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# New Zealand

# Planting Seeds

# Annual

# 2003

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**Report Highlights: Excellent weather conditions during the growing and harvesting periods along with a 25 percent increase in area resulted in significant increases in both quantity and quality of all planting seed types. Despite agreement among industry participants that New Zealand should implement UPOV 91 conventions, concerns over indigenous flora protection may delay UPOV 91 ratification.**

Includes PSD changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: Yes
Annual Report

Wellington [NZ1], NZ

## *SECTION I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY*

Excellent growing conditions combined with an increased planting area have led to a significant increase in planting seed production in the 2002/2003 season. Herbage & amenity grass seed production is up sharply. Perennial ryegrass yields improved 40 percent to 1,500-1,600 kg. per hectare. Yields of clover seeds increased 260 percent to 400-500 kg. per hectare. Cereal yields on irrigated land were up an average 10 percent. Brassica yields were up 20 percent.

New Zealand's seed exports in 2001/2002 fell 19 percent to 21,249 tons and were valued at U.S. $25.4 million (FOB). The United States accounted for one fifth of total export volume, with shipments largely consisting of ryegrass seed for the amenity market. Other key export markets for New Zealand include Australia, the Netherlands, Germany and Chile.

New Zealand's total seed imports nearly trebled to 24,596 tons in the 2001/2002 season and were valued at U.S. $12 million (CIF). The United States supplied only 4 percent of total volume. Fescue seed imports from the United States increased nearly 175 percent while imports of U.S. vegetable seed trebled.

New Zealand does have some problems producing certain seed types in sufficient purity. This creates niche opportunities for U.S. exporters for specialist turf applications and vegetables. The good harvest in 2002/2003 may, however, may reduce import demand for seed imports in 2003. The total value of U.S. exports of planting seeds to New Zealand in calendar year 2002 rose 43 percent to $2.8 million.

The New Zealand seed industry believes that marketing opportunities exist for developing high performing, specialized proprietary forage grasses targeted for the United States. This could diminish the current reliance by New Zealand exporters on non-proprietary amenity grass seed market.

The New Zealand Government initiated steps to amend the New Zealand Plant Variety Rights Act 1987 (PVRA 87). Industry participants want the amendments to enable ratification of the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV 91) Convention. However, concerns over indigenous flora claims make the likelihood of New Zealand's ratification of UPOV 91 more difficult to accomplish.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) is currently in the process of amending the Regulatory Standard 155.02.05 for the importation of seeds for sowing into New Zealand. Changes to the pest lists for wheat, barley, oats, peas and beans are outlined.

MAF expanded its GMO (genetically modified organisms) free planting seed certification requirements by implementing Import Health Standards for testing rape seed (October 1, 2002) and soybean seed (January 1, 2003).

***SECTION II. STATISTICAL TABLES***

Source: Statistics New Zealand, June year data
Note: Average exchange rate for the period July 2001 to June 2002: 0.431 U.S. $ per 1 NZ $

| N.Z. ALFALFA SEED TRADE 2001/02 | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Source/ Destination | IMPORTS | | EXPORTS | |
| | Kilograms | '000 U.S. $ CIF | Kilograms | '000 U.S. $ FOB |
| Australia | 82,955 | 224 | 0 | 0 |
| United States | 55,234 | 182 | 0 | 0 |
| Netherlands | 227 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 138,416 | 407 | 0 | 0 |

| N.Z. CLOVER SEED TRADE 2001/02 | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Source/ Destination | IMPORTS | | EXPORTS | |
| | Kilograms | '000 U.S. $ CIF | Kilograms | '000 U.S. $ FOB |
| Netherlands | 0 | 0 | 356,869 | 611 |
| UK | 0 | 0 | 293,871 | 572 |
| United States | 7,235 | 18 | 229,185 | 477 |
| China | 65 | 0 | 201,817 | 370 |
| Germany | 0 | 0 | 192,834 | 347 |
| Australia | 223,104 | 322 | 154,562 | 343 |
| Japan | 0 | 0 | 148,643 | 320 |
| Chile | 0 | 0 | 124,891 | 237 |
| France | 0 | 0 | 118,729 | 295 |
| Denmark | 16,623 | 42 | 0 | 0 |
| Other | 12,368 | 35 | 342,425 | 635 |
| Total | 259,395 | 418 | 2,163,826 | 4,206 |

