

Ka huri te kei o te waka

MĀORI AGRIBUSINESSES NAVIGATING
LAND USE AND ENTERPRISE TRANSITION





Rārangi upoko

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He kupu whakataki

Foreword



Image: The Māori research partners and Bioeconomy Science Institute kaimahi gathered at Tapuaeoharuru Marae in Rotoiti for a review wānanga that marked the end of the first year of the Land Use Transition programme in early 2025.

Mā te whakarongo, ka mōhio
Mā te mōhio, ka mārama
Mā te mārama, ka mātau
Mā te mātau, ka ora.

Through listening, comes knowledge
Through knowledge, comes understanding
Through understanding, comes wisdom
Through wisdom, comes wellbeing.

Over the past two years, the Bioeconomy Science Institute Maiangi Taiao has had the privilege of supporting the aspirations of Kānuka Charitable Trust, Mānuka Performance, Te Kautuku Trust and Te Pū Oranga Whenua through a unique and ground-breaking research kaupapa. The Land Use Transition programme brings together four Māori agribusiness partners and Bioeconomy Science Institute Kairangahau, scientists and researchers to co-lead and co-design research into how whenua Māori and Māori enterprises can transition toward higher-value, more sustainable futures.

Working alongside our Māori research partners has kept us firmly grounded in the kaupapa, ensuring our research stays focused on outcomes that create tangible benefits for Māori landowners, businesses and communities. Space has also been created for genuine peer-to-peer learning between our Māori research partners and Bioeconomy Science Institute. This reciprocal exchange of knowledge and experience is a powerful example of innovation in collaborative research.

That spirit of innovation continues with this publication. Alongside technical reports and research papers, we are sharing our insights through social media, podcasts, videos, presentations and other formats that are accessible and actionable for whānau and communities.

Our hope is that after reading the kōrero shared by our Māori research partners within these pages, you are inspired to turn the stern of your own rōpū – ka huri te kei o te waka – and navigate your own transition journey. It's a pathway you don't have to walk alone, so reach out to our partners or to Bioeconomy Science Institute to explore what transition could look like for your whānau, whenua or enterprise.

To our Māori agribusiness research partners, ngā mihi nui ki a koutou. As we enter the third year of our collaboration, we look forward to continuing to grow our Land Use Transition pātaka kōrero through seeking knowledge, understanding and wisdom for the oranga of all our communities across Aotearoa.

Ngā manaakitanga,

Ngā kaimahi o te hōtaka, Land Use Transitions
Māori Research & Partnerships, AgResearch Group
Bioeconomy Science Institute Maiangi Taiao



Image: The whenua of Totaranui Nama Ono on the East Coast.

Toitū te whenua

Introduction

Whatungarongaro te tangata, toitū te whenua

People come and go, but the land is permanent

We live in Te Ao Hurihuri – a world of perpetual change. Seasons turn. Tides ebb and flow. Technologies advance. Communities and organisations evolve. Yet for Māori landowners, one constant remains: Ko te whenua he taonga tuku iho – the land is a treasure passed down from the ancestors, to be protected, cared for and handed on to future generations.

But how do you ensure the rates are paid, fences maintained, and gorse kept at bay when the land is not generating an economic return? How can ahi kā make a living from the whenua without resorting to extractive practices or depleting natural resources? In the face of climate change and volatile global markets, what pathways exist towards more sustainable land uses? How can both the whenua and whānau not only survive, but thrive?

Ka huri te kei o te waka: Māori Agribusinesses Navigating Land Use and Enterprise Transition has been created to support Māori trusts, incorporations and enterprises who are currently grappling with these important issues. The publication features four visionary rōpū Māori who have turned the stern – ka huri te kei – of their own waka, charting a new course ahead. Each rōpū has either undergone a land use or business transformation or supported other groups to adapt and change.

Kānuka Charitable Trust, Mānuka Performance Limited, Te Kautuku Trust and Te Pū Oranga Whenua Collective are Māori research partners of Land Use Transition, a kaupapa Māori research programme delivered by the Bioeconomy Science Institute. Established in July 2024, the programme is co-led and co-designed by Bioeconomy Science Institute kaimahi and the four Māori research partners, each at different stages of their own transition journeys.

The initiative set out to understand what information, tools and support are needed to help Māori landowners and agribusinesses successfully transition their whenua and enterprises away from traditional models towards more diversified, higher-value and innovative approaches. A variety of research methods were employed to support the Māori research partners to accelerate the transition mahi they already had in progress.



Image: Wānanga with Māori research partners and Bioeconomy Science Institute kaimahi at Ohinewaiapu marae in Rangitukia.

The Land Use Transition programme acknowledges there is no single pathway to transition. The Māori research partners represent four different types of journeys that Māori landowners and Māori agribusinesses may consider when deciding which transition pathway to explore:

- **Emerging Transition:** Kānuka Charitable Trust is on an emerging transition pathway from subsistence or traditional land use toward new high-value pharmaceutical markets, unlocking the latent medicinal and commercial value in the kānuka tree that has been overlooked for far too long.
- **High Value Transition:** Mānuka Performance is on a high value transition journey, moving beyond mānuka honey to explore diverse native flower varieties and polymer extracts. The company is working to shift the honey industry toward innovative, science-backed products rather than raw product export.
- **Integrated Transition:** Te Kautuku Trust is navigating an integrated transition away from conventional beef farming toward a mix of nature-based industries powered by data, intergenerational connection and mātauranga Māori.
- **Shortened Supply Chain Transition:** Te Pū Oranga Whenua is transitioning away from large-scale commercial export toward kai sovereignty and a shortened supply chain, putting food back in the hands of whānau and hapū, and finding new models that work for small land blocks and community-scale enterprise.

The research programme is founded on the understanding that commercial goals for the whenua do not have to compete with social, cultural or te Taiao objectives in a zero-sum game, where one comes at the expense of another. Instead, these aspirations can be pursued together in a holistic and environmentally sustainable way. The research also recognises that land use and enterprise transition does not occur in isolation. Māori agribusinesses operate within a complex system of legal, financial, environmental and social factors that can either enable or constrain change.

Ka huri te kei o te waka shares the experiences of each Māori research partner, offering practical insights, inspiration and a potential roadmap for other Māori agribusinesses considering similar transitions. The publication adds to the body of knowledge available to other rūpū tasked with making decisions about the future of their whenua. Ultimately, it is the members of Whānau Trusts, Ahu Whenua Trusts, Māori Incorporations and Māori enterprises who must decide whether to adapt, pivot or stay with the status quo.

Transition and adaptation is nothing new for Māori. The great navigators voyaged across the Pacific from Hawaiiki to create a new homeland in Aotearoa. The four Māori research partners represent the latest wave of explorers who have taken the courageous decision to steer their waka towards exciting new shores while mapping out a passage for others to follow.

Image: Māori research partners and Bioeconomy Science Institute kaimahi meeting in Hamilton for wānanga.



Transition into Bioeconomy Science Institute

Government science research institutions have also undergone a transition in the last two years. On 1 July 2025, AgResearch, Manaaki Whenua – Landcare Research, Plant & Food Research and Scion merged to form the Bioeconomy Science Institute.

The creation of the Bioeconomy Science Institute brought together more than 2,300 people, including more than 1,500 scientists and researchers, located across Aotearoa and around the world. Under the new structure, the organisation provides Māori agribusinesses and landowners access to world-class science and innovation support encompassing agriculture, horticulture, forestry, aquaculture, biotechnology, manufacturing, biosecurity and climate.

Bioeconomy Science Institute recognises that meaningful partnerships with Māori are essential to achieving our shared vision of resilient, world-leading production systems within a healthy environment. Together with our partners, we develop collaborative research models that weave mātauranga Māori and research and science knowledge systems in ways that are respectful, reciprocal and empowering. Through this shared knowledge, we contribute to enduring cultural, social, economic and environmental outcomes, honouring both te Ao Māori and creating impact together for the benefit of the wider community.

