

Tourist trade can benefit farmers

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GETTING tourists from the paddock and to the plate is a challenge for New Zealand's two largest export sectors as global interest in food tourism continues to grow.

ANZ and the Ministry for Primary Industries have released a report on NZ's food and agri sector that highlights the still relatively untapped opportunities for farmers, artisan food producers and tourism operators getting together for a market keen to sample local cuisine served with a story behind it.

The report speaks of a tourist sector Italians, Spaniards and the French have long recognised.

But those established food

destinations also have the benefit of many generations developing their food culture and serving a market with significantly shorter haul visitor distances to contend with.

The report highlights the potential for NZ's 3.8 million tourists to be brand ambassadors for NZ food and beverage products.

It points to survey results showing 83% of travellers visiting NZ believe seeing the foods and drinks they consumed here on the shelf at home reminds them of their trips and prompts a purchase.

The power of good food and beverage benefiting the tourism sector is also recognised, with the same percentage agreeing a positive food and drink experience

makes them more likely to recommend the destination.

Yet the report also highlights a level of disconnect between NZ's quality food and beverage products and what visitors expect.

NZ ranks low as a food and beverage destination internationally, with more than 60% of respondents having a neutral view on our suitability for such visits.

That neutral impression is strongest among American visitors,

at 62%, compared to 45% for Chinese.

Of those who do regard NZ as a food destination, 30% regard it positively and only 10% negatively.

In contrast Italy and France have only 15-20% of visitors with neutral expectations and the remaining 80% have a positive impression.

ANZ central region commercial and agri manager John Bennett said despite the neutral vacuum there is still plenty of potential.

"It is not as if we are doing anything particularly badly.

"It is just that the perception of being a destination for food and drink is not as strong as it could be and that's the opportunity."

Tourism Council chief executive Judy Chen said the niche of food travellers has developed rapidly in the past five years.

But she suspects part of the reason NZ still has to firm up its identity in the niche comes from this country's cuisine being difficult to pinpoint.

"It's not just hangi and it's not just fish and chips.

"It is varied but we also face a balancing act between using quality ingredients but also trying to introduce the stronger flavours Asian palates, in particular, may expect. Their interpretation of salty and spicy could do with some more understanding.

"It can be a challenge though – how do you engage with over 50% of Chinese tour groups that choose to eat in a Chinese restaurant and then complain the food there is not as good as at home?"

She agrees there is plenty of room for greater collaboration between the farming and tourism sectors.

Still new to her position, she hopes to engage more with a sector that generally stands to



WORK TOGETHER: Tourism Council chief executive Judy Chen says there is plenty of room for greater tourism and primary sectors collaboration.

“ The perception of being a destination for food and drink is not as strong as it could be and that's the opportunity. **”**

John Bennett
ANZ

gain a lot from incorporating tourism into its income stream.

Meantime, interest in the farming sector that produces many of the food products is very strong among tourists.

Over half of Chinese tourists coming to NZ will visit a farm or orchard, enjoying the chance to engage directly with the people and places growing food they are becoming more familiar with.

"It could be there is the opportunity there for better collaboration between tourism

and farming, working together for a food experience.

"What we do see is those farmers who manage to combine their farm business with tourism and food play a big part in also getting tourists off the usual busy tourist routes, offering quite a different experience."

And the value in joining the two offers returns that can reverberate for years to come.

Over 60% of tourists buy products at home they first bought on their trip and, importantly, NZ's three biggest tourism markets, China, the United States and Australia are also our three biggest export markets.

Almost 80% of foodie tourists like to take food and drink to enjoy at home, particularly Gen X and Millennial tourists.

"These are also the same tourists who are looking for that new-world type food experience who may also be seeking a sustainable, grass-fed type food product and are prepared to pay to come here and enjoy it."

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Grab your mates, neighbours or treat your workers to a great night of comedy for a cause. Enjoy an all-star line up featuring Nick Rado, Wilson Dixon, Tevita Manukia, Tarun Mohanbhai.

Tickets are just \$20. All proceeds go directly to Farmstrong

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CPTPP takes effect on January 1

THE Comprehensive and Progressive Trans Pacific Partnership trade and investment pact will come into effect next month after Australia's ratification pushed the deal across the minimum acceptance threshold.

The deal has been ratified by New Zealand, Australia, Canada, Mexico, Japan and Singapore. Australia's confirmation started the 60-day countdown for the first round of tariff cuts now scheduled to come into effect from December 30.

