



This newsletter has been produced as part of the Future Orchards® program. Future Orchards is a strategic levy investment under the Hort Innovation Apple and Pear Fund. It is funded by Hort Innovation using the apple and pear levy and funds from the Australian Government and is delivered by APAL and AgFirst.

Future Orchards
Business Development Group
Update

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IN THIS ISSUE

Last newsletter looked at important datapoints to be collecting during harvest and harvest labour planning.

This newsletter will run through fruit sizing data across Gala, Granny Smith and Pink Lady and how things are tracking. Growers who are sizing will have noticed a good late season growth rate relative to the last few years and some of the lagging size has caught up a bit over the last month or so.

With more varieties starting to come off the tree now is a key time in both maximising this year's crop and beginning the planning phase for the 2021 harvest (already?!)

Now is a good time to be thinking about postharvest nutrition regimes, pruning requirements (invigorate, devigorate, restructure etc.), disease management, redevelopment plans and labour requirements.

On a personal note this will be the last time I write this newsletter from New Zealand with AgFirst. From April onwards I will be based in Victoria providing decision support services to

fruitgrowers under my new business, Fruit Help.

AgFirst and I will continue to work together in key areas and this newsletter is likely to fall into that category.

All the best with the rest of harvest

Nic

OrchardNet has a variety of in-built tools to allow for production planning. A combination of accurate tree counts, areas, block production targets and other factors can be combined to give target bud and fruit numbers per tree.

<http://www.orchardnet.co.nz>

Don't have an OrchardNet account?

As part of the Future Orchards project OrchardNet is provided to Australian growers for free (up to 1200 blocks total). Please contact your local FLA or a member of AgFirst (see details on the last page of this newsletter) if you would like to give it a go.



Fruit sizing update



Planning ahead for the 2021 season



Fruit size 2020 - Where are things sitting?

The below analysis has been derived from fruit size measurements taken by growers and uploaded to the OrchardNet database. This data is an amalgamation of all growers participating in fruit sizing for the 2020 harvest season.

2020 Season

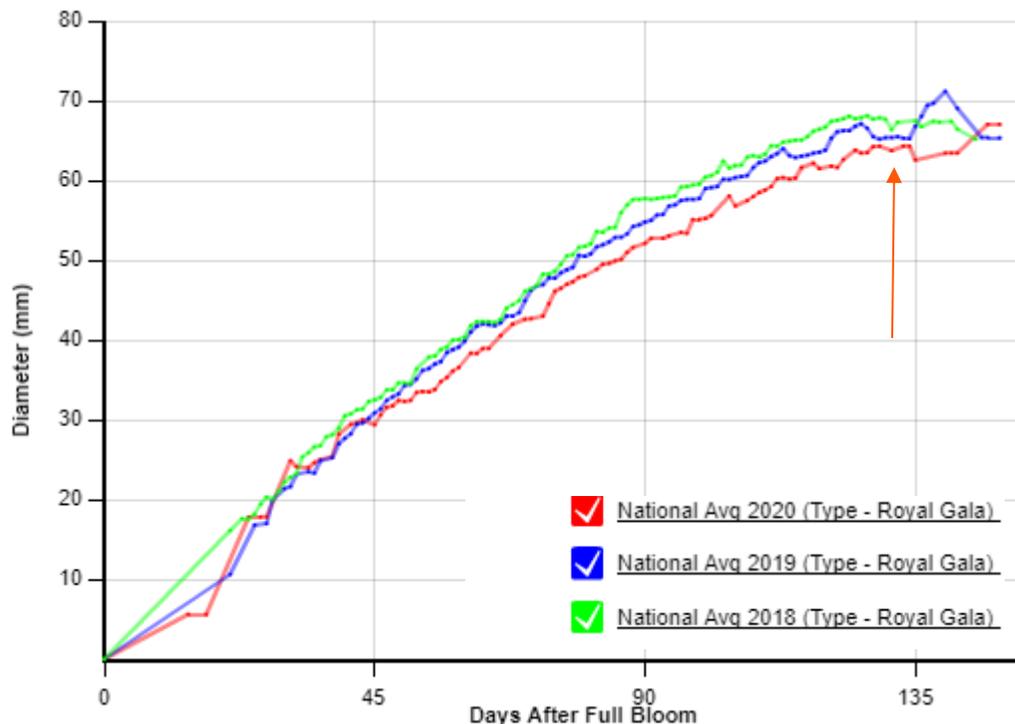
After a cool start to the 2020 season the vast majority of Australian growing regions, fruit size tended to be tracking relatively poorly across all apple varieties.