If you are interested in learning more about working with us, we encourage you to get in touch. Visit our website for further information:

<https://www.bioeconomyscience.co.nz/partner-with-us/partnering-with-maori#>



Images: Collecting eDNA samples at Te Kautuku.



Land Use Transition research team

Bioeconomy Science Institute: Selai Letica, Louise Hennessy, Melissa Savage, Raina Meha, Oriwa Tamahou, Waipaina Awarau-Morris, Anna Edwards, Mere Baker, Vicki Burggraaf, Shane Leath, Esther Meenken, Adrian Cookson, Rose Collis, Alec MacKay, Duy Tran, Ronaldo Vibart, Steve Cantwell

Kānuka Charitable Trust: Manu Caddie

Mānuka Performance: Tristan Vine

Te Kautuku Trust: Renee Raroa

Te Pū Oranga Whenua: Bonny Hatami, Lisa Warbrick, Tracey Bayliss



Poipoia te kākano

Kānuka Charitable Trust

EMERGING TRANSITION JOURNEY

Poipoia te kākano kia puāwai.

Nurture the seed and it will blossom.

Long overlooked as mānuka's poor cousin, kākano is now stepping into the spotlight as an emerging industry. The Kānuka Charitable Trust has been instrumental in building national and international interest in the native tree and laying the foundation for the successful commercialisation of new products using kākano oil.

Kānuka Charitable Trust was founded by Māori landowners and business leaders from across the motu. Its purpose is to protect kākano as a taonga species and ensure Māori values guide the development of the kākano industry. The Trust is united by a shared belief that kākano has the potential to transform the economic futures of their whānau and communities.

Manu Caddie (Ngāti Pukenga, Waitaha-ā-Hei, Ngāti Hē) is an establishment trustee of Kānuka Charitable Trust and also co-founder and director of Hikurangi Bioactives Limited Partnership, a social enterprise set up to create economic opportunities for Māori communities in and around the Waiapu Valley on the East Coast. Over the past decade, Hikurangi Bioactives has worked alongside researchers and scientific organisations to explore the medicinal and commercial potential of kākano oil. This mahi was acknowledged at the Science New Zealand Awards 2025 when Hikurangi Bioactives, Manaaki Whenua, and Hā Kānuka (a kākano producers' industry body formed by Kānuka Charitable Trust) jointly won Te Tohu Tūhura award.

Manu represents Kānuka Charitable Trust on the Land Use Transition programme, where the Trust has focused on building the evidence base and practical tools needed to support Māori landowners considering new land use opportunities. The Trust has also drawn on technical expertise from Bioeconomy Science Institute scientists and researchers in analytical chemistry, environmental data collection, and data governance.

In this kōrero, Manu shares some of the journey Kānuka Charitable Trust and Hikurangi Bioactives have navigated while cultivating commercial opportunities for Māori landowners in this relatively new industry. He also offers insights and advice for Māori landowners and Māori agribusinesses willing to take on greater risk and explore non-traditional options for their whenua.

Image: Manu Caddie stands beside Rākau Tuatahi (the first tree) that grows on Totaranui. Nama Ono, the whānau land block in Makarika belonging to his wife, Tarsh Koia. This kākano tree, marked with baling twine for future identification, provided the first samples that launched Hikurangi Bioactives' research and development journey more than a decade ago.



Gaining royalties from every product sold

A major breakthrough for our kōwhiri kaupapa came in 2022 when clinical trials revealed promising results. Hikurangi Bioactives had been developing an eczema cream containing 3% kōwhiri oil, and the testing found our product significantly reduced eczema severity compared to existing treatments. These findings sparked interest from around the world, especially after they were published in the Lancet Group's eClinicalMedicine, an internationally respected medical journal.

One of the groups interested was an American company, who was keen to produce the kōwhiri eczema cream for the U.S. market. Hikurangi Bioactives recently signed a deal to allow the company to purchase the licensing and intellectual property rights for the kōwhiri eczema cream. In exchange for the rights for both the American and global markets, the company will pay royalties on every unit of kōwhiri eczema cream that they sell. These profits will be shared with the species itself (probably via Kōwhiri Charitable Trust), Hikurangi Bioactives, and a Waiapū Valley trust yet to be established.

The company is planning to launch the kōwhiri eczema cream in the States later this year. It's yet to be seen how popular it will be with U.S. consumers, so it's hard to say how large the market opportunity will be. But if it is a success, there will be more demand. And that's just one product. There's heaps of other products that could be made from the kōwhiri oil, as well as other compounds found in kōwhiri. We have been doing some research into potential uses for hydrosol, which is the watery extract you get when you separate the kōwhiri oil from the leaf in the steam extraction process. So that could be a whole new range of products right there.

Expanding footprint of kōwhiri production

Hikurangi Bioactives also helped broker an order from the American company for 2,500 kilos of kōwhiri oil to be fulfilled by three East Coast kōwhiri producers. The order is worth around \$2 million, with payments going directly to the local producers. The company has ambitions to scale that to much larger volumes within the next five years. However, they have been looking for assurances that the supply of kōwhiri oil can be increased to that volume. More land growing kōwhiri and more kōwhiri extraction facilities will likely be needed.

To find out whether the footprint of kōwhiri oil production can be expanded, we have been doing mahi with different groups within Bioeconomy Science Institute. A national survey was carried out by Bioeconomy Science Institute legacy organisation Manaaki Whenua to identify where all the kōwhiri is, who owned it, and how mature and accessible it is. Our preference is to locate the kōwhiri growing on whenua Māori, but there are also substantial areas of public and private land around the country with kōwhiri coverage. So, we are keen to meet with Māori landowners to have a kōrero with them to see who might be interested in joining our kaupapa.

To help us to better understand what drives Māori landowners to make decisions about their whenua, we partnered with Bioeconomy Science Institute on the Land Use Transition programme to gather insights from 179 Māori landowners across Aotearoa. The survey results found that environmental and cultural values came out on top, with social and economic considerations ranking lower. Disconnection from whenua also emerged as a significant theme, with around 15% of respondents never having set foot on their land, including some trustees responsible for governance.

The survey revealed Māori landowners want to make decisions that uphold the mana and mauri of their whenua, but too often find themselves blocked by outdated systems, poor communication, and bureaucratic red tape. Follow-up interviews to dig deeper into these issues are something we are keen to pursue. The knowledge gap in this space is huge, and until it is properly addressed, it is difficult to see how Māori landowners can be effectively supported when making important decisions about transitioning their whenua to other land uses.



Image: Kōwhiri in flower.



Building the tools to support industry growth

We have several other research projects currently underway with Bioeconomy Science Institute. One focuses on modelling kānuka cultivation and harvesting values for Māori landowners, giving them real figures to work with when weighing up the opportunity costs of growing more kānuka versus grazing sheep, cattle, or pine trees. The goal is to be able to show landowners exactly what they could expect to earn per hectare, whether they choose to contract harvesters, have someone come in and pay them by the tonne, or put their own whānau to work. A second project is exploring whether an infield test could be developed to analyse the chemistry of kānuka oil extractions on-site at production facilities, rather than sending samples to a lab in Hamilton. The current process takes time and money, so a reliable field test would be a practical and cost-effective solution for producers.

The third project is an experiment designed to connect environmental data from where kānuka is growing to the chemistry, yield, and regrowth rates of the plant. Understanding how factors like rainfall, soil type, and sunlight influence oil chemistry and leaf growth will be crucial in determining what a sustainable harvest regime looks like, both for wild harvest and plantation kānuka. Over time, the industry will likely shift toward plantation kānuka as it is far more efficient than wild harvest, and there are already promising examples to learn from. There are mānuka plantations in Te Araroa and Waikura Valley, and Ngāti Kuia at the top of the South Island has around 30 hectares of plantation kānuka in the ground.