| N.Z. FESCUE SEED TRADE 2001/02 | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Source/ Destination | IMPORTS | | EXPORTS | |
| | Kilograms | '000 U.S. $ CIF | Kilograms | '000 U.S. $ FOB |
| United States | 134,378 | 219 | 411,161 | 261 |
| Australia | 2,735 | 4 | 235,687 | 345 |
| Denmark | 47,355 | 54 | 0 | 0 |
| UK | 0 | 0 | 18,000 | 10 |
| Other | 55,369 | 81 | 10,345 | 29 |
| Total | 239,837 | 359 | 675,193 | 645 |

| N.Z. RYE GRASS SEED TRADE 2001/02 | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Source/ Destination | IMPORTS | | EXPORTS | |
| | Kilograms | '000 U.S. $ CIF | Kilograms | '000 U.S. $ FOB |
| Australia | 0 | 0 | 2,658,403 | 2,815 |
| United States | 27,996 | 43 | 2,453,630 | 1,786 |
| Germany | 0 | 0 | 996,419 | 670 |
| Chile | 50,366 | 55 | 852,518 | 693 |
| Netherlands | 300 | 1 | 750,287 | 456 |
| South Africa | 0 | 0 | 427,575 | 376 |
| Re-Imports | 72,037 | 118 | n.a. | n.a. |
| Other | 41,491 | 82 | 1,497,563 | 1,069 |
| Total | 192,190 | 300 | 9,636,395 | 7,866 |

| N.Z. KENTUCKY BLUE GRASS SEED TRADE 2001/02 | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Source/ Destination | IMPORTS | | EXPORTS | |
| | Kilograms | '000 U.S. $ CIF | Kilograms | '000 U.S. $ FOB |
| United States | 2,908 | 9 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 2,908 | 9 | 0 | 0 |

| N.Z. TIMOTHY GRASS SEED TRADE 2001/02 | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Source/ Destination | IMPORTS | | EXPORTS | |
| | Kilograms | '000 U.S. $ CIF | Kilograms | '000 U.S. $ FOB |
| Canada | 72,000 | 104 | 0 | 0 |
| Re-Imports | 1,105 | 2 | n.a. | n.a. |
| Australia | 0 | 0 | 795 | 2 |
| Total | 73,105 | 106 | 795 | 2 |

| N.Z. OTHER GRASS SEED TRADE 2001/02 | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Source/ Destination | IMPORTS | | EXPORTS | |
| | Kilograms | '000 U.S. $ CIF | Kilograms | '000 U.S. $ FOB |
| United States | 7,207 | 33 | 524,520 | 785 |
| Netherlands | 83 | 2 | 156,329 | 536 |
| Australia | 3,610 | 30 | 155,497 | 259 |
| Argentina | 8,000 | 7 | 69,108 | 121 |
| Germany | 600 | 3 | 32,000 | 40 |
| Italy | 26,105 | 91 | 0 | 0 |
| Other | 1,834 | 12 | 140,001 | 312 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total | 47,439 | 178 | 1,077,455 | 2,053 |

**N.Z.VEGETABLE SEED TRADE 2001/02**

| Source/ Destination | IMPORTS | | EXPORTS | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Kilograms | '000 U.S. $ CIF | Kilograms | '000 U.S. $ FOB |
| Taiwan | 82 | 8 | 571,184 | 451 |
| Japan | 29,476 | 2,342 | 421,775 | 1,670 |
| Hong Kong | 623 | 1 | 415,044 | 435 |
| Thailand | 98 | 2 | 405,991 | 453 |
| Netherlands | 25,479 | 1,243 | 357,602 | 2,531 |
| Germany | 427 | 3 | 258,210 | 254 |
| South Korea | 0 | 0 | 211,623 | 712 |
| United States | 398,849 | 839 | 127,717 | 394 |
| Australia | 127,640 | 1,215 | 39,490 | 236 |
| Italy | 65,544 | 237 | 25,230 | 32 |
| Other | 34,397 | 476 | 454,479 | 1,099 |
| Total | 682,615 | 6,367 | 3,288,345 | 8,268 |

