Vegetable Research Roadshow 2026

Event Guide

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Vegetables NEW ZEALAND Inc

Vegetable RESEARCH + INNOVATION

Gold sponsored by: CORTEVA™ agriscience

Welcome

Vegetables
NEW ZEALAND Inc

A word from Vegetables NZ and VR&I

The Vegetable Research & Innovation Board is delighted to support the 2026 Vegetable Roadshow Events. A core purpose of the VR&I Board is the promotion of NZ horticulture research and innovation activities that underpin the sustainable growth of the horticultural sector.

The VR&I Board develops and manages a cross-sector research portfolio on behalf of vegetable industry stakeholders. The VR&I Board is supported by Vegetables NZ, Process Vegetables NZ, NZ Buttercup Squash Council and Onions NZ. Supporting partners are the Foundation for Arable Research and the Bioeconomy Science Institute. To find out more about the VR&I Board R&D programme, research outputs and resources visit https://www.vri.org.nz/

Vegetables NZ supports the Vegetable Research Roadshow because it's all about extension and getting practical research to where growers are.

In 2025, the Roadshow reached over 360 growers across 10 regions, offering tools like nitrogen decision-support and tackling issues like Stemphylium leaf blight. The Roadshow creates real grower-researcher engagement, making knowledge accessible and directly applicable. In short, we support the Roadshow because it helps growers turn research into results.

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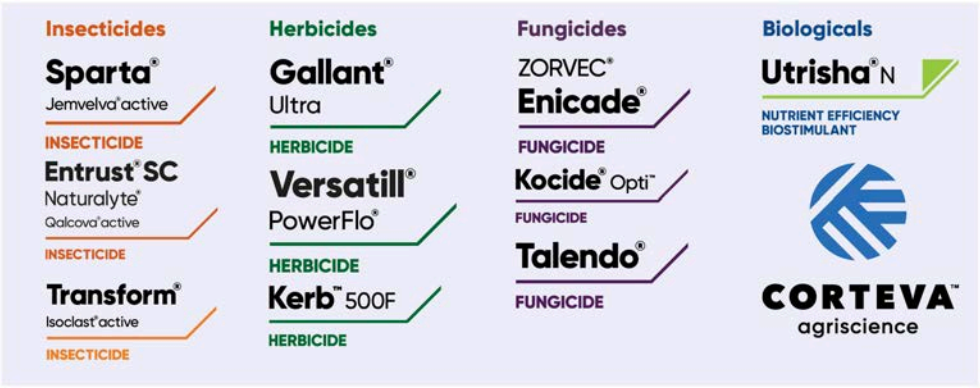
Corteva Agriscience is proud to support the 2026 Vegetable Research Roadshow as gold sponsor.

Corteva Agriscience is a global crop protection company, whose purpose is to enrich the lives of those who produce and those who consume, ensuring progress for generations to come. Continuous innovation and a significant investment in R&D allow Corteva to offer a comprehensive suite of crop protection and biological products, and solutions, to the New Zealand market, to help farm businesses succeed.

Products from Corteva are well regarded and established within the NZ primary industries, including the vegetable sector.

The future of crop protection is changing at a rapid rate. With sustainable food production at the front of consumers' minds, products such as biological, IPM compatible and softer synthetic chemistry are being trialed and commercialized in NZ by Corteva. With a focus on new technology and solutions specifically for farmers, Corteva will continue to support NZ's vegetable industry.