Building healthy relationships with your Māori governance entity

Based on our group's experience working with Māori landowners, there is one piece of advice I would emphasise above all others when it comes to considering your options for transitioning your whenua to something different. Make sure you invest time, effort, and money if necessary in building healthy relationships with the trustees and whānau within your Māori governance entity, whether that's a Whānau Trust, Ahu Whenua Trust or Māori Incorporation. Not just through governance training, but by creating better ways of deliberating together so that people feel genuinely included in decisions.

Where there is conflict or disagreement, rather than letting a raruru fester, finding constructive ways to work through it matters enormously. Too often people have fallen out for decades and never spoken again, and that legacy of disconnection makes it harder to build the trust and confidence needed to move forward together. As we are more dispersed and disconnected from each other as whānau and from the whenua, it's harder to have trust and confidence in each other. So that does need a lot of investment. Don't underestimate the need for that.

A key lesson we got from the Māori landowners survey was the importance of asking whānau directly rather than assuming trustees and directors know what everyone thinks. The results revealed a significant divide: roughly half of respondents felt their governors represented their views well, while the other half felt poorly represented. That is not a small gap. It points to a need for more deliberate engagement, particularly with those living away from the whenua, many of whom feel they have no right to ask questions or come home.

Maybe trustees should think about 'how we can make it easier for whānau to reconnect, even if they feel whakamā or scared?' There should also be some thought about navigating the frustrations and tensions that can arise when those living away may want to have a disproportionate say on decisions that will primarily affect those living at home on the whenua. So those are all good issues for each entity to work through themselves.

The survey questions themselves could be a useful starting point for any Māori land entity wanting to understand what their own shareholders prioritise. Every collective will have its own dynamics, but the underlying questions are universal. If you do not ask, you do not know, and too much on Māori land has stalled simply because the issues have not been explored deeply enough to find a way through.

Image: (Left to right) Manu Caddie with landowners Melanee Stevenson and Bella Paenga on the Paenga whānau land block in Tikitiki.





Taking bold, considered risks

The other piece of advice I have for Māori landowners is about taking risks. Not reckless risks, but bold, well-considered ones. If you want things to be different, sticking with the status quo can sometimes mean going backwards rather than staying still. For our rūpū, Hikurangi Bioactives and Kānuka Charitable Trust, we have spent over a decade working on the kānuka opportunity. We have been building the proof that new pathways are possible, but they take significant commitment of time and money to achieve, plus a willingness to sit with uncertainty.

But for individual Māori land blocks looking to participate in the kānuka industry, the barrier to entry should be relatively low. The kānuka is already growing. The wider opportunity is being de-risked by the work our rūpū is undertaking. What each entity needs to decide is what level of involvement suits them. Early adopters who commit time and resources stand to gain more but also risk more. Those who wait for the opportunity to mature will still have options, just with a different risk and reward profile. Either way, we are careful about raising expectations for Māori landowners. The scale of what the kānuka industry could become is still being understood. That's why it's an emerging industry. Kānuka may become the next mānuka honey. It may not. What we do know is that the opportunity is real, and Māori are in the driving seat.

I guess the challenge is that Māori capital tends to be conservative, and understandably so. Farming, forestry, and fisheries feel safer than weird new things that have a real chance of not succeeding. We were fortunate to fund much of our kānuka work through share sales from previous investments, supplemented by some government support. Māori entities with capital could consider committing a portion of their funds to higher-risk opportunities if they want to be part of creating new ones, and have some skin in the game.

Image: Bella Paenga and whānau harvesting Kānuka from their whenua.



Image: (L-R): James Stevenson-Wallace, former CEO, and Dr Nikki Harcourt, Kaihau Māori, of Manaaki Whenua - Landcare Research accept the Toitu Tūhura award at the Science New Zealand Awards 2025 on behalf of Hikurangi Bioactives, Hā Kānuka, and Manaaki Whenua - Landcare Research. Credit: Rebecca McMillan Photography

Image: Bioeconomy Science Institute kaimahi visiting Tarsh Koia at Tōtaranui Nama Ono land block. (L-R): Melissa Savage, Tarsh Koia, Selai Letica and Pānia Wharewera.

Find good partners

My final piece of advice is to find good people in the science and innovation community, people who can be trusted and who genuinely have the best interests of your whānau and your whenua at heart. Those relationships take time to build, but the investment is worth it. However, scientists and researchers will never have the resources to work with every individual land block, which is why I recommend engaging with them as a collective of trusts, farms, businesses or hapū groups. I've made good relationships with the three other Māori partners within the Land Use Transition programme. We work together where there are areas of common interest and share information and opportunities. We all need each other to make it work.

Find out more about the mahi of Kānuka Charitable Trust and Hikurangi Bioactives, or contact them through their websites:
<https://www.hakanuka.co.nz>
<https://www.hikurangibioactives.co.nz>





Whāia te mātauranga

Mānuka Performance Limited

HIGH VALUE TRANSITION JOURNEY

Whāia te mātauranga
hei oranga mō koutou

Seek after learning
for the sake of your wellbeing

For far too long, many Māori honey producers have been price-takers instead of price-makers, paid by the drum in an unstable commodity market. Mānuka Performance is working to change that. By unlocking the unique rongoā and bioactive properties of indigenous honey, the company is building a science-backed pathway for the miere (honey) from Māori land blocks to move beyond the farm gate, into the sports bags and medicine cabinets of overseas customers.

Mānuka Performance Limited is a Māori Research, Innovation & Bioactive Intelligence company based in Whakatāne, co-founded in 2019 by Tristan Vine (Ngāti Kuri, Muriwhenua, Tūhoe) and Jeremy Gardiner (Ngāti Awa). Driven by a vision to innovate beyond selling mānuka honey in a jar, the founders set out to develop evidence-based, premium high-margin products for global export markets.

The company has been pioneering research into the polyphenols (naturally occurring plant compounds) found across a variety of native New Zealand honeys, many of which have traditionally been overlooked by the industry. Their first product was a sports gel brought to market in just three months. Mānuka Performance now produces a growing range of high-value sports nutrition, energy recovery, and chronic disease health supplements, as well as pet and equine performance products.

What sets Mānuka Performance apart is not just the science, but the intentional grounding of that science in kaupapa Māori. By linking emerging research back to the whakapapa of the whenua where the honey is produced, Mānuka Performance is building a new kind of value chain, one that connects global consumers directly to Māori land trusts and the stories behind them.

In this kōrero, Tristan draws from his experience as founder and CEO of Mānuka Performance to share insights and learnings gained from running the company and being a Māori research partner on the Bioeconomy Science Institute Land Use Transition programme. Tristan has also supported Māori landowners and Māori enterprises in previous mahi, where he saw firsthand how a strong foundation is critical for good decision-making.

Image: Apiarist checking on bees.
Credit: Peter Young (NZ Story).



Image: Mānuka Performance factory in Katikati.

Unlocking nature's superfood

When we started, it was all about mānuka, hence the name Mānuka Performance. But on our journey, we've transitioned away from solely chasing high-MGO monofloral mānuka honey. What we want to be chasing is what other people would consider lower-value honey: your multiflorals, your rewarewa, all sorts of other honeys that people have overlooked.

The science backs this up. Honeys like rewarewa actually have higher antioxidant and anti-inflammatory markers than mānuka because of their polyphenol profile, and there are all these unique attributes to indigenous honeys that no one has properly researched. It stands to reason, because

if you look at traditional rongoā Māori, certain species have long been used for different ailments. We know mānuka is famous for its methylglyoxal, the MGO, which gives it its antibacterial properties. But there are thousands of polyphenols across all honeys, and our quantification work has started looking at the top 20 that are common across them all.

These polyphenols are the bioactives that help with reducing inflammation and blood pressure, improving cardiovascular and gut health. No one has been doing this research with a commercial application in mind. We've very intentionally set out to unlock the science and data around what I'd call nature's superfood, and then apply it in functional products with specific, proven health outcomes.