The below looks at main varieties to see where fruit size is tracking in OrchardNet. Data is collected across all growing regions by individual growers and monitored, typically weekly, by each grower.

Royal Gala

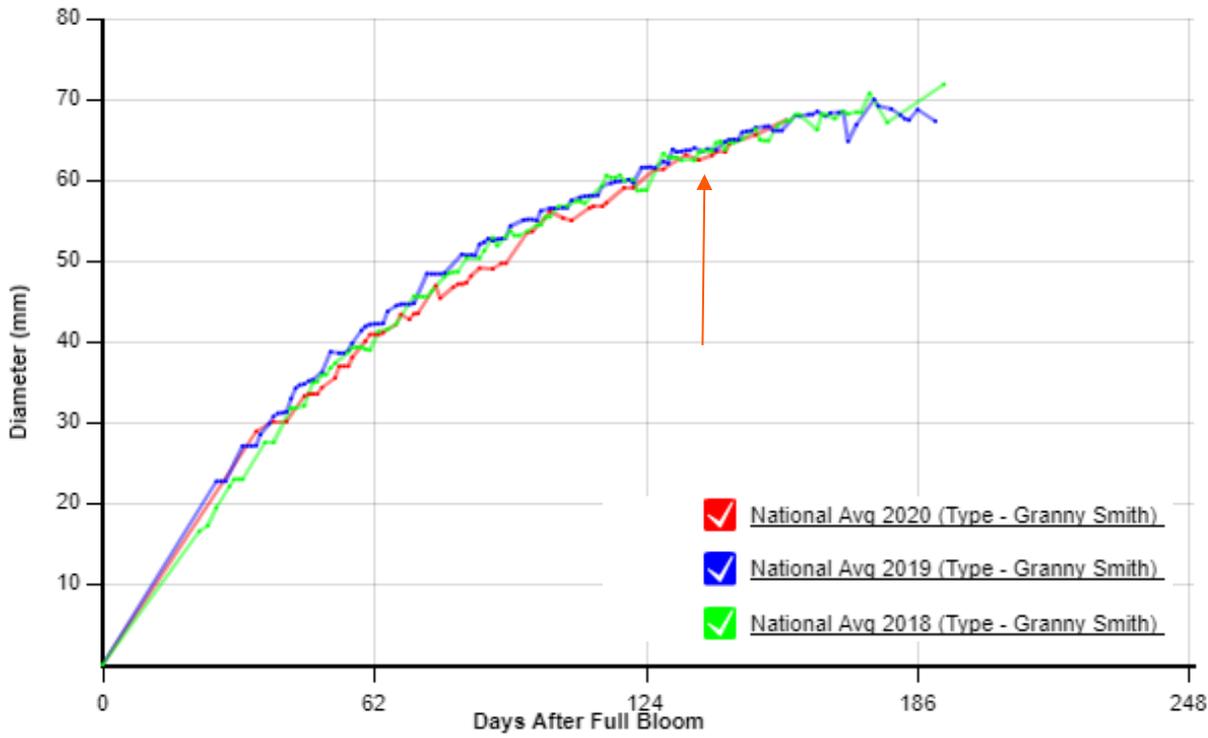
With harvest drawing to a close for Gala in most regions it's interesting to see where Royal Gala strains have ended the season for fruit sizing. Despite relatively good late season fruit growth rates, size has lagged behind on Gala types for most of the season. Whilst growth rates were strong pre-harvest, my interpretation of this would be a slightly reduced size profile relative to last year.

It is important to note that data to the right of the orange arrow is more sporadic and should be largely ignored. This is predominantly due to regional differences and the number of growers who fruit size right up to and during harvest.