**N.Z. LEGUMINOUS VEGETABLE SEED TRADE 2001/02**

| Source/ Destination | IMPORTS | | EXPORTS | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Kilograms | '000 U.S. $ CIF | Kilograms | '000 U.S. $ FOB |
| Pakistan | 1,000 | 1 | 892,082 | 422 |
| Australia | 24,694 | 20 | 603,246 | 262 |
| UK | 15,020 | 12 | 372,615 | 150 |
| France | 0 | 0 | 371,825 | 125 |
| United States | 199,091 | 304 | 241,514 | 226 |
| Belgium | 0 | 0 | 217,085 | 119 |
| Netherlands | 875 | 3 | 195,847 | 95 |
| Sweden | 201 | 0 | 188,460 | 62 |
| Italy | 0 | 0 | 176,507 | 84 |
| South Africa | 0 | 0 | 168,238 | 90 |
| Israel | 0 | 0 | 117,080 | 53 |
| Other | 16,996 | 5 | 747,100 | 385 |
| Total | 257,877 | 346 | 4,291,599 | 2,074 |

| N.Z. FIELD CORN SEED TRADE 2001/02 | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Source/ Destination | IMPORTS | | EXPORTS | |
| | Kilograms | '000 U.S. $ CIF | Kilograms | '000 U.S. $ FOB |
| Australia | 22,626,756 | 3,041 | 62,608 | 144 |
| United States | 60,635 | 390 | 31,240 | 93 |
| France | 13,841 | 161 | 0 | 0 |
| New Caledonia | 0 | 0 | 21,000 | 3 |
| Other | 1,368 | 2 | 502 | 3 |
| Total | 22,702,600 | 3,593 | 115,350 | 244 |

| N.Z. TOTAL SEED TRADE 2001/02 | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Source/ Destination | IMPORTS | | EXPORTS | |
| | Kilograms | '000 U.S. $ CIF | Kilograms | '000 U.S. $ FOB |
| Australia | 23,091,494 | 4,856 | 3,910,288 | 4,407 |
| United States | 893,533 | 2,037 | 4,018,967 | 4,022 |
| Canada | 117,619 | 178 | 265,766 | 247 |
| Denmark | 91,846 | 175 | 40,430 | 13 |
| Italy | 91,649 | 328 | 608,700 | 412 |
| Re-Imports | 83,845 | 153 | n.a. | n.a. |
| Chile | 51,661 | 60 | 994,821 | 980 |
| Other | 174,735 | 4,296 | 11,409,986 | 15,279 |
| Total | 24,596,382 | 12,083 | 21,248,958 | 25,358 |

***SECTION III. PRODUCTION, MARKETING & POLICY***

**New Zealand Certified Seed Entry and Areas**

| Crop Type | 2000/01 (Entry No.) 1/ | 2001/02 (Entry No.) 1/ | 2002/03 (Entry No.) 1/ | 2000/01 Area (ha) | 2001/02 Area (ha) | 2002/03 Area (ha) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Arable Crops** | | | | | | |
| Barley | 165 | 204 | 175 | 1,082 | 1,341 | 1,111 |
| Wheat | 254 | 163 | 155 | 1,795 | 1,201 | 1,078 |
| Other | 59 | 81 | 138 | 467 | 540 | 997 |
| **Total** | **478** | **448** | **468** | **3,344** | **3,082** | **3,186** |
| **Brassicas** | | | | | | |
| **Total** | **105** | **67** | **103** | **739** | **539** | **868** |
| **Herbage & Amenity Grasses** | | | | | | |
| Hybrid Ryegrass | 161 | 205 | 334 | 1,389 | 1,794 | 3,074 |
| Italian Ryegrass | 259 | 359 | 536 | 2,103 | 3,061 | 4,787 |
| Perennial Ryegrass | 1,139 | 623 | 803 | 10,104 | 5,872 | 7,687 |
| Other | 283 | 344 | 344 | 2,401 | 3,026 | 3,122 |
| **Total** | **1,842** | **1,531** | **2,017** | **15,997** | **13,753** | **18,670** |
| **Legumes** | | | | | | |
| Red Clover | 167 | 138 | 140 | 905 | 781 | 783 |
| White Clover | 862 | 691 | 772 | 7,583 | 6,059 | 7,053 |
| Other | 34 | 19 | 31 | 244 | 112 | 155 |
| **Total** | **1,063** | **848** | **943** | **8,732** | **6,952** | **7,991** |
| **Other Species** | | | | | | |
| **Total** | **363** | **88** | **92** | **2,955** | **839** | **864** |
| | | | | | | |
| **Grand Total** | **3,851** | **2,982** | **3,623** | **31,767** | **25,165** | **31,579** |