Transitioning an industry

The mahi we're doing is about transitioning an entire industry, not just a product or business transition. It's really pioneering, but it's also really hard. It's hard enough for Māori agribusinesses like ours to navigate export barriers and compliance, but when you overlay polyphenol analysis and bioavailability research on top of that, there are a lot of moving parts to consider.

We're helping to crack more value within the whole supply chain so everyone across that ecosystem can benefit and Māori landowners and Māori honey producers can command a bit more pūtea. That means informing better land use decisions, unlocking data that's highly beneficial to Māori agribusinesses and helping smaller honey producers understand what bioactives their whenua can actually produce.

One of the biggest challenges for many Māori Land Trusts is the lack of knowledge around what their honey is actually worth. Everyone thinks they want the top grade, high concentration MGO honey, but that's not where the real opportunity lies. Also recent reports are showing that higher concentrations of MGO are actually not that good for you in high amounts. Meanwhile, multifloral honey drums are sitting in sheds that no one can move because the market hasn't put a high value on them.

That's exactly where we come in with what we've found in our research. We're adding value to low value products that have been gathered from the whenua. That approach extends all the way to waste streams. What the industry calls beehive dross, which is the leftover wax, honey and material from the frames, in reality it contains higher polyphenols than the honey itself. So we've developed a fermentation process to extract real value from what was simply being washed down the drain.

Joining the Land Use Transition programme

We already had a relationship with Bioeconomy Science Institute legacy organisation AgResearch before we joined the Land Use Transition programme, but being part of it has helped us make huge inroads. It's opened doors to different methods, different scientists, and we've been able to have robust conversations with experts in specific fields. We now have multiple doors, not just one, and access to better science, better research and better data has been invaluable for what we're building. We're part of the programme's co-design process and have the flexibility to make tweaks and adjustments to our projects.

A really significant part of our mahi has been around Māori data sovereignty and developing strategies and pathways around remote data gathering. How we apply that into our consumer markets and customer engagement has been a real step forward. Equally important has been working at a real, candid level with researchers and scientists in a kaupapa Māori, relational way, within a team that puts tikanga, te reo and indigenous concepts first.

When we started the programme, we had a big wānanga session that set us all off on the right path, connecting kanohi ki te kanohi with the other Māori partners and the research team and breaking down barriers early. Trust takes time, and getting that right from the outset has been the foundation of everything. The biggest highlight has been the people, the kōrero, walking the whenua and building genuine relationships across the four flagship programme partners.

Image: Mānuka Performance CEO, Tristan Vine with research and development kaimahi (left to right): Steve Howse and Kelsey Stevens from Analytica, and Dr Lillian Morton PhD, an independent registered nutritionist and scientist.





Blending Mātauranga Māori with Western Science

As a kaupapa Māori company, our aim is to blend Mātauranga Māori with cutting-edge Western science. If you take science on its own, it's just numbers and data, but adding a Māori lens brings human, cultural, and spiritual elements that add incredible depth and richness. I'd say we're the first in Aotearoa, and possibly the world, doing this kind of work. We are putting rigorous science around what Māori already knew, and connecting that all the way through to the consumer. The whakapapa of the honey, the kaitiaki of the land, the cultural connection to the whenua, and the science behind its health outcomes, all telling one story.

There's also a massive and growing trend, especially in the US market, around ethical sourcing. Consumers genuinely want to know where their product comes from, who grew it, and who was part of that value chain. When a consumer buys one of our products, we want them to scan the barcode, go to the website, and actually see the Māori land block where the honey came from, and hear a kōrero from the landowners about the whakapapa and tikanga of that place. It's really important for us to be able to engage customers around the world with the provenance of where our product comes from. The Māori story also gives us a massive point of differentiation globally.





Image: Tristan (second from left) was part of the Asia New Zealand Foundation's nutraceutical trade delegation to China in 2025. The delegates met with professors from Jinan University biological research division in Guangzhou. Mānuka Performance is now working to collaborate with the university on clinical trials.

Partnership with Te Kautuku

We also want to tell them a story about how that whenua and climate created a unique ecosystem, and how that produced a distinct honey, with specific polyphenols scientifically proven to deliver specific health outcomes. We are working with Te Kautuku Trust on a research project pilot, where we are putting remote sensing equipment into the ngahere where the beehives are. We have them hooked up to Starlink with a live video feed. It enables us to track sunlight hours, moisture content, wind and weather patterns in real time. Over seasons and years we can correlate whether climate change is impacting the polyphenols in the honey and feed that information back to inform better land use decisions.

If we can present data showing a higher honey yield came from specific seasonal conditions, Te Kautuku might decide to put their hives in a different spot or start planting regenerative forests with rewarewa because it's better for the ecosystem. That's the kind of informed land use decision making this mahi can unlock. It also helps to tell the origin story about different honeys from different regions.

Taking miere to the world

We have purposely positioned ourselves as a global manufacturing export company, targeting markets like the US, UK, the Middle East, India, China, and South Korea. We have members of our operations team based on the East and West Coast of America, and in the Mid-West. We also have global market directors based in India and South Korea developing our presence in those regions, with export orders already flowing to market.

We do quite a lot of mahi in China and South Korea and it's really beautiful the relationship we have with them. They are closer in nature to us through their tikanga, traditional culture and indigenous supply chain values. When doing business with the East you are building an enduring relationship for 200 years, not just for the 20th of next month.

Our future trajectory is looking exciting. We want to scale up and exploring options like licensing our intellectual property or floating the company on the US stock market. Every step of our future growth will be grounded in the same kaupapa we started with, making sure the value flows back to the whānau and the whenua where it all began.



Getting the fundamentals right

If I could offer one piece of advice to Māori landowners and agribusinesses thinking about transition, it would be this: get your foundations right before anything else.

Good governance is everything. Make sure your trustees and your trust deed are current, and your governance structure is solid. It sounds basic, but I've seen some amazingly beautiful opportunities completely derailed because these fundamentals weren't in place. The aspiration and vision for your kaupapa might be there, but you also need to make sure your financials are up to date, you are aligned as a collective, and you are ready before you start knocking on doors for funding. That groundwork can take a year or more, so start early, otherwise you will come up against a brick wall.

Also, you can have the best land use transition plan in the world, but if there's conflict within the rūpū, or no one can agree on who's even on the trust deed, you'll hit a wall before you even get to the starting line. I've seen groups miss out on millions of dollars of funding because as soon as the money came on the table, it all descended into fighting, which is really sad, because the outcomes of their kaupapa were really good.

