

NEWS FROM MG

GROWER PROFILE

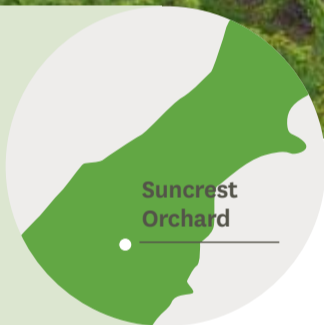
SUNCREST ORCHARD LTD

A family orchard built on steady evolution

Main crops grown



Cherries



Central Otago's Suncrest Orchard has been shaped by more than forty years of family persistence, curiosity and steady evolution. What began as a small mixed orchard on Ripponvale Road has grown into one of Central Otago's more progressive cherry operations, with original owners, Doug and Eletheria Jones, still working on the property today and their son Michael leading the orchard and packhouse.



Doug and Eletheria began their fruit growing journey in the early 1980s when they purchased ten hectares of land to build their family home. Both had strong business instincts and a determination to create something lasting. When a 60 hectare undeveloped block became available nearby, they took the opportunity, leasing and later purchasing Suncrest Orchard before gradually expanding and replanting. It was hard work, managing existing plantings, breaking new ground and building a small fruit stall at the front of the property, but the foundation it set is still visible today.

Michael has continued that momentum. He manages the orchard and the packhouse, supported by his wife Diane who oversees much of the administration and finance. His sister Christina works alongside Eletheria in the fruit shop, which is iconic in the region, and the next generation is also involved, with Michael and Diane's three children helping through school and university breaks.

Although the fruit stall remains an important part of the family story, Suncrest's commercial success has been built on the orchard itself.

The family first grew apricots for export to Australia, then nectarines into Taiwan, supported by small plantings of peaches and plums. As demand for cherries grew, especially for the export window leading into Chinese New Year, Suncrest transitioned increasingly towards cherries and today they form the core of the orchard. Small blocks of other summerfruit are still grown, but cherries are the main commercial crop.

Suncrest is known for its willingness to innovate with growing systems. When the family first took on cherries, pruning was minimal and trees were largely managed as they came. As expectations changed and quality standards became more demanding, Michael began looking for better ways to structure the orchard. A chance conversation with an international consultant led to a study trip to Chile and Europe, which completely reshaped his thinking.

"We started retrofitting older plantings into shoot renewal permanent," says Michael. "It is a double table style where you are constantly renewing shoots. The whole idea is to keep the canopy young and productive."

The orchard then added pergola blocks that apply the same principle used on kiwifruit orchards, but in a different structure. Branches are broken and trained flat to capture light and improve fruit set. It looks unique at first glance, especially in the Central Otago landscape, but the results speak for themselves.



↑ MG Representative Ross Howard and Michael Jones
← Aerial shot of Suncrest Orchard

"Some people worry about disease, but there is disease in every system," Michael explains. "Once growers see how it works, they understand the logic. If it produces good fruit and it pays the bills, then it is doing its job."

Innovation continues inside the packhouse. Suncrest moved from hand sorting and roller sizing to early optical graders, eventually trialling a full surface optical system that rotates each cherry and scans it with AI assisted grading. The system was particularly valuable for Sweetheart, a variety prone to cracking around the nose that single view cameras often miss.

"We ended up doing a lot of the trial work on the machine, which was stressful at the time, but it has absolutely paid off," he says.

Suncrest also plants varieties and rootstocks with consistency as the main objective in mind. The packhouse is set up for about two tonnes an hour and varieties are chosen to fill gaps, match the export window and maintain momentum across the season.

The orchard has a number of high quality varieties, including the early harvest Lani cherry which is named for Michael and Diane's youngest daughter. Suncrest also grows Starletta variety white cherries, which offers a point of difference for customers.

MG Group remains a key partner for the business. The team provides an important channel into the domestic market, backed by strong relationships, helping Suncrest reach customers throughout New Zealand.

