

# TELLING OUR STORY TO THE WORLD

TELLING NEW ZEALAND'S STORY TO THE WORLD INVOLVES MORE THAN SOME SHARP IMAGES OF ENDLESS STUNNING SCENERY AND REPETITIVE STATISTICS AROUND THE NUMBER OF SHEEP WE HAVE VERSUS NUMBER OF PEOPLE.



GLOBAL CONSUMERS ARE INCREASINGLY sophisticated and wanting to better understand the sources of the products they purchase, and New Zealand is not immune from this.

The New Zealand Story and its accompanying New Zealand FernMark logo are run through New Zealand Trade and Enterprise (NZTE), tasked with weaving our people, landscapes, and products together into a single narrative.

The initiative has worked to build depth and move beyond the undeniably spectacular landscape that plays such a big role in our primary sector's foundation.

Meanwhile, the FernMark logo that was developed way back in the early 1990s to establish a singular visual identity for New Zealand has become a validation of a producer's efforts to build recognition and trust with consumers.

FernMark is run through a licence programme ensuring a level of consistency and quality among producers, keeping the New Zealand Story a consistent and high quality one.

David Downs, the CEO of the New Zealand Story group says many Kiwis

would be surprised to learn their country has an organisation devoted to marketing "NZ Inc." to the world.

"But the reality is many countries do this, including the likes of Denmark and Costa Rica. It is just that New Zealanders are not usually the target of those countries' campaigns."

Created eight years ago, the organisation was born from a response to increasingly nuanced expectations from consumers New Zealand was wanting to target for exports.

With input from Tourism New Zealand, NZTE and Education New Zealand, the brief has been to extend the country's image to those markets beyond our natural beauty to include values of Pōtikitanga, Tiaki, Manaaki and Pono.

David Downs says the consistency and unity of the efforts to date have meant consumers are increasingly aware of the "people element" within this country's landscapes, the role they play in preserving and improving those landscapes, while also producing exceptionally high-quality food and fibre in particular.

The New Zealand Story project has provided exporters with a rich vein of resource materials to aid their marketing initiatives, tailored to the subtle variations and perceptions that accompany different export markets.

The initiative's free tool kit includes images, footage, video stories and presentations that have been downloaded by over 18,000 users to date for their campaigns and efforts in overseas markets.

"How to" guides provide valuable first steps for early-stage exporters dipping their toe into the wider world, with market and industry-specific research available online to help back those decisions.

Included under the "New Zealand Story" umbrella is the "Made with Care" campaign, one that evolved in response to the initial COVID-19 outbreak two years ago.

Aimed specifically at New Zealand's food and beverage sector, the campaign tapped into growing global awareness and concern over not only what constituted safe food, but what also constituted healthy food that was, literally, made with care.

"We pulled in a lot of resources that included staff from Tourism New Zealand who had the capacity in the wake of COVID-19, and who brought a lot of experience in direct-to-consumer marketing with them," says Downs.

The campaign has built on New Zealand Story's earlier efforts, empathising the idea care has been taken in producing food and beverages of the highest quality.

"It has really helped take the image of this country and personalise it, and in a way that proved to really resonate with consumers."

The United Kingdom in particular has proven to be a market that has enjoyed strong success with the campaign.

"Wine has proven to be particularly successful, and of course the entire campaign has been helped by the fact we are already marketing premium food and beverage products."

Some of the key findings from the latest Made with Care research is that New Zealand wine is the most recognised product from New Zealand, punching above its weight given it is the item with



the third highest sales value after dairy and kiwifruit.

Overall, New Zealand food and beverage rates highly for its ethical and environmental standards and is well regarded for the sustainability of its production.

As the world progresses through the pandemic, tourism recommences and businesses reconnect, Downs says the

role of New Zealand Story will change, but its purpose remains as a means of underscoring the deeper experiences behind products from this part of the world.

"We have multiple agencies all aligned around the campaign, telling a consistent story that still allows for depth and variety that reflects the many different products and services we offer the world."

## Surveys take consumer pulse over pandemic

Part of the New Zealand Story resource kit is an annual New Zealand Story global perceptions survey, conducted to determine how consumers in some of New Zealand's key export markets view this country amidst some of the most tumultuous market conditions ever experienced.

Those markets include China, Australia, United Kingdom, Germany, and the United Arab Emirates, and the project involves taking focus group surveys of both consumers and businesses in those countries.

The latest survey results published in late 2021 were based on the period when New Zealand was responding with its second nationwide lockdown in response to the Delta outbreak that ultimately had the Auckland region locked down for 12 weeks.

The results of the perceptions survey revealed some cautionary signals for New Zealand exporters, with international customers less positive about this country's response to the outbreak of the second COVID-19 variant than to the original in 2020.

At that time, the 2020 survey reported a strong level of admiration for New Zealand's approach to managing the pandemic, resonating in the belief New Zealand was placing health, communities, and safety ahead of



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DAVID DOWNS  
NEW ZEALAND STORY CEO

individual rights, as the “team of five million” worked to keep the virus out.

The late 2021 report noted the global business audience was less empathetic this time around, and that New Zealand risked being seen as falling behind in vaccination rates, which at that time were barely in double figures.