1/ the column "entry numbers" is defined as the number of paddocks (farms entered for seed certification)

**PRODUCTION IN 2002/2003**

Sufficient rainfall during November 2002 and a favorable balance of sunshine and dry conditions thereafter have created mostly excellent growing and harvesting conditions in all seed producing areas in New Zealand[1]. These growing conditions combined with an increase in planting area to increase significantly planting seed production in the 2002/2003 season. Herbage & amenity grass seed production in particular has increased. In calendar year 2001 (CY2001), total certified seed production reached 31,814 tons which was down 17 percent from total seed production in CY2000. In CY2002 total certified seed production again decreased 27 percent from the CY2001 level. Certified seed production in CY2001 and CY2002 consisted of seed for herbage and amenity grasses (15,557 tons, 12,018 tons[2]), arable crops (9,723 tons, 9,040 tons), legumes (3,913 tons, 995 tons), brassicas (860 tons, 509 tons), and other (1,762 tons, 698 tons). New Zealand's certified yearly seed production averaged 36,000 tons between CY1997 and CY2000 and 35,000 tons between CY1998 and CY2001. Statistics for CY2003 will show a significant increase over CY2002 figures.

Industry officials report that perennial ryegrass yields improved from 1,000-1,200 kg. per hectare in 2001/2002 to 1,500-1,600 kg. per hectare in 2002/2003. Two late frosts in December 2002 have, however, lowered the average ryegrass seed yield. Seed quality of the 2002/2003 crop was very high. Total area planted in forage grasses was up significantly driven by a shortage of ryegrass seed. This was caused by the poor 2001/2002 harvest and low international stocks. European ryegrass seed production is expected to remain subdued in 2003 which will give rise to sales opportunities of New Zealand ryegrass seed. As a consequence, the area planted in ryegrass seed in 2003/2004 is forecast to remain at 2002/2003 levels.

Yields of clover seeds were up significantly from an average of 120-150 kg. per hectare in 2001/2002 to 400-500 kg. per hectare in the 2002/2003 season. Total area planted in clovers was also up compared with 2001/2002. Seed quality of the 2002/2003 clover crop is very good. Total area of clover seed production may decrease somewhat due to competition from competing land uses such as dairying and other livestock operations.

Yields of cereal crops in 2002/2003 varied depending on whether they were situated on irrigated land. Some of the cereals produced on unirrigated land suffered due to very dry conditions in December 2002. This reduced seed yields. On the other hand, cereal yields on irrigated land were up, on average 10 percent, over the 2001/2002 season. Area under production was up modestly. Brassica yields in 2002/2003 were up 20 percent with good seed quality also being reported. Total area planted in brassicas was up 61 percent in 2002/2003. Area planted in brassicas in 2003/2004 is likely to remain the same.

Much-needed rain in late March 2003 has alleviated fears by growers that autumn sowing may be

[1]Ninety-five percent of planting seed production is in the Canterbury region (South Island), with 2.5 percent each in the Wairarapa and Hawke's Bay regions in the North Island.

[2]First figure in brackets refers to CY2001 and second figure refers to CY2002

jeopardized by an increasingly severe soil moisture deficit that has developed over recent months. However, more regular rains are needed until May (when many seed crops are sown) so that total area planned for seed production in the 2003/2004 season is not diminished.

## MARKETING

### *Market Development Opportunities*

The New Zealand seed industry is open and very much attuned to the international market. However, New Zealand will remain a small volume buyer of seeds on the international market due to its significant domestic production. The greatest opportunities for U.S. seed exports to New Zealand exist for proprietary forage grasses. New Zealand does have some problems producing certain seed types in sufficient purity, so niche opportunities exist for specialist turf applications and vegetables. The good harvest in 2002/2003 may, however, restrict opportunities for some seed imports in 2003. In favor of increased sales opportunities is the current U.S. $ : NZ $ exchange rate for U.S. exporters.

U.S. exports of planting seeds to New Zealand increased 43 percent to U.S. $2.8 million (according to U.S. Customs data) in CY2002. New Zealand's total seed imports nearly trebled to 24,596 tons in the 2001/2002 season and were valued at U.S. $12 million (CIF). The United States accounted for 4 percent of total volume, led by fescue seed, vegetable seed and field corn seed. Fescue seed imports from the United States increased by nearly 175 percent, vegetable seed imports trebled, while field corn seed imports halved due to concerns over the inadvertent presence of genetically modified seeds in import consignments.