"It is a very important part of our business model," Michael says. "It is not just tag two fruit. There are tag one lines as well and MG helps us reach customers we would not reach on our own."

Reflecting on the evolution of Suncrest Orchard, Michael says the thing he is most proud of is the willingness to try new ideas.

"We have tried a lot of different things. Some have failed, most have succeeded. If something looks promising and we think it will work here, we trial it properly. I am proud that we are still operating at the leading edge."



Build on tradition and focused on progress

For brothers Bharat and Pravin Jivan, growing vegetables is about more than just running a successful family business. It is about being part of something bigger, contributing to the collective future of the horticulture industry and supporting others along the way.

Their business, Jivan Produce, is based on the rich soils of Pukekohe, where the family has been growing since 1962. Originally trading as Jivan Lakhu & Sons Ltd, the business was started by their father and has grown into a large and respected operation spanning 280 hectares. Bharat and Pravin formally took the reins in 2010, establishing Jivan Produce Ltd, and today they are joined by the fourth generation, with Bharat's son also involved in the business.



Potatoes and onions are the cornerstone crops, but the team also grows broccoli, lettuce, pumpkin and cauliflower. It is a hands-on operation with a team of 25 supporting the business. Bharat oversees growing and compliance while Pravin focuses on packing, although both admit that in a family business, everyone pitches in where needed.

"We like the challenge of growing a good product that people appreciate," says Bharat. "It is satisfying seeing something through from start to finish and knowing that what you grow ends up in people's homes."

That commitment to quality underpins everything they do. Their reputation as growers who pay close attention to inputs and quality has helped them build a strong customer base, with their produce recognised on shelf by brand and by name.

"It matters to us that people know what they are getting," says Pravin. "We take pride in producing a clean, marketable product. That starts in the paddock and carries right through to the way we pack and package it."



↑ MG Representatives Neil Bridgens and Irshad Khan with Pravin Jivan
 ← Jivan Produce brothers Pravin and Bharat with MG Representatives Neil Bridgens and Irshad Khan
 ↓ Jivan Produce brothers Bharat and Pravin with MG Sales Reps Neil Bridgens and Irshad Khan

But their contribution goes beyond the farm gate. Bharat is on the Executive Committee of the Pukekohe Growers Committee, a role that sees him support engagement with councils and government to help achieve better outcomes for the industry.

"It is not just about looking after your own business," he says.

He points to recent recognition of vegetable production as a nationally significant land use as a good result of growers working together and making their voices heard.

The team at Jivan Produce also plays a quiet but important role in trialling new ideas. Whether it is a seed company testing a new variety or a chemical company evaluating good practices, the farm has run a number of trials. Bharat says they are always open to innovation and are happy to support development that benefits the wider grower community.

"When someone approaches us to put in a trial, we usually say yes," he says. "Sometimes it is about finding a better variety for our region. Other times it is about testing new chemicals that could improve growing practices. Either way, it is useful. Once the results are in, the companies share the information with other growers, so it becomes something that benefits everyone."

"It is that open mindset that has helped the business evolve over the years. The team is constantly adapting to seasonal variability, changing market conditions, including global economic impacts for their onion exports, as well as shifting customer expectations."

Relationships with MG staff form part of the picture for Jivan Produce. Bharat and Pravin speak highly of the support they receive from the team, including regular contact with sales reps and seasonal planning with the procurement team.

"We talk most days, even if it is just a quick call to sort out orders or check in on what's happening," says Pravin.

Looking ahead, the brothers remain focused on delivering high standards and maintaining the trust they have built over generations. That includes continuing to support initiatives that strengthen the industry as a whole.

"You get out what you put in," says Pravin. "If we keep producing a good product and keep doing the right thing by our customers and by the industry, we will be in a good place."



Pukekohe

Main crops grown



Potatoes & Onions



Succession planning

STARTING THE CONVERSATION EARLY

Succession is one of the most significant transitions a family business will face. For many growers, it can feel complex and emotionally charged, especially when different generations have different expectations, priorities and timelines. While every family is unique, the process becomes more manageable when it is treated as a journey rather than a single decision.

