

MEDIA RELEASE

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Ballance lends a hand with Maori Excellence Trophy

For the second year running Ballance Agri-Nutrients has taken on the challenging task of coordinating all aspects of the Ahuwhenua Trophy – BNZ Maori Excellence in Farming Award's judging process.

Ballance is a sponsor of the awards, but rather than contributing just funding one of the fertiliser co-operative's senior field operatives, Key Accounts Representative Andrew Rutherford, is also supporting them as judge coordinator.

Andrew is developing a judging timetable to accommodate the needs of the five preliminary judges, the four finals judges and, most importantly from Andrew's point of view, the entrants, whose farms are situated in different parts of the North Island.

'I work hard to make the whole experience as easy as possible for the entrants. I learned a lot as last year's judge coordinator and I'm sure that's going to make this year's process run very smoothly indeed.'

In his current role as Ballance's Key Accounts Representative for Eastern North Island, Andrew advises farmers on their fertiliser requirements.

'I work a lot with Maori farmers, Trusts and Incorporations. Maori farmers take their kaitiaki role seriously and in my experience are keen to use tools such as nutrient budgeting and nutrient management plans to reduce their impact on the environment. I find that admirable.'

Andrew has farming in his blood. He grew up on his family's 225ha sheep and beef farm in the southern Hawke's Bay, spent seven years with Wrightson, first as a trainee in the Central Plateau and later as branch manager at Katikati, before joining Ballance eight years ago.

'I get great job satisfaction from being able to build strong business relationships with my customers and enjoy having a positive influence on their farming operation by providing quality plant nutrient advice and services.'

Andrew isn't the only person from Ballance to participate in the awards process in one way or another. In 2008 Ballance Hawke's Bay-based director Dean Nikora and wife Kristen won the Ahuwhenua Trophy.

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Initial judging for this year's competition starts in March. Field days will be held on the properties of the three finalists in April and May and the winner of the Ahuwhenua Trophy – BNZ Maori Excellence in Farming Dairy Competition will be announced at a Gala Awards dinner in Taupo on Friday 28 May 2010.

About the award

The Ahuwhenua Trophy – BNZ Maori Excellence in Farming Award acknowledges and celebrates business excellence in New Zealand's important pastoral sector. This competition is held annually, alternating each year between dairy and sheep & beef.

The 2010 competition showcases achievement by Maori in the dairy sector – in particular, successful approaches to governance, financing, management, innovation, environmental management and the recognition of nga tikanga Maori.

For more information visit <http://www.ahuwhenuatrophy.maori.nz/>