a strong interest expressed in the Huarahi concept and a willingness on the part of a number of organisations to form long-term associations with Huarahi.

Offers were made to supply Huarahi with seeds of new crops of varieties not grown in New Zealand and to provide advisers for periods to Huarahi to assist in the growing and presentation of produce for market.

High demand

Demand is high this year for the crops being grown by Huarahi and particularly our production fills a gap in the Japanese market, arriving at a time



Meeting with Toshoku Ltd, importing agents in Osaka, Japan's main port for agricultural produce. (back row left to right) Robert Mahuta, Mr Ikegami, Roha Pahuru, Waaka Vercoe, Mr Takubo — managing director, Bruce Robinson, Mr Kamabayashi — general manager. (front row left to right) Stavros Kolovos, Claude Edwards, Dexter Taylor.

of high prices and when it is least likely to be in competition with produce from the Japanese farmer. The mission was satisfied that Huarahi can find a permanent place for its produce, provided very high quality standards are maintained and the produce is delivered on time at reasonable cost.

Japan impressed all members of the mission. The densely populated country where no scrap of cropping land is wasted and the people are polite and friendly, left a strong impression. Japanese incomes are relatively high, and they are demanding in their quality standards. They can afford the best and they expect us to produce high quality fruit and vegetables and to deliver on time.

High quality needed

Malaysia although smaller and less developed is another fast growing market and a number of opportunities were identified.

The mission returned home fascinated by the people they had met and the things they had seen, but with a firm conviction that we can produce the high quality crops needed by these markets. So long as we are professional

and competent in our production and handling, we can sell to Japan and Malaysia at prices which will give our growers a good return and provide many jobs for our people. It is essential that the marketing be well planned and coordinated with processing, storage and shipping being carefully coordinated beforehand.

Mission members

The mission was led by Claude Edwards of Opotiki, a farmer, and Chairman of Huarahi, Deputy Chairman of the Opotiki Dairy Company and Chairman of the Whakatohea Trust Board. With him were Dexter Taylor, General Manager — Marketing and Development from TNL Group and also a director of Huarahi; Waaka Vercoe Secretary of Huarahi and Secretary of Te Arawa Trust Board; Roha Pahuru of Hicks Bay, a Huarahi grower; Bruce Robinson Deputy Secretary for Maori Affairs, and Robert Mahuta, Director of Maori Studies and Research at the University of Waikato.

While in Japan, they were assisted by Stavros Kolovos, a marketing executive with TNL who has been responsible for coordinating the sale of the Huarahi produce.