Locations

1 **Dargaville**. 24 Feb, 5-7pm
Northern Wairoa Boating Club

2 **Pukekohe**. 21 April, 4-7pm
Pukekohe Golf Club

3 **Gisborne**. 22 April, 5-7pm
Bushmere arms

4 **Hawkes Bay**. 23 April, 4-7pm
Havelock North Function Centre

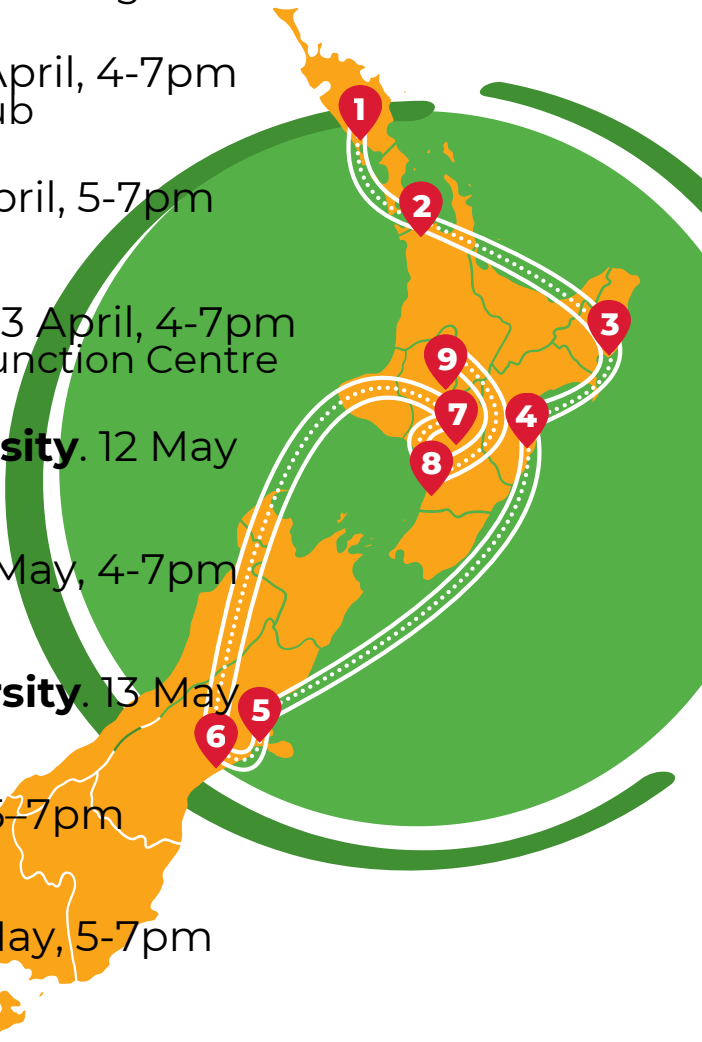
5 **Lincoln University**. 12 May
11am-12:30pm,

6 **Ashburton**. 12 May, 4-7pm
Nobel 600

7 **Massey University**. 13 May
11am-12:30pm

8 **Levin**. 13 May, 5-7pm
Bushmere Arms

9 **Ohakune**. 26 May, 5-7pm
Powderkeg



Dargaville

Time	Description	Speaker
4:30 pm	Registrations Open	
5:00 pm	Welcome & introductions	Daniel Sutton (Vegetables NZ)
5:10 pm	Nematodes & black rot in Kumara	Holly Norman (Lincoln University)
5:35 pm	Fall armyworm update	Ash Mills (FAR)
6:00 pm	Black cricket project	Sophie Hunt (BSI)
6:20 pm	Off-label use in vegetables	Daniel Sutton (Vegetables NZ)
6:40 pm	Vegetable R&D Headlines	Daniel Sutton (Vegetables NZ)
7:00 pm	Meeting close and dinner invitation	

Pukekohe

Time	Description	Speaker
3:30 pm	Registrations Open	
4:00 pm	Welcome & introductions	Daniel Sutton (Vegetables NZ)
4:10 pm	Sponsor spot	Corteva Agriscience
4:15 pm	Stemphylium Update	Daniel Sutton (Onions NZ)
4:35 pm	Potato tuber moth & Alternaria	Paula Lleras (Potatoes NZ)
4:55 pm	Fall Armyworm update	Daniel Sutton (Vegetables NZ)
5:20 pm	Break	
5:40 pm	Utilising Phosphorous from volcanic soils	Matt Norris (BSI)
6:00 pm	On-farm Biodiversity	Asha Chhagan (BSI)
6:20 pm	Sweetcorn catch crop & IPM	Olivia Prouse
6:40 pm	Vegetable R&D Headlines	Daniel Sutton & Paula Lleras
7:00 pm	Meeting close and dinner invitation	

