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## SUBMISSION ON

### Te Ara Paerangi - Future Pathways

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## INTRODUCTION

1. Onions New Zealand represents the interests of New Zealand's 85 commercial onion growers, 19 exporters and the wider sector. The New Zealand onion industry grows and exports 180,000 tonnes of onions annually, with a further 40,000 tonnes sold domestically. Onions are grown in 5,225 hectares of land in New Zealand with returns per hectare in 2019 of \$38,277/ha.
2. NZ grows specific onion varieties that are extremely different to those grow elsewhere around the world. New Zealand onions have great storage capabilities and clean appearances. The most well-known variety is the world-renowned Pukekohe Long-keeper which can be stored for up to 10 months, which makes it a versatile export product. New Zealand grown onions have firm flesh, multiple skins and a clean appearance which enables the industry to command premium prices, approximately 2-3 times that of domestic onions in our export markets. As a result of these key attributes, the NZ onion industry exports 85% of all onions grown in NZ.
3. New Zealand is one of the best countries in the world for growing high quality onions. Our soils, climate and farming practices make for the superior quality onions that our international markets demand. Onions are grown as a part of a rotational cropping system with other vegetables, arable or feed crops, this is an accepted practice throughout the industry as it decreases disease pressure associated with various crops. The added benefits of a rotational system are the variation in nutrient and mineral uptake by different crops during their growing period, this can aid in the levels of heavy metals and nutrients in the soil, due to different root systems and plant nutrient requirements.

## Executive Summary

Onions New Zealand is appreciative of the opportunity to submit on Te Ara Paerangi - Future Pathways Green Paper. The current way for research/ science to occur in the horticulture space is to focus on crops which delivers a high return on investment. This results in crops

which are currently not extensively grown, lack in research investment. It is a capitalist structure whereby research assistance is given to crops which are already established, whereas crops which are not of significant economic value currently, lack scale and investment from research institutes. As a country we run the risk of remaining reliant on a handful of industries/ crops rather than exploring new diverse options.

For an ambitious and prosperous future, New Zealand needs to consider what the future looks like, rather than just the current way of doing things. As such, Onions New Zealand recommends that the research principles should include:

- End users in the development of priorities,
- Consideration around regional economic resilience,
- Adding resilience to the New Zealand economy,
- Research benefitting all,

New Zealand has limited funds for research and science. As such, the priorities and investments need to be targeted and ensure we maximise the impact the findings have. As such, Onions New Zealand wishes to stress the importance of:

- Ensuring research findings make it to the end user,
- Identifying research priorities and putting in place appropriate structures to work across CRIs, Universities, Iwi, Private enterprises and Industry to get the best result.
- Regional solutions to regional problems.

Onions New Zealand supports the submission made by Horticulture New Zealand.

## Body of Submission

What principles could be used to determine the scope and focus of research Priorities?

### **Regional Economic Resilience and Solutions for Regional Issues**

Although this is a national framework discussion, there needs to be consideration to regional economic resilience. The New Zealand climate and population distribution has led to certain regions having comparative advantages within New Zealand and globally. Regional requirements also vary by local iwi/ hapu. Onions New Zealand recommends a principle around regional economic resilience.

### **End Users**

Onions New Zealand believes that there needs to be a principle around the end users having a say in the research priorities. For the agriculture/ horticulture sector, the end users are likely to be the growers/ farmers. Ensuring the research and science is going to deliver to what New Zealand needs to etch out increased productivity whilst limiting the impacts to the natural environment is important.

Onions New Zealand recommends a principle to assist with setting priorities which focuses on the end users of the research/ science.

### **Adding Resilience to New Zealand**

Onions New Zealand believes there needs to be a principle around adding resilience to New Zealand. In other words, will the research priorities deliver greater resilience to New Zealand? This includes not only health outcomes but also economic diversification. New Zealand is currently extremely reliant on exporting milk powder, specifically to China. Encouraging diversification through a competitive science system will be important for New Zealand's long-term prosperity.

### **Research for all**

Research should be for the benefit of New Zealand rather than the benefit of the CRIs. New Zealand needs to ensure the research outcomes are focussed around delivering impact for New Zealand, rather than intellectual property being built up within CRIs that doesn't deliver impact to the wellbeing of New Zealanders. Onions New Zealand recommends a principle being around research for all, and the impact of research.

[How should the strategy for each national research Priority be set and how do we operationalise them?](#)

### **End Users Identify the Research Priorities**

Once Government has identified the priority areas of focus, Onions New Zealand believes it is then important to identify the end users/ stakeholders that the priority aligns to and allow them to develop the strategy for that priority. The strategies and research priorities need to be identified and developed by the end users. There is little benefit in developing/ imposing a strategy on end users if it is not relevant or inaccurate.

### **Virtual Missions:**

Technology now greatly allows virtual missions to be worked on collaboratively, which may not have been the case in the past. Once the priorities/ strategies are identified, Onions New Zealand recommends virtual missions are established and resourced to answer the research questions/ priorities. These virtual missions need to span beyond CRIs to include Universities, private research entities, and offshore experts. The virtual missions need to be resourced and cut across organisations. New Zealand is too small to expect any one entity to hold all of the answers to the priorities established by MBIE.

### **Regional Execution**

Onions New Zealand believes it is important to have regional solutions for regional issues. The regional research hubs need to be in collaboration with Government, Industry, Iwi and the Research institutes.

To deliver the most from limited resources, we need to be considered in how we resolve regional and local Iwi/ hapu issues. Local Iwi and end users of research are going to have different issues that need to be connected with other regions and virtual missions.

Do you think a base grant funding model will improve stability and resilience for research organisations?

Onions New Zealand is supportive of a base grant, but we would like to see greater consideration given to how this will impact private researchers. Onions New Zealand would like to see the funds going towards the best researchers/ scientists, rather than underpinning high administrative costs.

How do we design collaborative, adaptive, and agile research institutions that will serve current and future needs?

Onions New Zealand believes that the institutes need to be led by key research missions that are long term focussed, but regularly evaluated. For example, sustainably growing food for New Zealanders and abroad.

How do we better support knowledge exchange and impact generation? What should be the role of research institutions in transferring knowledge into operational environments and technologies?

The current competitive nature of CRIs supports the retention of IP and knowledge, rather than commercialising it or releasing it for the greater good. This is because they need to gain royalties and additional revenue streams to survive, rather than releasing the information or knowledge. Onions New Zealand would like to see experience and knowledge extended to end users. This can possibly be done by has mission led research priorities, that the IP is owned by rather than the CRIs.

How do we design new funding mechanisms that strongly focus on workforce outcomes?

Onions New Zealand proposes a funding mechanism set around research priorities. These priorities are a research mission/ priority that are governed by a Board, which includes end users. That Board is responsible for overseeing the investment in projects and research institutes to deliver the outcomes sought. This would open funding to CRIs, Universities and Private Research Companies and enhance collaboration across the research institutes.

## Conclusion:

Onions New Zealand supports the work that Government and MBIE are doing to review the current research, science and innovation framework. The investment and structure in research for New Zealand is extremely important for the future prosperity of the country. Onions New Zealand encourages the Government to be bold and look at what the end users of science and research require. Onions New Zealand supports investment in priority areas that are mission led, with regional and New Zealand resilience kept in mind.

We believe this is an important discussion to be had, and Onions New Zealand is very willing to be involved in any further discussions on this subject.