"The timing means there will be the added bonus of a second round of tariff cuts on January 1 for NZ exporters into those markets which apply a calendar tariff year," Trade and Export Minister David Parker said.

"In the case of Japan this second round of tariff cuts would fall due on April 1."



DIDN'T GO DOWN WELL: New Zealand farmers are set to benefit from the deal United States president Donald Trump couldn't stomach.

NZ's Parliament passed legislation ratifying the deal two weeks ago.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade's national interest analysis estimates the agreement will boost the economy by between \$1.2 billion and \$4b, largely because of the removal of

tariffs and non-tariff barriers to trade.

The countries that have ratified the deal account for about \$14.65b of NZ's annual exports, the bulk of which goes to Australia, and about \$13.67b of imports.

The CPTPP morphed out of the Trans Pacific

Partnership. Countries including NZ and Japan tried to revive the Asia-Pacific trade and investment pact after United States President Donald Trump walked away from the initial deal.

The Labour-led administration was wary of the TPP and was reluctant to sign unless it could restrict foreign buyers of residential property and water down some of the more onerous investor-state dispute resolution provisions.

NZ has signed side letters with Australia, Peru, Malaysia, Vietnam and Brunei excluding the use of ISDS provisions.

Brunei Darussalam, Chile, Malaysia, Peru and Vietnam haven't yet ratified the deal.

– BusinessDesk

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P35

Food and tourism sectors need unity

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LEADING food writer Lauraine Jacobs has welcomed the ANZ report calling for better connection between New Zealand's food producers and those who visit to eat it.

Jacobs, former editor of Cuisine magazine, author and food columnist said the report has come the closest yet to identifying where NZ should be lifting its game to entice more high-spending foodie tourists.

"It is a positive thing after the likes of myself shouting and screaming about this for a number of years.

"But we heard at the launch of the report from Tourism NZ how tourists are coming here for our clean air, scenery and space and my concern is we are still not appreciating the opportunities that lie beyond that.

"At present food comes a distant second to scenery."

Her concerns were reinforced by the report that said almost half the

visitors to NZ have a neutral view on what this country offers for food and beverage experiences.

That compares to less than 15% for food culture heavyweights France, Italy and Spain.

The one area the report did not address was what NZ is going to do about the disconnect between farming, food and tourism.

She cited the example in the report of Roots Restaurant in Lyttelton and owner Giulio Sturla's tough battle to establish supplier relationships with local growers and producers to ensure he can provide a strong regional focus to all dishes served.

He has managed to achieve 80% Canterbury food content and 90% wines on his menu but maintains NZ needs to up its game to meet visitors' expectations for regionally grown food.

Jacobs is a strong advocate for NZ to develop more regionalised cuisine offerings, similar to what Italy has been doing for generations, with local iconic ingredients unswervingly served.

"For example, if you were in

Marlborough, a tourist may only have two eating experiences, dinner and breakfast, and they should know they will find green shelled mussels on the menu in some shape or form."

She cautioned there is also a risk Tourism NZ will keep the focus on international visitors when domestic tourists are also a valuable part of the market.

Spending by Kiwi tourists last year was \$21.4 billion compared to the \$14.5b international visitor spend.

Total tourist spend on retail and served sales of alcohol and food amounted to \$6.7b, the fastest growing category of all tourism expenditure types.

"Should we get another global financial crisis the first market to fall over will be international tourism and there is significant value in working harder on our domestic tourists' interest in food and where it comes from."

The number of high-country stations and farms actively offering farm stay tours provides an excellent springboard to a



JOIN THEM: New Zealand needs to link tourists with regional foods, writer Lauraine Jacobs says.

fuller food experience for visitors.

"They might involve those operations collaborating with a talented chef to deliver a more interesting, varied interpretation of NZ produce than simply offering Watties' peaches and ice cream for dessert."

She believes there is also a good market for a network of higher end lodges in NZ where the key focus is first and foremost on quality local food.

It is a market Italy has identified and established its extensive Agriturismo network on.

It has lodges and homesteads integrated into rural communities, maintaining authentic traditions

and quality agricultural food products from artisan producers in their community.

Visitors can select from across a range of Agriturismo standards, depending on their budget.

The Agriturismo network is protected under a national law requiring standards of authenticity and regionality to be wholly included.

Jacobs said given the prevalence of iwi land ownership, a growing appreciation for Maori cuisine and use of native foods, NZ has the unique opportunity to leverage farming and indigenous strengths in a way no other country in the world has done.

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