Gisborne

Time	Description	Speaker
4:15 pm	Registrations Open	
4:45pm	Welcome & introductions	Daniel Sutton (Vegetables NZ)
4:55pm	Squash project	Dereck Ferguson (Ferguson Agronomy Ltd.)
5:15 pm	A Lighter touch farm update	Daniel Sutton (Vegetables NZ)
5:35 pm	On-farm biodiversity	Daniel Sutton (Vegetables NZ)
5:50 pm	Fall armyworm update	Rene Van Tilburg (FAR)
6:10 pm	Smart trapping	Chris Lambert (Fruitfed Supplies)
6:30 pm	Vegetable R&D headlines	Daniel Sutton (Vegetables NZ)
7:00 pm	Meeting close and dinner invitation	

Hawkes Bay

Time	Description	Speaker
4:00 pm	Registrations Open	
4:30 pm	Welcome & introductions	Daniel Sutton (Vegetables NZ)
4:45pm	Sponsor spot	Fruitfed Supplies
4:55pm	Squash project	Dereck Ferguson (Ferguson Agronomy Ltd.)
5:20pm	Process vegetables biological update	Soonie Chng (BSI)
5:50 pm	Fall Armyworm update	Rene Van Tilburg (FAR)
6:15 pm	Stemphylium Update	Daniel Sutton (Onions NZ)
6:40 pm	Vegetable R&D Headlines	Daniel Sutton (Vegetables NZ)
7:00 pm	Meeting close and dinner invitation	

Ashburton

Time	Description	Speaker
3:30 pm	Registrations Open	
4:00 pm	Welcome & introductions	Daniel Sutton (Vegetables NZ)
4:05 pm	Sponsor spot	Corteva Agriscience
4:10 pm	Potato tuber moth & *Alternaria*	Paula Lleras (Potatoes NZ)
4:30 pm	Powdery Scab Masters	Ellie Brooks (Lincoln University)
4:40 pm	Stemphylium Update	Daniel Sutton (Onions NZ)
4:55 pm	Integrated weed management	Andrew Pitman (FAR)
5:15 pm	Break	
5:30 pm	Process vegetables biological update	Soonie Chng (BSI)
6:00 pm	On-farm Biodiversity	Asha Chhagan (BSI)
6:25pm	Nitrogen decision support	Andrew Barber (Agrilink)
6:45 pm	Vegetable R&D Headlines	Daniel Sutton & Paula Lleras
7:00 pm	Meeting close and dinner invitation	

Levin

Time	Description	Speaker
4:30 pm	Registrations Open	
5:00 pm	Welcome & introductions	Daniel Sutton (Vegetables NZ)
5:10 pm	Sponsors spot	The Horticentre Charitable Trust
5:15 pm	On-farm biodiversity	Asha Chhagan (BSI)
5:45pm	Nitrogen decision support	Andrew Barber (Agrilink)
6:10pm	Potato *Alternaria* & TPP update	Paula Lleras (Potatoes NZ)
6:35pm	Vegetable R&D headlines	Daniel Sutton (Vegetables NZ)
7:00 pm	Meeting close and dinner invitation	

Ohakune

Time	Description	Speaker
5:00 pm	Registrations Open	
5:30 pm	Welcome & introductions	Daniel Sutton (Vegetables NZ)
5:40 pm	Potatoes NZ update	Paula Lleras (Potatoes NZ)
6:10pm	Nematode update	Daniel Sutton (Vegetables NZ)
6:30pm	Vegetable R&D headlines	Daniel Sutton (Vegetables NZ)
7:00 pm	Meeting close and dinner invitation	

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Horticentre Charitable Trust is funded by