### *Competitor Activities*

New Zealand's exports of seeds in 2001/2002 reached 21,249 tons and were valued at U.S. $25.4 million (FOB). The United States imported one fifth of the total volume, which was predominantly ryegrass seed for the amenity market. Other key export markets for New Zealand include Australia, the Netherlands, Germany and Chile. New Zealand exports of clover in 2001/2002 fell 42 percent, while leguminous vegetable seed exports increased 245 percent.

### *U.S. Market for Proprietary New Zealand Forage Grass Seed*

New Zealand industry officials comment that the most important U.S. market segment for New Zealand ryegrasses is represented by U.S. demand for amenity grasses. Especially roadside plantings and golf courses represent the main source of recurring annual demand for non-proprietary perennial ryegrasses. Non-proprietary ryegrass cultivars from New Zealand, while not as well performing as some proprietary cultivars, are cheaper than proprietary seeds but of similar quality. However, some New Zealand proprietary plant breeders have identified marketing opportunities for proprietary perennial ryegrass cultivars for "all year around" grazing systems, such as those found increasingly in dairying operations. As agricultural producers in the United States are becoming increasingly aware of New Zealand's unique grazing systems, they identify potential economic advantages by using forage plant species that can perform well under local U.S. conditions. Consequently, New Zealand plant breeders are undertaking research to develop proprietary forage species for country-specific temperate climates, including various areas in the United States. This involves the use of New Zealand germ plasm and its

adaptation to local U.S. conditions. New Zealand breeding companies undertake research in the United States and Australia, with the aim to develop markets for proprietary forage seeds for temperate climates such as those prevalent in France, England, Japan, South Africa, Australia, and Chile.

## POLICY

### *Review of the New Zealand Plant Variety Rights Act 1987*

Intellectual property protection rights for plants in New Zealand are covered by the New Zealand Plant Variety Rights Act 1987 (PVRA 87). The PVRA 1987 is based on the 1978 revision of the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV 78) Convention. In 1991, UPOV member states agreed on a new and enhanced convention (UPOV 91). The changes embodied in UPOV 91 considerably expand the rights available to plant breeders, reflecting a number of problems that had arisen with UPOV 78.

Although New Zealand is a signatory to UPOV 91, the necessary New Zealand amendments to the PVRA 87 to enable ratification of UPOV 91 have not been made, yet. Over recent years, however, there has been an ongoing debate at breeder, grower and regulator levels over the perceived confusion of the PVRA 87 with respect to the increased use of proprietary cultivars in New Zealand. As a consequence, industry participants developed the view that the current act needs to be amended.

PVRA 87 amendments that reflect and enable full ratification of UPOV 91 conventions would entail significant changes for both growers and breeders. While both groups still have concerns over some of the UPOV 91 conventions, there is a general consensus that if any PVRA amendments were to be made they must enable New Zealand to ratify UPOV 91. If New Zealand is not able to ratify UPOV 91 both breeders and growers believe that foreign and domestic investment in New Zealand-based plant breeding research and commercial development of proprietary cultivars would be curtailed. The New Zealand Government is also favoring ratification of UPOV 91. Its "Innovation Strategy" states that New Zealand needs to maximize the value form its innovations by of improving New Zealand's intellectual property framework.

As a consequence of these ongoing discussions, the New Zealand Government has initiated steps to amend the PVRA 87. In March 2002, the Ministry of Economic Development released a public discussion document which sought input on whether, and if so, how the PVRA 87 should be amended[3]. Proposed amendments to the act are currently being drafted with the expectation that a bill will be presented to cabinet in June 2003.

While plant breeders and growers generally agree that the PVRA needs to change and that New Zealand should ratify UPOV 91, a contentious issue has been raised. Several groups suggest that due to New Zealand's unique political landscape New Zealand should not ratify UPOV 91. New

[3]Subsequently, the Ministry released a summary of the submissions to the discussion paper. Both documents can be viewed at: www.med.govt.nz.

Zealand's ratification of UPOV 91would limit the ability of New Zealand to put in place a unique (*sui generis*) regime for the protection of Maori rights and interests.