Getting the right people involved

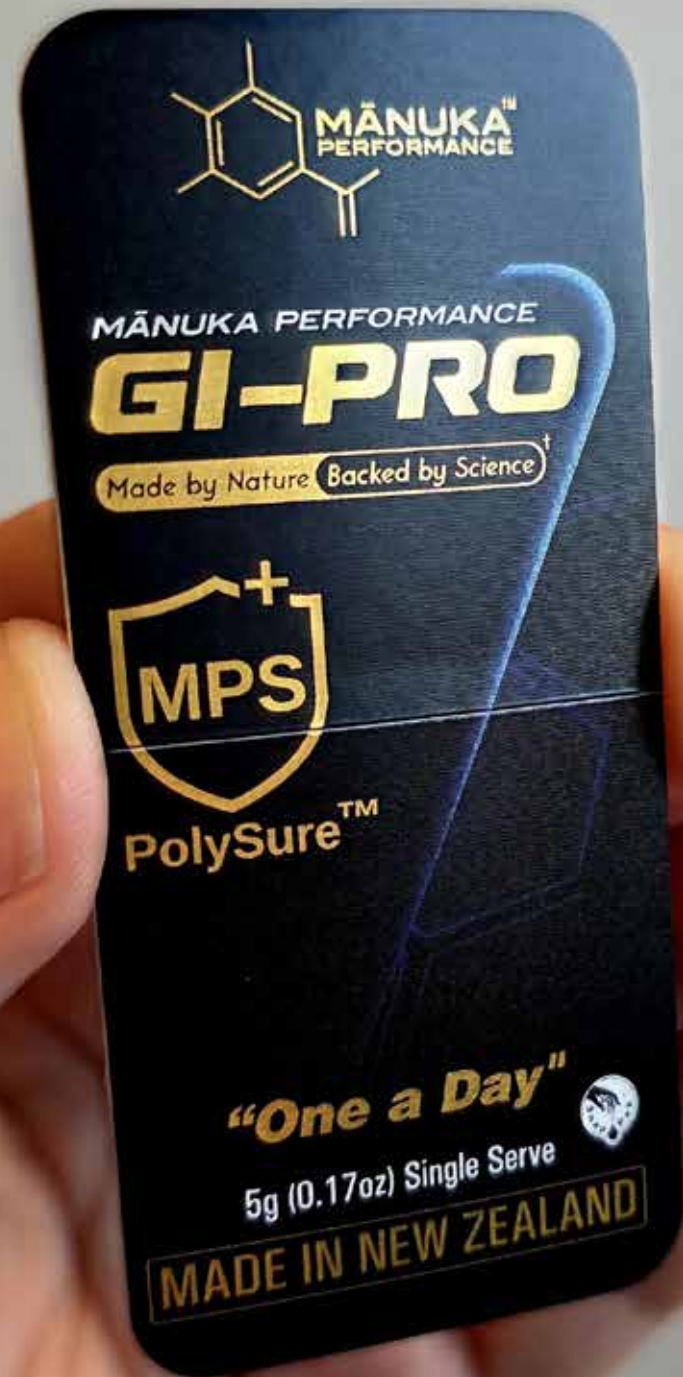
My second piece of advice is to invest in your relationships early on and be intentional about who those people are. It takes a lot of time to make sure you've got the right people on the waka.

You want people who will genuinely awahi you through your transition process, not just point you in a direction. Navigating different agencies and organisations can be a minefield. You often get bumped from one place to another, and unless you have someone who truly understands your kaupapa and can walk alongside you, it's easy to get lost. Find a person who can help you navigate the system, understand where funding is accessible, and makes that process as straightforward as possible. The barriers and challenges are real, but they're not insurmountable with the right support and the right advice.

From my own experience, some of the most valuable connections have come from marae-based workshops, hui and symposiums, sitting down to have a cup of tea and a kōrero with people who have been on a similar journey and are willing to share their experiences openly. Seek those moments out.

Consistency in relationships also matters enormously. Through the Land Use Transition programme, we've been fortunate to work with the same people over time rather than constantly having to rebuild trust with someone new. That consistency is what allowed us to go deeper, to have more candid kōrero, and to actually get things done. Trust takes time, but what builds that trust is showing up, going the extra mile, being authentic and doing what you say you're going to do!

Learn more about the mahi of Mānuka Performance, or contact them through their website:
www.manukaperformance.com



Ko te whenua te waiū

Te Kautuku Trust

INTEGRATED LAND USE TRANSITION JOURNEY

**Ko te whenua te waiū
mō ngā uri whakatipu**

**The land will provide sustenance
for future generations**

Te Kautuku is a 930-hectare Māori land block located in the heart of the Waipapu Valley on the East Coast. Governed by an Ahu Whenua Trust with over 300 shareholders, the main economic activity on the steep, erosion-prone whenua for many decades was beef and sheep farming. However, in recent years Te Kautuku Trust has been exploring new economic, cultural and environmental opportunities to sustain both the whenua and the whānau.

One opportunity includes partnering with the East Coast Exchange and Toha Network to pilot a nature markets model, where trusted data can help direct investment into regeneration activities. Restoring at least 85% of the land back to its natural habitat, stabilising the eroding slopes and enhancing the health of the waterways are among Te Kautuku's long-term goals. To help achieve these aspirations, Te Kautuku Trust also joined the Land Use Transition programme of Bioeconomy Science Institute as a Māori research partner, to access science tools and research support to inform Te Kautuku's decision-making.

Renee Raroa (Ngāti Porou) is the Te Kautuku project lead on the programme, supporting the relationship between Te Kautuku Trust, whānau, researchers and wider partners, and a founding director of the East Coast Exchange. She is also the daughter of Rangi Raroa, long-standing land manager at Te Kautuku, continuing a whānau legacy of land management passed down from his Pāpā. Growing up, Renee witnessed firsthand the issues faced by many Māori farming whānau working to remain on their whenua while navigating vulnerable landscapes, changing markets and the pressures of rates. In more recent times, a succession of cyclones and storm events hitting the Coast has added to these challenges.

In this kōrero, Renee shares Te Kautuku's transition from farming beef as their main source of income, towards integrating a diverse range of activities that restore the mauri of the whenua, strengthen whānau connections to the land, and create a sustainable economic future for generations to come.

Image: Three generations share a passion for Te Kautuku. Rangi Raroa is pictured here with his daughter Dayna Raroa and mokopuna Awatere Richardson. In the background is te ngutu awa o Waipapu in Rangitukia.



Image: The site of Taperenui-a-Whātonga, one of the first whare wānanga in Ngāti Porou is located at Te Kautuku.

Always in transition

For our whānau, one of the simplest and most enduring goals has been to stay connected to the whenua we come from. I didn't even realise growing up what a unique position it was to stay there intergenerationally and not be displaced like so many of our other whānau across Aotearoa. To be the kaitiaki of a place and earn enough of a living there that enables us to remain.

What I've come to understand is that the transition story is continual. Over a long timeframe, we've had to adapt to changing conditions, be it environmental, whānau or government policy shifts. Change has always been part of who we are, and that recognition has given us confidence to know we're never going to be separated from the whenua.

We just innovate, make changes, and adapt alongside the adapting whenua. We've gone from small whānau holdings with shared mahinga kai, to wheat growing, to amalgamation under government schemes, to sheep and beef. Even in the short timeframe I've seen, where my Dad has been land manager and my Pāpā before him, we've diversified to include poplar nurseries, worm farming, mānuka honey, mānuka oil, firewood for the community and tourism operations. You try all these different ways of earning income to enable you to stay there as a whānau, in alignment with what you're doing on the whenua.

Nature Market opportunity

Te Kautuku is a pilot under the Toha Network, trialling data templates for global nature markets that can bring revenue and investment to the whenua. Being involved early in these nature market spaces, we've been able to lean hard into exploring what that means for our whenua. The exciting thing is that in this space, you don't have to compromise on the impact for whenua, for wai, or for our moana. We can generate investment and return while regenerating the ngahere, excluding pests, and seeing the native cover come back.

These new nature markets are different to the NZ Emissions Trading Scheme. Rather than measuring carbon alone, they measure carbon sequestration, waterway health, biodiversity, landscape condition, and impact on community. They don't incentivise behaviour that ignores those things. These new markets consider a wide range of outcomes, and Te Kautuku is an early pilot, helping to test what this could look like for whenua Māori.

I've been part of the team developing the first templates, to make sure they will work for whenua Māori. We're also part of a global indigenous network ensuring these emerging markets work for indigenous peoples and don't put their landscapes in greater harm. For Māori landowners, I think we're in a Goldilocks moment. We're able to test these things out and build systems that work for us. We shouldn't underestimate our responsibility to be out ahead of the game, so that things are done by us, rather than done to us in these emerging markets.

Image: A new track had to be cleared after the extreme storm event of January 2026.





Image: Renee Raroa with whānau at Te Kautuku.
(Left to right) Aiesha Raroa, Renee Raroa, Rangi Raroa, Esther Raroa and Jayden Raroa.



Layering onto the knowledge

Joining the Land Use Transition programme under Bioeconomy Science Institute has helped us to build our research capacity and supports our mahi in the nature markets space. It's helping us to make more informed decisions, as we transition our farm systems toward native reforestation, native nursery establishment, biodiversity enhancement, waterway restoration, slope stabilisation and restoring the ancestral trails on the whenua.