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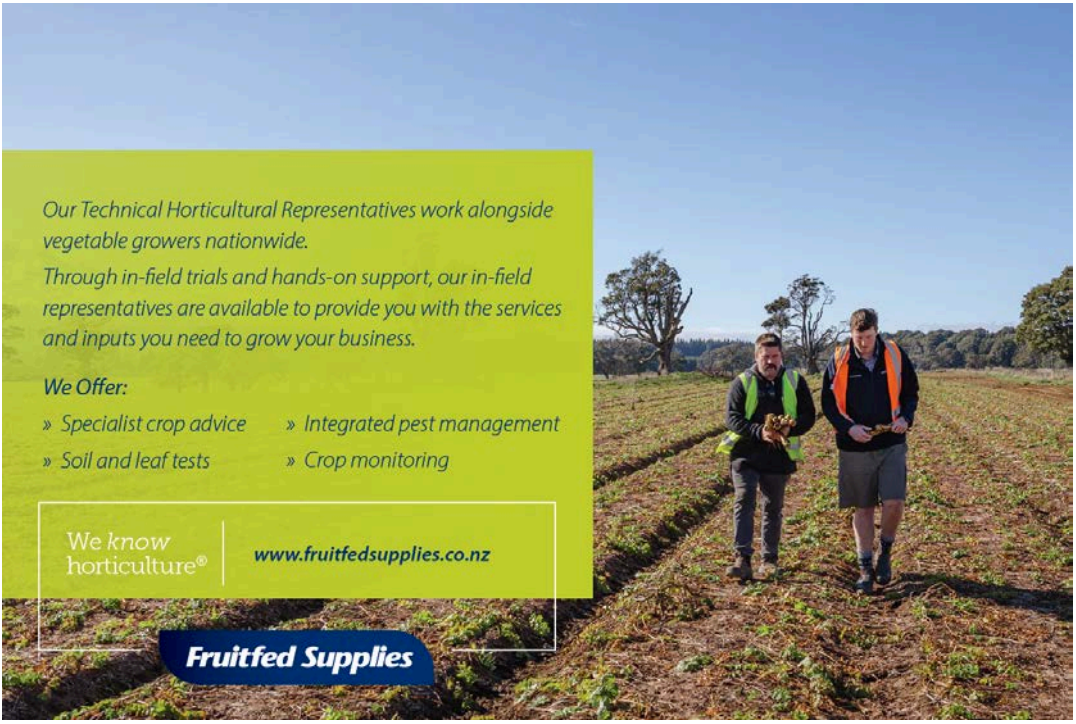
Advancing Horticulture & Viticulture in New Zealand

Funding grower-led initiatives that promote education research and development

Fruitfed Supplies



Speaker Profiles

Andrew Barber

Andrew Barber (Agrilink NZ) works across the primary sector on resource use optimisation. He works extensively in the vegetable sector including on erosion and sediment control, irrigation consents, GHG emissions, and most recently as the programme manager for the Sustainable Vegetable Systems (SVS) project.

The SVS Decision Support Tool is underpinned by soil mineral nitrogen testing to make informed fertiliser decisions based on the actual season's conditions. Regional hands-on workshops are planned where growers and advisers will plan and track crops using the SVS Tool.

Quarterly meetings will allow peoples experiences to be discussed and worked through in a collaborative group environment. User feedback is then incorporated to improve both the tools underlying model as well as its interface.

Andrew Pitman

Dr Andrew Pitman has been General Manager of Research and Development at the Foundation for Arable Research (FAR) since 2028.

The role involves research strategy development, programme management and overseeing a team of 17 researchers and field officers.

He has a PhD in Molecular Biology, from the University of Wales, Swansea.

Speaker Profiles

Asha Chhagan

Asha Chhagan is a Senior Scientist and Acting Team Leader in the Biocontrol & Innovative Pest Management Team at the Bioeconomy Science Institute, Auckland.

She has worked in Integrated Pest Management and Biological Control for over 25 years, and has entomology expertise across a diverse range of fruit and vegetable crops including kiwifruit, apples, citrus, feijoas, onions and brassicas.

Asha's presentation will focus on the use of flower-rich strips and companion planting to provide shelter, nectar, alternative food sources, and pollen (SNAP) for beneficial invertebrates is a well-established concept, with extensive research and successful application in international horticultural systems.

This project aimed to monitor invertebrate populations in biodiverse native plantings at the Pukekohe Research and Demonstration Farm and assess how these plant species support key beneficial invertebrates and their movement into adjacent vegetable crops from spring to summer.

Ashley Mills

I am an Arable Biosecurity and Industry Relationships Officer with the Foundation for Arable Research (FAR), and I support national readiness and response through Seed and Grain Readiness and Response (SGRR). My work focuses on protecting crop health and strengthening practical biosecurity systems across the arable sector.

I lead preparedness for emerging pests and diseases through surveillance design, early detection, risk assessment, and response planning. A key focus is Fall Armyworm (FAW), where I manage the Sustainable Food and Fibre Futures (SFFF) long-term management project. This includes coordinating monitoring programmes, supporting integrated pest management research, and working with growers, researchers, and government to develop effective, field-ready control strategies for New Zealand conditions.