At its core, succession planning is about finding a path that supports the wellbeing of those stepping back while also giving confidence and opportunity to those stepping forward. Families who approach succession as a series of open conversations tend to move through it with greater clarity, fewer surprises and stronger relationships.

Good advice plays an important part in this. Most farming businesses benefit from bringing in external expertise at different points in the journey, particularly when decisions carry both financial and family implications. Independent guidance can help add structure, clarify options, and support conversations that may otherwise be difficult to navigate. Drawing on a small group of trusted professionals who understand your business and goals often leads to clearer thinking and more balanced outcomes.

Those who work regularly with families on succession often highlight similar pitfalls. Delaying the first conversation is a common one, as is making assumptions about what others want. Emotions can also run high, particularly for parents

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who have spent a lifetime building the business. Another challenge is overlooking the legal and tax implications of various options, which can cause issues later if not carefully worked through.

Although there is no simple formula that works for every family, several themes consistently emerge.

Starting early helps everyone understand the journey ahead. Seeking well rounded advice ensures the business side is

properly addressed. Being open to compromise allows both generations to find common ground. Most importantly, respectful communication helps maintain trust during what can be a demanding time.

A frequent point of discussion is the difference between fairness and equality. Many retiring growers want outcomes that feel fair for all their children, although this does not always mean assets can or should be divided evenly. In many cases, equality is only possible when everything is sold or when the family has sufficient assets outside the farm to



balance the differences. Achieving fairness often requires all parties to adjust their expectations and recognise each other's interests.

There is no perfect template for family succession, but a thoughtful process can provide clarity and confidence for the future. The most successful transitions are those where everyone understands the plan, feels heard, and can look ahead knowing the business is positioned to thrive for the next generation.

Business continuity

THE REAL VALUE OF BEING READY WHEN SOMETHING GOES WRONG



In the past few years, the fresh produce industry has had more than its fair share of disruption. Weather events continue to test growing regions, but the challenges have stretched far beyond the climate. Technology failures, supply chain delays and biosecurity threats have all reminded us how quickly normal operations can be interrupted.

One example was the global *CrowdStrike* issue, which affected businesses across the world, including MG. While our core systems remained intact, an external provider was impacted. That forced a rapid switch to manual processes and older systems while the team worked around the clock to keep the markets operating. It highlighted just how dependent everyday tasks have become on technology and reinforced the need to plan for situations where digital tools suddenly go offline.

Biosecurity has also come into sharp focus. The recent detection of the yellow-legged hornet in Auckland and two separate male Oriental fruit fly finds in early 2025 all served as reminders that new risks can appear quickly and without warning. The work carried out by Biosecurity New Zealand has kept these issues contained, but every incident shows how fast something could escalate if not managed well.

Events like these are a useful prompt for growers to consider how prepared their own businesses are for sudden disruption. A plan does not need to be complicated to be effective, but it does need to be practical.

Growing businesses are busy places and stopping to consider "what if" scenarios is not always easy. But as many growers know, investing even a small amount of time in planning makes it far easier to respond when something unexpected happens.

Across the MG Group, teams have shown how important agility and communication are during a disruption. Whether it is weather, logistics, IT challenges or biosecurity issues, the MG network is designed to adapt quickly and support growers to keep product moving. That support becomes even more effective when growers also have clear plans in place at their end.

Being ready for the unexpected will never remove uncertainty, but it does make tough moments more manageable. In an industry where unpredictability is a constant, a simple business continuity plan can be one of the most valuable tools on the farm.



Some helpful starting points include:

- Identifying the tasks critical to keeping your business running and noting what would happen if they stopped
- Backing up important information and keeping copies in more than one place
- Ensuring staff know who to contact, what to prioritise, and what alternative processes to use
- Preparing for power outages by checking access to generators, fuel, water and communication tools
- Thinking through how you would operate if digital systems or machinery were unavailable for a period of time
- Reviewing your approach to biosecurity, including hygiene, visitor protocols and monitoring routines
- Keeping an updated contact list for contractors, advisors, insurers and key suppliers



CREATING VALUE TOGETHER

The past century has shown that there is something powerful about growers and MG choosing to work together. That collective strength remains at the centre of our co-operative today and continues to guide the way we operate, make decisions, and create value for our grower-shareholders.