Rather than just saying we're going to transition to native cover, we first ask ourselves: what specifically do we mean by that? What are the transition details? What is our percentage of pasture? How can our farming systems operate in a way that works for agriculture but also protects the areas we want to preserve?

We are layering onto the knowledge we already have. For example, we already have a relationship with our flora and fauna, our waterways and whenua, but now we have tools such as eDNA analysis that show us the picture of what species there are, tools that we wouldn't otherwise have had access to.

As we've gone deeper into mapping the whenua, more kōrero and place-based memories have started to emerge. Place names have resurfaced, with Dad recalling histories connected to particular waterways and places that we had not heard before in that level of detail.

Dad has been managing the farm for most of his life, he's in his mid-70s now, and he knew there was mānuka, natives, and pasture. But now that we're looking at different tree species and how they impact the health of the whenua, we're seeing the block differently and appreciating the variety we've got. The amount of time we're now spending in the Ngā Whenua Rāhui block is probably more than we've spent in there in our whole lives before, because there's a reason for us to go into these spaces and reconnect.

Intergenerational mahi

Our mahi at Te Kautuku has always been intergenerational, and the Bioeconomy Science Institute Land Use Transition programme has supported that way of working. Every time we've done our eDNA testing, it's been my Dad and his wife, myself, my siblings, and also my kids. Three generations learning the mahi to take us forward so that we can continue to make changes, live on the whenua, and hold the space. The scientists are also passing on the knowledge, sharing information and data across the generations and recognising that's important to us.

That intergenerational view extends to reopening the whenua itself. While it's been a working farm, a lot of the spaces have had to be locked down. For safety reasons, visitors can't just roam freely over a working farm. But now we're reopening our historic trails and setting up spaces for people to come back and reconnect. We've created visitor accommodation so that whānau and visitors can come and connect with the whenua. Having those trails and spaces means people can reconnect with their ancestry or be introduced to the whenua before beginning a working relationship with us. By encouraging that connection, people are better able to help care for the whenua and help us achieve our goals.

Part of the vision for Te Kautuku is an interwoven landscape where the whole community can reconnect with whenua, restore kai sovereignty, and support the return of both native flora and fauna and the population of people too. Hundreds of people used to live through these hills. They don't live here anymore, but the whakapapa is still there.

Data sovereignty

One of the biggest things I'd share with other landowners looking at what we're doing at Te Kautuku is not to underestimate the value of data and information. We really recognise the value in our data, information about the whenua, about the mahi that goes onto it. It holds more value than we've ever realised. Protecting that data and ensuring that the whenua itself is the owner, is really key. That will only become more important as time goes on.

Collect information to inform your land transition. Any opportunity you get, gather more intelligence and document it, whether it's from pūrākau, observations, or test results. Right down to taking as many photos as possible. After the extreme storm event, we went out and walked as much of the whenua as we could and documented everything with GPS locators on, because that data and knowledge is key.

If we're not protecting it and ensuring it's owned by us, that data may be used elsewhere and monetised in a way that doesn't necessarily benefit the whenua and the whānau. But if we can protect our data and uphold our authority over how it is used, there's a real opportunity to create assets and revenue from it, meaning we have the resources to carry out the mahi we want to do. In an environmental space, good things happening on any whenua is valuable to the world, especially now with the impacts of climate change increasing. We shouldn't underestimate the value of our information and research. We should ensure that value flows back to the whenua it comes from.

As data systems and digital tools continue to evolve, we want our next generations to be more than consumers of those tools. We want them to help shape how they are designed and used, in ways that uphold the authority of the whenua and whānau.



Image: Renee Raroa and her son Awatere Richardson collecting eDNA samples from Waikaka River on Te Kautuku whenua.



Back yourself

When dealing with other organisations or agencies, fiercely protect your connection to the whenua and have confidence that your whānau and the ones on the ground know best. The people most closely connected to the whenua, their opinions and knowledge should always be paramount to whatever other relationships come in.

Have a strong understanding of the vision for your whenua before any strategy comes in, because you get pushed and pulled in all sorts of ways. Have that understanding come from those living on the land, the trustees, and as wide as possible from shareholders and the community.

Stand your ground also when engaging in research or advisory situations, as it's not always a safe space for whānau Māori to engage. Often people come in without fully connecting with your kaupapa, with their own worldviews and opinions. Some arrive with a single-layer mindset because that's their research expertise and the way they think about things. We've had to build up a muscle for being quite firm, being able to say: thank you for your insight, we'll consider that, but we've got all of these layers of mātauranga that's been building up over years of working with our whenua that we will also consider.

We have been fortunate that our Bioeconomy Science Institute Kairangahau in the Land Use Transition programme understand we start with whakawhanaungatanga and spending time getting to know the whenua. In other research situations, you might be pressured to get straight to the mahi. Having a research

partner who's able to hold that space for us and allow us to form relationships before getting to the research nitty gritty has meant we can engage in a way that feels safe, more grounded, and more able to honour our kaupapa and our intentions.

Other advice for transitioning

Strong governance and strong land management matter. We couldn't have done any of this if Dad, as the station manager, wasn't open to it, or if our trustees had said no. Having people in these roles who trust each other to take considered risks and keep themselves informed about potential opportunities makes all the difference.

Beyond that, it's just getting on with stuff. Have the confidence to dabble and try things out. Our Māui-tanga comes in handy where we can jump into innovation and work alongside each other to take a bit of the risk out. We can collectivise and share, and together we're way stronger.

The responsibility now feels like it's for us to extend our learnings beyond Te Kautuku. We have had this opportunity to do all of this awesome science and form all these awesome partnerships. Our future stages should be about how we set up those same opportunities and understandings beyond our boundaries for others around us.

Find out more about Te Kautuku Trust's Toha Nature Markets pilot: <https://toha.network/tekautuku>



SHORTENED SUPPLY CHAIN TRANSITION JOURNEY

He kai kei aku ringa**There is food in my hands**

For Te Pū Oranga Whenua, feeding your whānau first isn't just a philosophy. It's a practical movement that pushes back against industrial, export-first food systems through community-led solutions like a mobile abattoir, putting small Māori land block owners back in control of their own kai and keeping value close to home.

Te Pū Oranga Whenua is a wāhine-led, inter-regional collective of Māori agribusinesses dedicated to reimagining land use and agribusiness in ways that support local communities and the environment. The collective was formed in 2021 by a core rōpū of wāhine who were part of an AgResearch programme exploring what it takes to transform Māori agribusinesses in the digital age. Through this mahi, the wāhine discovered they were on the same page about a kaupapa close to their hearts: community kai sovereignty.

Bonny Hatami (Ngāti Pāhauwera, Clan McLean, Rakaipaaka, Ngāi Tahu), Lisa Warbrick (Te Atihaunui a Paparangi, Ngāti Maru, Ngāti Awa, Ngāti Rangitahi) and Tracey Bayliss (Tangata Tiriti) represent Te Pū Oranga Whenua on the Land Use Transition programme facilitated by the Māori agribusinesses. The collective's focus is on the shortened supply chain: supporting whānau and marae to grow their own kai locally, feeding whānau first rather than exporting first, and using the whenua to build more resilient, affordable kai systems that keep value within communities.

Lisa and Tracey's research has focused on accelerating the development of a turnkey mobile abattoir model, a replicable, community-led approach to meat processing that Māori communities can adopt and run for themselves. Bonny's research has centred on small Māori land blocks and farm clusters in the Ngāti Pāhauwera rohe, exploring land use transition and local kai supply. Together, their work offers Māori landowners a practical alternative to export-dominated industry supply chains.

In this kōrero, Lisa and Bonny share the insights Te Pū Oranga Whenua has gained while exploring decentralised, short supply chain models that put nutritious, affordable kai on whānau tables and create meaningful employment within their own communities. They also offer advice to Māori farmers and Māori landowners interested in making the transition for their small land blocks.