Through the Government Industry Agreement (GIA), I contribute to readiness planning, industry action plans, and response exercises to ensure the seed and grain sector can respond quickly and consistently to new incursions.

My role connects science, policy, and practice, and I aim to provide clear, practical guidance that builds resilient and sustainable cropping systems.

Speaker Profiles

Chris Lambert

Chris is part of the Fruitfed Supplies Technical Team, supporting vegetable crop production and protection around the country.

Previously he has worked as a Research Agronomist and vegetable Crop Production Manager in Gisborne. Chris has a Master's degree in IPM and is passionate about entomology. Much of Chris's role is spent training and advising the Fruitfed sales team in their role as trusted advisors. He also enjoys working with growers and the wider industry, looking for solutions to pest, disease, and soil health issues.

On the back of a successful project trialling smart traps in sweetcorn last year, Chris will be sharing details on follow-up research that aims to further understand the role of smart monitoring traps for various vegetable crops in New Zealand – aiming to save growers money or improve the control of several important caterpillar pests.

Daniel Sutton

Daniel Sutton is the Research, Development and Extension Manager at Vegetables New Zealand, where he works closely with growers, researchers and industry partners to ensure research investment is practical, coordinated and directly relevant to on-farm decision making.

He plays a central role in planning and delivering the Vegetable Research Roadshow each year. Across the roadshow, Daniel will cover a range of current and emerging topics, including off-label use in vegetable crops, the latest information on Stemphylium leaf blight management, on-farm biodiversity, and key research headlines from Te Ahikawariki, including BioScout monitoring.

He will also provide updates from the A Lighter Touch programme, highlighting how integrated pest and disease management approaches are being applied in New Zealand vegetable systems.

Speaker Profiles

Dereck Fergusson

Dereck Ferguson is an independent agronomist with extensive experience supporting vegetable growers across the East Coast of the North Island, with a strong focus on practical, on-farm solutions that improve crop performance, profitability and resilience. Working closely with growers, he provides advice on crop nutrition, pest and disease management, and agronomic decision making tailored to local conditions.

Within the A Lighter Touch (ALT) buttercup squash project, Dereck plays a key role linking research with real-world practice. He supports trial design and implementation on commercial properties, helps evaluate biological and reduced-input crop protection programmes, and works directly with growers to interpret results and refine management approaches.

His practical insight ensures the project remains grounded in commercial reality, while helping identify pathways to reduce reliance on conventional chemistry and strengthen integrated crop management in squash systems.

Ellie Brooks

My name is Ellie Brock, and I'm currently in the second year of my Master of Horticultural Science, where I am investigating new integrated pest management approaches for Spongospora subterranea f. sp. subterranea, the pathogen responsible for powdery scab in potatoes.

Powdery scab remains a significant challenge for potato growers, affecting both roots and tubers and reducing crop quality, yield, and marketability. Despite the tools available, currently, no single control practice can provide consistent, reliable control.

My research explores an innovative idea: using industry potato waste to "wake up" dormant sporosori in the soil before planting. By stimulating the pathogen to germinate when no host is present, I aim to reduce the soil inoculum load.

I am also testing whether applying the waste at planting can disrupt zoospore movement, making it harder for the pathogen to locate and infect potato roots.

Alongside this, I am evaluating the biocontrol potential of Trichoderma atroviride LU132, a highly rhizosphere-competent strain that has yet to be tested against S. subterranea in potatoes. Together, these approaches may offer growers new tools to reduce powdery scab pressure and support healthier potato crops.

Speaker Profiles

Holly Norman

I am a Master's of Horticulture student at Lincoln University, majoring in Plant Protection, with a focus on pest and disease pressures in kūmara production. My research aims to support more sustainable and resilient growing systems by managing reliance on chemical controls and investigating post-harvest practices.

The current work investigates the impact of root knot nematodes and black rot, caused by the fungal pathogen Ceratocystis fimbriata, on kūmara crop health. Using a combination of glasshouse and laboratory-based trials, I am exploring the effectiveness of biological control options, with particular emphasis on Trichoderma as a tool for managing both pest and disease pressures during the growing season.

