



Participants of the Central Otago Emerging Leaders development programme

New leaders programme transforms workers

The horticulture industry has tapped into an 'Emerging Leaders' development programme for some of its orchard supervisors and managers, with Central Otago becoming the first region to run it.

Aimee Wilson

After being successfully trialled on participants in Nelson by Horticulture New Zealand (HortNZ) last year, the first ten-week programme concluded in Alexandra in mid-August and is now being rolled out into other regions.

Jointly funded by Agricultural and Marketing Research and Development Trust (AGMARDT), the New Zealand Fruitgrowers' Charitable Trust and HortNZ, the programme is on offer in Canterbury, Gisborne, Hawke's Bay, Bay of Plenty and Pukekohe, with plans to deliver it in Nelson too.

There is a maximum cohort size for each region to ensure participants obtain the most they can from the sessions. To attend the programme, participants had to show a keen interest to become involved. Alternatively, group leaders from various orchards were put forward by their managers.

"They had to come in with an open mind and have a growth mindset," said organiser and GoHort career progression manager, Chelsea Donnelly. "Everyone got really stuck in, it was awesome."

Modules included emotional intelligence, developing self-awareness, managing emotions, resolving conflict, delegation and building relationships with others to lead confidently.

"There was often agreement from the participants around the challenges of the horticulture industry but also the opportunities if given the right leadership tools," Chelsea said.

The course is run by Emerge and Transform - a leadership training and coaching company founded five years ago. New Zealand's dairy industry has run the programme since

2020, so the horticulture industry was a natural progression.

Course founder, Sha Perera, says the aim of the programme is to develop the tools, skills and mindset to lead with confidence.

"Leaders need to model the qualities they expect from their team," Sha says. "This builds trust and connection and leads to stronger relationships."

"Emotional Intelligence underpins effective leadership and is integrated into the course to help participants learn about themselves and become better industry leaders."

One participant, Lionel Boyce from Roxburgh, says he learnt how to develop more empathy as well as other useful initiatives that he could take away and think on.

"There were a lot of great takeaways from the course, all in and around self and social awareness and self and social management," Lionel says. "My learnings from the course will help me approach difficult conversations with more confidence and [will] allow me to stay above the line [by] having a more positive mindset and by being able to recognise and understand my feelings better and relate to others."

"There's no doubt it's going to make me a better leader at work, a better partner at home and just a better person

in general."

Participants were also encouraged to share some of their work issues and brainstorm solutions to these over the course of the programme - making it completely personalised.

Chelsea said there was so much she learnt from the course that could be applied not just to the workplace, but to home situations as well.

"I would often find myself using many of the tools we learnt on the daily app at home," she says. "For example, planning tough conversations with my teenagers beforehand and engaging my 'active listening' skills rather than letting myself get distracted by my seemingly endless to-do list."

The course includes daily learning 'bites' via an online app, three one-on-one coaching sessions and four online workshops with a facilitator.

The learning and mentoring doesn't just stop after the course either. Participants create their own specialised 'toolkit' to keep for future reference. ●



To learn more about the Emerging Leaders programme, or to participate, contact your regional GoHort career progression manager: <https://gohorticulture.co.nz/leadership/>



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