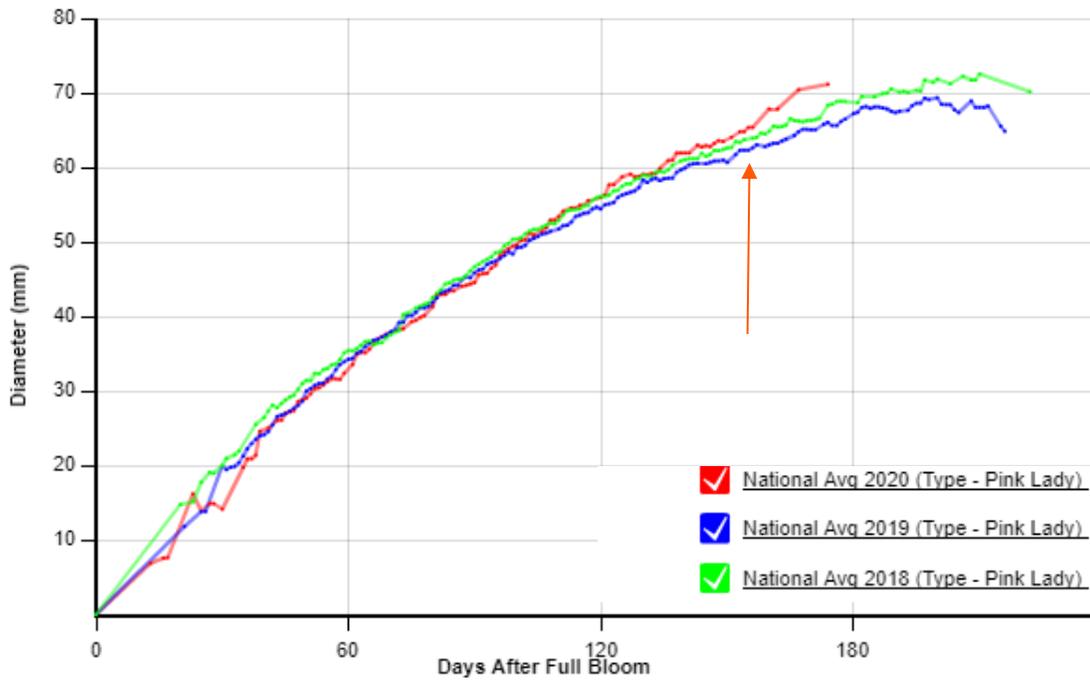
Granny Smith

Granny Smith sizing has improved in recent weeks and seems to be running similar to the past two years at present. Given the general tendency for this to be the biennial "off" year fruit size should be tracking similar to 2018 at present, if not slightly on the larger side.



Pink Lady

Despite a relatively slow start good mid-season growth rates are likely to see large fruit size for the Pink Lady strains which has probably been helped along by recent rain coupled with lighter croploads being carried in some areas following the harsh temperatures last summer. It is important to note that data to the right of the orange arrow is more sporadic and should be largely ignored.



Halfway through harvest - thinking ahead

Harvest is now well underway which it's time to be thinking ahead so that key tasks are not missed in the postharvest period.

As outlined in previous newsletters (all are in the Future Orchards Library on the APAL website), planning ahead is critical to achieving your goals.

Nutrition

Postharvest presents a unique opportunity to correct tree nutrition. Pre-harvest leaf tests can help to inform your postharvest applications (how much or how little to apply).

Pruning

Taking 'large cuts' where necessary can be an effective way to remove large branches and spread the demand later in the year. By having your higher skilled pruners undertaking structural cuts, revisiting for winter detail has no need for loppers or saws.

It is important to note that in doing this you are likely to see a vigour reduction. This type of structural pruning is most appropriate on strong growing trees where a reduction in vegetative growth is desired. Renewal of the branch is less likely so keep that in mind depending on your desired result (and don't forget to paint!)

Disease management

Where black spot or other disease issues have been a challenge your management in the leaf fall period can be key in reducing inoculum levels over the next year.

Copper chelate and nitrogen applications can be very effective for leaf removal and breakdown allow for inoculum levels to be dropped out.

Getting your data into OrchardNet

Once a block is harvested (and hopefully a total bin number for that block has been recorded) this data can be put into

OrchardNet to perform a "Block Profitability Report" and to benchmark against other growers

Block profitability report

THE MINIMUM DATA YOU NEED IN ORCHARDNET TO GENERATE THIS REPORT

- Block details (planted area in hectares, variety)
- Tonnes picked/sent to packhouse
- Class 1 packout %
- Fruit weight (grams)

For your class 1 packout and fruit weight, take a sensible estimate (informed by last year, two years ago etc.) and make a note that it was an estimate. For estimates round numbers (eg. 80%, 85%) are best as they are typically easy to distinguish from actual packouts/weights later in the selling/packing season when data is finalised.

Planning ahead - setting a target

With the crop almost off it is now the time to be setting goals for next year.

A cropload target can be set and from this 'end goal' you can produce the season plan from pruning all the way through.

Previous BDG newsletters on the Future Orchards Library discuss this topic.

See: <https://apal.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/23BDG-Newsletter-June-2019-NF-1.pdf>

Interested in trying OrchardNet within your business?

OrchardNet takes some perseverance and may require a different way of thinking to what you're used to.

If you're not too sure how-to login to OrchardNet, enter data, add blocks or you just need a few extra pointers don't be afraid to get in contact with your local Front-Line Advisor (FLA), the OrchardNet Administrator (adrian.stone@agfirst.co.nz) or a member of the AgFirst team.

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