More recently, my research has expanded to examine the post-harvest implications of these stressors, with the goal of identifying management strategies that can improve crop quality and consistency. I am working on understanding the effect of nematode damage on the spread of fungal disease in storage conditions, along with the rate of fungal disease spread during the curing process.

Matt Norris

Matt Norris is a Senior Researcher at the Bioeconomy Science Institute with a background in soil and environmental science.

He leads and supports the delivery of applied and fundamental farm systems research including on soil health and regenerative agriculture, nitrogen and phosphorus cycling in cropping systems and sustainable nutrient management.

Matt recently completed a project for Horticulture New Zealand on opportunities to better utilise legacy P stocks in long term cropping soils, and will be sharing some findings from this research along with some other insights on this topic.

Speaker Profiles

Olivia Prouse

Olivia Prouse, Cropping Services Ltd, is working alongside vegetable growers to support practical, whole-farm agronomy across a range of crops and production systems. Her work focuses on integrating pest management, enhancement of biological control agents, use of biologicals, and crop performance to deliver resilient, productive systems for growers.

Within the A Lighter Touch programme, Olivia plays a key role in the IPM demonstration farm, supporting the development and on-farm implementation of integrated pest management strategies that reduce reliance on conventional inputs. She is also involved in the sweetcorn catch crop work, looking to find alternative control measures for key insect pests, due to the loss of organophosphate chemical control options.

Alongside this, Olivia contributes to biodiversity plantings and monitoring, supporting the establishment of functional habitats that enhance beneficial insect activity and overall system resilience. Her involvement helps ensure research outcomes are practical, measurable, and directly relevant to commercial vegetable production.

Paula Lleras

Paula Lleras is the Research & Development Project Manager at Potatoes New Zealand, where she leads the management and monitoring of the potato research programme.

Her role includes overseeing research and extension activities, liaising with industry stakeholders, and administering R&D initiatives to ensure research outcomes deliver practical value to growers and the wider sector.

At the Vegetable Research Roadshow, Paula will present insights from several key research areas, including recent trial results on Powdery Scab management, Integrated Pest Management in a Canterbury process potato crop, and a Potato Tuber Moth mound integrity trial.

She will also discuss progress within the Sustainable Vegetable Systems: Innovation and Improvement programme, as well as current research exploring alternative management options for Alternaria.

Speaker Profiles

Rene van Tilburg

I am the senior maize researcher at FAR and am responsible for developing and leading the research strategy and overseeing numerous trials.

I have a real interest in working on constraints to improving yield and productivity and in this regard am driven by the simple idea that understanding the problems at a deeper level are required to maximise progress.

In other words trials that simply give a yes or no answer may improve yield/productivity but don't fundamentally improve our understanding of how things work.

Understanding how things work at a deeper level provide insight into how the system can be further manipulated to a growers advantage. The updated strategy and trial program will reflect this shift in thinking.

Soonie Chng

Dr Soonie Chng is a plant pathologist with the Bioeconomy Institute of Science (BSI), specialising in soil-borne diseases affecting New Zealand's vegetable production systems. Her work focuses on understanding pathogen ecology, disease risk, and the practical management options available to growers, with a strong emphasis on applied outcomes for field crops.

Through her involvement in the A Lighter Touch (ALT) programme, Sonnie is leading research into the role of biological products within integrated crop protection programmes for process vegetable crops. This includes evaluating biologicals alongside conventional tools to improve disease suppression, crop resilience, and resistance management. Sonnie works closely with industry partners and growers to ensure research findings are relevant, practical, and ready for on-farm adoption.

Speaker Profiles

Sophie Hunt

Sophie Hunt is an entomologist at the Bioeconomy Science Institute, where her work focuses on developing practical, science-based solutions for insect pest management.

Her research focuses on understanding how insects use sound and other signals to communicate, and applying this knowledge to develop effective, targeted pest control tools.

Her talk will focus on the development of a novel trap for the black field cricket (*Teleogryllus commodus*), a persistent pest in vegetable and pasture systems.

The trap exploits the natural acoustic signals used by male crickets to attract females, turning their own communication system into a targeted monitoring and control tool.

Sophie will also briefly discuss how similar acoustic and multisensory approaches are being explored for other pest insects, including moths, as part of broader efforts to reduce reliance on broad-spectrum insecticides.

Notes

Thank you for attending the

Vegetable Research Roadshow 2026

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