Image: Te Pū Oranga Whenua is the title of the artwork by artist, Regan Balzer (Te Arawa, Ngāti Ranginui, Raukawa, Apakura, Scottish, Irish). Regan is the daughter of Roma Balzer, one of the kāhui of Te Pū Oranga Whenua.

Regan was commissioned by Te Pū Oranga Whenua to represent the collective's story and vision, and create an art work that reflects the relationship indigenous wāhine have with Papatūānuku within the agriculture sector.

He kai kei aku ringa

Te Pū Oranga Whenua



Image: (L-R) Tracey Bayliss, Lisa Warbrick and Bonny Hatami are directors of Te Pū Oranga Whenua.

Kai motuhake

Lisa: The hononga between the founding members of Te Pū Oranga Whenua came from our common interest in the domestic market rather than exporting, and from acknowledging that parts of our kai systems were paru and inaccessible to ordinary whānau. Central to this was our relationship with Papatūānuku and how she could support our whānau. From that came our common statement: “Feeding our whānau first.”

We were all about nutritious kai motuhake for our babies and using our whenua to contribute to a more positive, resilient kai story within our regions. We were also definitely about community, grassroots, and evolving the asset base that we did have. From early on, our land use conversations always came back to kai: sheep milking, māra kai, what happens post-forestry. How do we turn the whenua back into something if we’re not using it for pine?

For those of us not entrenched in the food story of Aotearoa, we did a lot of learning about how export corporations dominate the supply chain, the price points, and the availability of kai. Add to that natural events like Cyclone Gabrielle, flooding, and landslips, where kai becomes more difficult to get to whānau.

It became a whole awareness, and out of that grew our heightened interest in pushing back. How do we ensure the resilience of our communities? How do we make sure the kai our kids are eating is not full of chemicals? We have a commitment to nutritious, low-input food systems and affordability. When your meat is \$25–\$30 and your butter is \$20, something is just fundamentally wrong.

Kai systems in Ngāti Pāhauwera

Bonny: My research under the Bioeconomy Science Institute Land Use Transition programme has focused on small Māori land blocks and kai systems in the Ngāti Pāhauwera rohe. We’ve got a lot of historical evidence and previous research to draw on, including WAI claims on the river and the Takutai Moana, and kai has always been central to that story. You protect your awa because it is central to your identity, and that’s where you get your fish and whitebait. Same for the whenua, we look after our ngahere and whenua firstly because we are kaitiaki but also because it sustains us. That relationship between whenua and kai has always been there.

What we’re asking now is: what’s missing in these kai systems, and what can we do to help whānau who want to transition? We found a real spectrum. Some small landowners can’t do much on their whenua because they don’t have access to resources. Others in the middle would like to work cooperatively, but how? Then there are the larger entities who have had to work hard to establish themselves who only now are able to look at how they can support smaller blocks.

The iwi is supportive of this work. They’ve got large orchards, they’re farming, and they can see what’s needed for those small blocks. On the commercial side their focus is on generating income for the iwi, to assist with the aspirations of the Trust. Those aspirations are cultural, social and environmental, it covers a lot. So there’s a gap, and that’s what Te Pū Oranga Whenua and Bioeconomy Science Institute are helping to fill.

Our research has included long-form interviews with small land block entrepreneurs, and looking at what’s been trialled in the rohe and asking: why didn’t it stick? In our rohe you can grow anything: apples, avocados, fruit trees. The soil isn’t the issue. It’s what needs to be wrapped around small whānau trusts and landowners to give them the support and infrastructure they need.

There are over 100 land blocks centred around our communities. As an example, Raupunga is right on State Highway 2, but it’s not close enough to processing facilities. You can grow whatever you like, but there’s only the supermarket or you’ve got to transport it yourself. Now we’re also contending with storms that would once have been called fifty or hundred-year events happening every six months. We saw with the cyclone and bridges being destroyed that self-sufficiency, grow local, eat local, was vital.

A shortened supply chain is definitely something we saw could highly benefit our communities at all levels: healthy kai, lower cost, and keeping things close to home. I’m focused on kai growing as a collective of skills, money, labour, and relationships.

Image: Site visit hosted by TPOW with Bioeconomy Science Institute researchers (Scion Group and AgResearch Group) to Lux Organics (Rotorua) as part of a food forest kaupapa.





TākiToa shortened supply chain

Lisa: TākiToa, our mobile abattoir business model, morphed out of a real sector need and a response to challenge the status quo. We found that small farmers couldn't get one or two of their beasts processed a month because large plants found it operationally inefficient, and when their animals did get picked up the farmer got very little in return. Things really got moving four years ago, when Tracey and I were asked by Ngāti Pāhauwera: "How can we get our beef from the farm to our whānau?"

By the time we finished our initial research, MPI had changed the legislation as a result of lobbying from small farmers. It became possible to home-kill and sell to retail, as long as you hold accreditation for both slaughtering and butchery. Even though we aren't exporting, the standards we maintain are export standards. That policy change was a game changer. We opted to establish TākiToa as a legal entity and kept going. We rolled out live last year for Phase 1 of a three-phase pilot programme.

Phase 1 was about testing the ideology, the business model, and the hardware. We built a fit-for-purpose physical unit for slaughtering and butchery and tested it on Tracey's dad's farm. We processed from Tracey's dad's farm in Raglan and distributed from Uenuku and Poihakena marae using butcher paper rather than plastic packaging.

Phase 2 requires capital investment and we are self-funding it. We're relocating and establishing farm clusters in Manawatū-Whanganui, bringing in farms with the same ethos. One unit goes around the farm systems so there is no trucking the beasts, which is better for animal welfare and reduces emissions. Ideally we process beasts, the meat hangs for a week, and within a two-week cycle it goes from farm gate to whānau plate. We don't freeze the meat; it's fresh, chilled, butchered, and vacuum-packed or wrapped in butcher paper.

The beauty of the shortened supply chain is cutting out the middleman. In a long supply chain, the beastie goes from the farmer to a truck, to the plant, to a supplier, to a butcher, then to the consumer, with levies, auditors, and meat inspectors clipping the ticket at every step. With TākiToa, it goes from the paddock to the mobile abattoir on site, to a chiller truck for butchering, then to the marae. Our costs are significantly less, and because we are domestic only, we don't carry the same regulation costs either.

The Bioeconomy Science Institute Land Use Transition programme has been an important part of shaping how we understand and articulate what we are doing. They didn't fund the hardware or pay our skilled people; that was our own investment. But what Bioeconomy Science Institute brought was the research capability to help us define our story and understand the technical dimensions: short supply chains, data integration in a mobile system, quality of meats, and health and safety. That was invaluable. We also used the programme to explore nose-to-tail utilisation, minimising waste and making organ meat relevant again because of its nutritional value. We're investigating other markets too, like the Halal market for our Muslim and Indian communities.

TākiToa was never about becoming a mega-franchise. Our interest is to decentralise a food system that has monopolised this country for too long, and to work at community level with localised farmers. We've landed on a turnkey package: we'll get you accredited, build your unit, provide the systems, train your team, and then you go do you. Every region is different and each community can vary the model to suit their landscape and their people. This is about encouraging and supporting whānau and hapū at a molecular level.

My Pāpā always told me when I started in business: follow the kaupapa and the pūtea will come. That has stood me in good stead. Be really clear about your intention, because that is what will carry you through the hard times, when you don't know what you don't know. If you focus only on the money, it becomes harder. Focusing on the kaupapa is what attracts the right people and the right resources. Cool people have come into our TākiToa journey because it is a needed, valued story. That is what gives me the kaha to keep going.

Bonny and Lisa's advice for Māori landowners considering transition

Get your whānau on board first

Collective agreement from whānau is always difficult, particularly when you're a Trust. Expect it to take time. Getting your whānau, trust, or collective on board first has to be a priority, and then co-design that story so everyone takes responsibility. It's difficult to sell a vision if nobody agrees with you.