Further complexity is added to the situation. Some groups recommended that the Government should impose a moratorium on the granting of plant variety rights over indigenous flora until a Waitangi Tribunal Claim (Wai 262 or the "Flora and Fauna Claim") lodged against the New Zealand Crown in 1991, is resolved. The Wai 262 claim is based on "Maori Cultural and Intellectual Property Rights" granted under the Treaty of Waitangi. Consequently, the New Zealand ratification of UPOV 91 may become difficult to achieve.

***Review of Import Health Standard for Seeds for Sowing***

Over the past 18 months MAF conducted pest risk assessments for the importation of wheat, barley, oat, pea and bean seeds for sowing, followed by a review of the existing pest lists. In November 2002 MAF released a public discussion document because it believed that the existing pest lists did not accurately represent actual pest risks encountered. MAF is now considering the submissions to the discussion document, indicating that final amendments to the existing standard (Standard 155.02.05) will probably be implemented by January 2004. The changes will not abolish existing approved country lists (currently about 15 countries listed). Importers wishing to import seed for sowing from countries not listed on the existing standard will have to complete the existing "country approval" procedures showing that the country of origin does not pose a significant pest risk. Indications are that the existing pest lists for wheat, barley, oats, peas and beans will be extended.

MAF is also redeveloping the import health standards for grains for processing, citing changing New Zealand import requirements as the rationale for the amendments. Up until the end of last year, MAF was operating under a historical import arrangement. This arrangement allowed grain imports only from Australia, Canada and the United States. However, severe droughts in Australia, Canada and United States disrupted the availability of grains to New Zealand importers in 2002, and some major New Zealand grain importers approached MAF, requesting that grains from additional supply countries be allowed. MAF is developing a revised Import Health Standard (IHS) along generic lines to meet the requirements for importing grain from any country. MAF hopes to implement the new standard by the middle of 2003 but it will allow Australia, Canada and the United States to operate under their existing standards until January 2004.

MAF has already implemented specific IHSs for wheat (December 20, 2002), maize (February 17, 2003), and plans to develop other product-specific IHSs for oat, barley and sorghum. Import requirements for these grain types will apply to all countries as specified in WTO SPS agreements under the terms of equivalence.

***GM Seed Testing Regime for Presence of GM in Conventional Seed Shipments***

On August 1, 2002 MAF implemented a final protocol that requires testing certification for the presence of GM corn in conventional sweet corn seed imports. The new testing protocol aims to prevent the unapproved release of genetically modified varieties and sub-species of sweet corn into the New Zealand environment through seed imported for sowing. The protocol requires that every consignment must be tested for the presence of unapproved GM seeds. If requested, MAF will

consider the option of area freedom from commercial GM production on a crop/country basis. MAF will grant area freedom conditionality if the country can demonstrate that it has sufficient systems in place to provide a level of assurance equivalent to testing every import consignment.

On October 1 2002, MAF expanded its GMO (genetically modified organism) free planting seed certification requirements by implementing Import Health Standards for testing rape seed for planting. This was followed by an additional protocol for testing soybean seed for planting on January 1, 2003.

(All protocols can be found at: www.maf.govt.nz/biosecurity/imports/plants/seeds-sowing.htm)

***Levy Order Vote Ensures Continued Funding for Non-Proprietary Cultivars Research***

The Herbage Seedgrowers Subsection of Federated Farmers (an independent farmers organization with statutory backing by the New Zealand government to represent herbage seedgrowers) conducted a ballot under the Commodity Levies Act 1990, in October 2003. The ballot was conducted to determine whether the existing "Non-Proprietary and Non-Certified Herbage Seeds Order" should be renewed for another five years (the statutory period of time after which grower endorsement for levy collection must be sought). The order enables the levy funding of breeding research of non-proprietary grass and clover cultivars which is undertaken by AgResearch, a Crown Research Institute. Only 27.1 percent of growers responded to the ballot, however, the majority voted in favor (82 percent by volume and 79 percent by value) of renewing the levy order. The new Commodities Levy Order is likely to be implemented by June 8 2003, when the existing order expires. However, it will not come into effect until the 2004 season.

For the current 2003 harvest, the Herbage Seed Growers have set the levy at 1.5 percent of estimated farm gate value across all non-proprietary cultivars. The farm gate value is set in consultation with the New Zealand Grain & Seed Trade Association.