In recent weeks, all active grower shareholders will have received a copy of our Shareholder Partnership document. It brings together the full range of advantages available to those who support the co-operative and sets out, in one place, the long-term value created through loyalty and participation. I encourage you to take the time to read it and reflect on what those benefits mean for your own business and how they compare with others in the market.

While we pride ourselves on the service, scale and reach we provide, the most important point of difference is that our success is shared with our grower-shareholders. Simply through partnering with the MG Group, grower-shareholders receive benefits that competitors are unable to match. Over time, the more you supply, the greater the rewards generated through rebates, dividends and bonus issues, along with the longer-term advantages of equity growth and balance sheet strength.

Unlike many other co-operatives, MG doesn't require shareholders to supply exclusively, which means the co-operative must earn support every day. This reinforces the importance of top-level service, strong relationships, and working closely with growers to secure value.

The document also highlights real world examples that show how loyalty compounds over time. These examples come from growers of different scales, but each one demonstrates how commitment to the co-operative model builds meaningful value. In several cases, growers have seen their annual distributions grow significantly while also strengthening their financial position through ongoing supply and reinvestment.

Another feature of the MG Group is our structure. Ownership rights are shared equally so every active shareholder has one vote. This ensures that a broad range of views are represented and that our direction reflects the collective interests of grower-shareholders. It also means we must take a long-term approach to decision making and remain focused on investing in the future strength of the business.

This structure also ensures that participation matters. Whether it is attending grower meetings, taking part in the AGM, or engaging directly with our teams, the involvement shapes the co-operative and helps us understand the priorities of our shareholders.

As we continue to invest in infrastructure, people capability, technology and our core market operations, our goal remains



constant. We want to grow value, reward loyalty and ensure the MG Group continues to be the best option for growers who want trusted market access and long-term partnership.

To that end, I would like to thank everyone who continues to support the MG Group. I again encourage you to read the new Shareholder Partnership document and consider the value you receive through the co-operative model. It is an opportunity to reflect on the strength of what we have built together and the advantages that come from choosing to partner with us.

® Together.Stronger.



Peter Hendry
Peter Hendry
 CEO



CHARITABLE TRUST

The MG Charitable Trust continues to build momentum. Since launching in 2021, the Trustees have refined their focus to ensure funding flows to areas where it can make the greatest impact. This includes supporting initiatives with a strong educational link, providing development opportunities for people entering or progressing through the industry, and backing projects designed to lift the profile and reputation of horticulture.

The impact of this approach is growing year on year. The latest contestable funding round has just been completed, with funding distributed to a further four organisations. While the Trust is still young, the cumulative contribution across projects, programmes and individuals continues to grow and is already making a noticeable difference.

Education Fund

Alongside the contestable fund, the MG Trust will again offer significant subsidies through the Education Fund. Eighty percent support will be available for the following programmes:

- 2026 Rabobank Farm Managers Programme
- 2026 to 2027 Rabobank Executive Development Programme
- 2026 Mayfield Group Governance Development Programme
- 2026 Kellogg Rural Leaders Programme

These opportunities play an important part in building capability and leadership within horticulture and have delivered strong benefits for past participants and their businesses.

Information on how to apply can be found on the MG Group website: www.mgroup.co.nz/mgtrust

2025 Contestable Funding Round Recipients



Agribusiness in Schools

2026 Primary industry funding partner for national schools programme



Tomatoes NZ & Vegetables NZ

Project funding to improve eRNZ detection within an integrated framework



United Fresh

Support for Women in Horticulture workshops



Pukekohe Vegetables Centre of Excellence

Vegetables Big Day Out event sponsorship