

Indigenous applications- Traditional Māori Worldview and climate resilience



Helen Scott | Rangitaiki

Helen Scott is an Executive member of the Māori Kiwifruit Growers Inc and the Manager of the Whiritoa Kiwifruit Orchard, Bay of Plenty. She has been in the kiwifruit industry over 20 years and award-winning orchard manager for her commitment for conservation of traditional horticultural and organic farming practices. She shared with us her kiwifruit industry journey and Te ao Māori use in her orchard.

- With Indigenous perspectives, how you would like to see Climate Change and its impacts, and Māori worldview connecting it with horticultural Industry?

Te ao Māori is all about our relationship between natural environment and people, and our strong connection and dependence on environment for wellbeing and prosperity. 'Climate Change' we consider as a part of change in the natural environment and its activities. We accept it as a 'natural' phenomena and we do have resilience. 'Being resilient' is part of our lives.

In our world of thinking, we value mainly five things; Whakaiti- humbleness, Ka tou rourou and manaakitanga-generosity, taking care of others and giving for long-term-future, Whanaungatanga- connectivity across generations, Tāria te wā and kaitiakitanga- long-term thinking and sustainable guardianship and protection, and Tikanga Māori- cultural authenticity where we value our traditional principles, as an examples how we respect and use our 'karakia'.

In our way of doing, we maintain the 'balance' of ecosystems and biological cycles, so how we respond to climate change is avoid it happening by living with nature. We hold a great connection to past, present and future, environmental preservation, and care for the collective future generations. We want to see same land/soil, air and water, our 'Taonga- treasurers', as we see and use today, for generations to come. We protect the 'health of our land and nature' not for five years but for generations to come.

- Embracing wider view of success and a holistic view of Te Ao Māori how Māturanga Māori was integrated to Kiwi fruit industry?

Gardening and cropping is very well connected to our lives, our ancestors collectively cultivated for their food provision. We practice our own rituals even in cultivation. In my Orchard we start and end the day with 'karakia'. We start harvest with karakia. Even though we do commercial horticulture, we strongly consider the maintaining of 'soil health' using organic and traditional methods. When we finding solutions for problems, we practice 'community of thinking', means not only the issue we have to deal with, but related other issues and components and possible consequences that could occur with the solution we could see. Therefore, we can choose the best possible solution which brings multiple benefits.

We get floods very often, but our orchard is very healthy and resilient to floods. We establish good water drainage, helping natural water flow all through the orchard. We restore the soil health by using organic methods. Our orchard has cover-crops, so they avoid direct rainfall to the soil and protecting soil-erosion, this also helps to maintain soil-health. Our orchard is resilient not only to climate change, but also insects and pests" attacks, as we practice healthy cultivation methods our orchard is not vulnerable to external infections. We have experienced this lots of times where despite floods, droughts and other infections the orchard has stood resilient.

The kiwifruit orchard is shared with vegetable crops as well. Our employees are locals, and this is "our" orchard, we share our vegetables with local communities and we look after each other. Our ambition is to maximise the land potential, we are the guardians of this land, our taonga, today its for us but tomorrow its for our grandchildren.

- One of the most important things is how we could encourage the young generation to continue our traditional world views, do you think it is happening, are we doing enough? According to your thinking, do you think we need to find a better way of doing what we do today?

I believe we still have a lot to do. I would like to see schools, vocational training institutes, farm schools teach our rangatahi more about our traditional and organic horticulture methods, this is because our practices weren't recognised with commercial agriculture, and we need to rejuvenate and bring them back.

- What are your thoughts on support from the government to reinforce organic/ traditional horticultural practices and the use of traditional knowledge for the betterment and wellbeing of the industry, do you think enough happening or much to do?

If the government could enhance support for farmers on use of cover-crops, organic fertilizers, and traditional water management systems that would definitely be a help. Also, if we have opportunities to share our knowledge and success stories with other farmers then we can share our experiences and show them how we commercially use organic/traditional methods. Governments and industry associations can work together and do more to restore these practices more in the industry.

- To windup, Any message to researchers, academics and national policy makers, and industrialists

Please do more research on indigenous agricultural/farming techniques, still research institutes and universities depend more on Western Science The attention on indigenous knowledge and methods, in Māturanga Māori is still lacking.