At the time, survey manager Alex Jones said New Zealand risked being seen as

not caring for the relationships it had with the rest of the world, and reflected the growing frustrations experienced by exporters here in New Zealand in trying to re-connect with customers.

The survey identified a need for New Zealand to start building a story of re-connecting with the rest of the world and explaining why this country did what it did in response to the pandemic.

This includes referencing back to the values New Zealand Story aims to capture, around values that included kaitiaki, caring for those around us as well as the environment we live within, backed by an integrity, or promise to “do the right thing” by way of people and that environment.

New Zealand Story CEO David Downs says an updated survey is due out soon. He says as the world reopens, New Zealand needs to carefully manage the messages sent to businesses, consumers and tourists about how the country has come through the pandemic.

“We are re-adjusting to a ‘new normal’ and need to work on how we get the message out on how you can trade and do business with New Zealand now. The good thing for New Zealand is our food and beverage story has proven to be a real highlight, despite the issues of supply chain disruptions.”

## Companies proud to carry the fern

### LANACO

#### Taking Kiwi wool to the moon

Kiwis are familiar with the use and value of wool as a garment, but a New Zealand company has proven it is the “right place right time” to be a world leader in the production of wool fibre-based face masks.

Lanaco had been making respirator filters for nearly a full decade before COVID-19 made masks mandatory, and the company had a good head start to refine filtering technology and build its presence in those markets hit early and hard by COVID-19, including the United States, Europe and South Africa.

Lanaco founder and director Nick Davenport says the company's focus has always been to develop sustainable filter tech that draws on the powerful properties of New Zealand wool to develop face mask filters suited to any application.

The quality of that wool is assured by Lanaco's own breeding programme that has developed the “Astino” wool fibre as the key ingredient to the company's mask filters. The input to the Astino sheep which incorporates three different breeds makes the company a truly vertically integrated one, right from the raw material to final

manufactured mask product, produced in Ellerslie, Auckland.

“New Zealand's heritage of growing wool for over 150 years is embodied in a high technology product that has the potential to protect the health of every breathing human on the planet”, says Davenport.

The Astino has particular fibre characteristics including consistency of micron width and fibre quality that make it superior for quality filtration material.

The positive electrical charge that wool attracts acts as a filter itself, acting like a magnet to capture a range of airborne particles, while its natural bacteria-static



Minister of Agriculture Damien O'Connor and Minister of Foreign Affairs Nanaia Mahuta at the Lanaco launch at the company's head office in Auckland.

nature ensures germs are removed and toxins are naturally absorbed.

The company's filter materials have also been incorporated into NASA's forthcoming Moon and Mars programmes.

Its Helix filters are part of emergency fire protection equipment worn by crew inside the Orion capsule.

Davenport saw an opportunity to supply masks to Kiwi athletes at the Tokyo Olympics last year, and opted to become a FernMark licensee.

FernMark's values of authenticity, naturalness and ingenuity fitted well with Lanaco's own values as the company competed against synthetically-based, plastic-type imported products.

“To stand out, we needed high integrity and high brand value, and that's also represented in FernMark – high quality products that are associated with a level of professionalism,” says Davenport.

Developing personal masks for the New Zealand Olympic team and being worn on the global stage by medal winners including the New Zealand men's rowing eight, Lisa Carrington and more recently Zoi Sadowski-Synnott and Nico Porteous in Beijing were a highlight for the company, and a valued marketing opportunity enhanced with the FernMark endorsement.

### LEWIS ROAD CREAMERY Happy cows bring added value

Launching a consumer food item in the United States is not for the faint hearted in what is the largest, most competitive food industry on the planet.

Having established a stellar reputation here in New Zealand for its premium quality chocolate milk, Lewis Road Creamery moved to achieve the same with its butter. The company's focus is on producing milk from a selected

number of farms by grass-fed cows, many owned by the parent company's Southern Pastures farming company.

These properties are singularly focused on sustainable farming, and the first to gain a farming sustainability linked loan from BNZ.

When Lewis Road launched its popular butter in the United States it opted for New Zealand Story's FernMark branding to accompany its own 10 Star Certified Values claims on its packaging.

New Zealand Trade and Enterprise research had revealed United States consumers did not have a clear understanding about New Zealand as a food producer, but did understand the country, including knowing about hobbits, All Blacks and pristine landscapes.

Store sampling with the Silver Fern logo and the Southern Pastures 10 Star Certified Values claims on packaging, which are all independently audited by Asure Quality, help lift recognition levels, with consumers seeing it as representing quality, purity, and trust.

The company started selling its butter range through the beachhead stores Central Market in Texas and Erewhon in California in 2019 and now have national ranging in Wholefoods which will see them expanding nationwide.

The same approach was employed in launching into Australia with consumers there seeing the FernMark as a symbol of New Zealand origin alongside the 10 Star Certified Values logo becoming the “clincher” for consumers, the final mark that it was the real deal in terms of purity and provenance.

Meanwhile, here in New Zealand Lewis Road is anticipating even more domestic coverage with its latest launch, a Lemon and Gin Botanicals ice cream, promising to combine a cocktail and dessert in one.