Trust your own judgement

You know your whenua and the whakapapa to that whenua. If it used to be an orchard, you know it can grow kai. If it was left for a long time, maybe there was a reason why our tūpuna didn't use it. When consultants come in to do soil or land use capability assessments, you at least have an understanding of what it used to do. If they say "grow cherries" but your koro says it's too dry, that's important information. The stuff we take for granted is really valuable. Sometimes experts have something to peddle or a narrow vision, but if they work with you as you identify your land use, it becomes a true relationship of research engagement.

You already know what can grow on your whenua. If you're going past a block and you see sedges and rushes, you know that's a wetland. The indicators are there. It's those outside influences that can affect our confidence in decision-making sometimes.



Image: Brookdell Farm, owned by Cliff and Maureen Bayliss in Te Uku, Whaingaroa, provided operational support for phase one of the TākiToa mobile abattoir. Tracey, a director of TākiToa (and TPOW), is also a member of the Bayliss whānau, who also run Grandad's Beef from Brookdell Farm. (Left to right): Maureen, Cliff, Brooklyn and Tracey Bayliss.

Image: Indigenous Women in Agriculture team in Brisbane. TPOW have been collaborating with CSIRO on Indigenous Women in Agriculture mahi which is part of a broader programme, 'Caring for Country – Ag2050'.



Always be the rangatira of your relationship

When you are engaging with any external party, remember: you are the holder of that mana. You have tino rangatiratanga. You lead those conversations, the budget, and the project design. Always be the rangatira of your relationship. It sounds simple, but it changes everything about how you show up. Know your story before you walk in the door.

Be clear about what you want, what you need, and specifically how science or research can help you get there. It is not about the researcher coming in and saying “we can do this or that” and you retrofitting yourself to what they want. Also, if you are engaging with researchers or scientists, have the IP and mātauranga Māori protection conversation at the very start of the relationship, before anything is agreed.

Look within your own circle

Be clear about what resources you have at your fingertips. Whose moko or niece is doing this or that? Check out the pūkenga within your circle of influence. We don’t do that enough; it’s always the same people. Look at who in your whānau has relationships with Crown agencies, science, research, hauora, or education. Having people with those connections within your circle means that when you start hustling your plan, someone knows who to tap.

Find good writers

Find people who can write stories and funding applications. You have to tell your story and build relationships with your regional advisors. Find out who they are and have lots of cups of tea with them. Whether you need them now or in a year’s time, knowing people saves you time and angst.

Engage your rangatahi

Bring your rangatahi into whenua conversations and expose them to the world of science and te Taiao. It wasn’t in our consciousness until we engaged in this work. We need to bring the joy and incredible opportunity of science to our rangatahi. There is a lot happening without us and the system is designed to marginalise indigenous inclusion. We smash that by weaving mātauranga and Western science and learning from each other. We were always scientists anyway, navigating by the stars.

Reach out

You don’t have to do it alone or start with a Google search or do things the hard way. Send us a message or reach out to one of our wāhine if you would like to have a kōrero. Te Pū Oranga Whenua is also building resources to support whānau on their transition journey. We have just completed a podcast series called ‘Te Karanga o Te Whenua – The Call of the Land’ with Bioeconomy Science Institute legacy organisation Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research. The series includes kōrero from some of our members around whenua Māori, weaving together diverse journeys and lived experiences. Our hope is that these stories will resonate with and inspire whānau who are just beginning their own journey.

To find out more about Te Pū Oranga Whenua and the resources to support whānau on their transition journey, visit <https://orangawhenua.nz>



Ki te whai ao, ki te ao mārama

Summary of Insights & Learnings

**Ki te whai ao,
ki te ao mārama.
Tihei mauri ora.**

**To the glimmer of dawn to
the bright light of day.
There is life.**

Throughout this publication, Kānuka Charitable Trust, Mānuka Performance, Te Kautuku Trust, and Te Pū Oranga Whenua have shared their experiences of carefully steering their waka through the changing currents of land use and enterprise transition. Although their starting points and pathways differ, their kōrero reveals strong commonalities in the challenges they faced, the decisions they made, and the lessons they learned.

The Māori research partners are also united through the Land Use Transition programme, where they paddle in the same direction – he waka eke noa – towards a greater kaupapa benefiting whānau and te Taiao. While the waka they have built and the haerenga they take may take different forms, whether in kānuka oil products, indigenous honey bioactives, nature markets, or mobile abattoirs, the horizon remains the same.

For Māori landowners and Māori agribusinesses interested in charting their own transition journey, the following actionable insights are drawn from the kōrero of the Māori research partners. May they support your own haerenga as you move from the glimmer of dawn toward the bright light of day – mauri ora.

Get your foundations right first

- Make sure your trust deed is current, your financials are up to date, and your governance is functioning well before pursuing any transition opportunity.
- Internal conflict can set your journey off-track. Ensure your rūpū is aligned, on the same kaupapa and has worked through any raruraru before moving forward.
- Having supportive, informed trustees who back your decisions and direction is critical.
- Getting your foundations in order can take a year or more, so start early. Opportunities move quickly and entities that are not ready will miss out.

Bring your whānau along the journey

- Don't assume your trustees know what your shareholders want. Ask the whānau directly.
- Make sure your rūpū has a shared vision for the whenua. A vision that only a few people own is hard to sustain, and you'll get pulled in different directions.
- Co-design your transition journey and strategy so that everyone takes responsibility for it.
- Create genuine space for people to be heard, including those living away from the whenua, and make it easy for disconnected whānau to reconnect.
- Where conflict exists, find constructive ways to work through it rather than letting it fester.
- Bring your rangatahi into these conversations early. They will be the kaitiaki of new tools and opportunities and need to be part of the kōrero now.



Invest in relationships

- Engage collectively where you can. As a group of trusts, farms, or hapū you'll have far greater access to science, funding, and support than individual land blocks working alone.
- Reach out to others who've already started the journey. The best insights often come from a kōrero with someone willing to share what worked and what didn't.
- Seek external partners, researchers, advisors, funders who genuinely have the best interests of your whānau and whenua at heart, and who will walk alongside you rather than simply point you in a direction.
- Find people within your own circle who can write stories and funding applications, and who have relationships with Crown agencies, science organisations, regional advisors, and funders. Build these relationships before you need them, through ongoing kōrero rather than one-off requests.



Image: (Left to right): Tracey Bayliss (TPOW), Mariza Reis (BSI AgResearch Group), Lisa Warbrick (TPOW) at Te Ohu Rangahau Kai as part of research for TakiToa.



Know and protect your data

- Information about your whenua – its soil, water, biodiversity, and history – holds important value. Collect everything you can: environmental monitoring, eDNA results, photographs, pūrākau, observations passed down through generations.
- After significant storm or weather events, get out and document what has happened while the information is fresh.
- When working with external agencies or researchers, agree early on who holds your data, where it is stored, what it can be used for, and what protections are in place. Don't leave these conversations until later in the relationship.
- The same applies to mātauranga Māori and intellectual property. Have these conversations with research partners at the very start, before anything is agreed.
- Make sure that data and knowledge stays with your whānau, and isn't monetised by others. As nature markets, AI, and digital tools become more prominent, the value of what you hold will only increase.



Back yourself and your knowledge of the whenua

- Your people know your whenua better than any outside expert. Trust that knowledge as it has been building for generations and it is real evidence.
- Look at your own land with fresh eyes. The indicators of what it can do are often already there within the soil, the growth along the fenceline, the stories your kaumātua tell. That knowledge is rarely wrong.
- When researchers, consultants, or advisors come in, you lead. You set the agenda, you hold the budget, and you define what success looks like.
- Be open to what others bring, but be prepared to push back when necessary.



Be willing to take considered risks and think long term

- Don't be afraid of taking considered risks. Staying with the status quo when it isn't working means going backwards, not standing still.
- If your entity has capital, consider committing some of it to higher-risk opportunities or become early adopters. You can't help shape new industries from the sidelines, you have to have some skin in the game.
- If you're not ready to be an early adopter, that's okay too. The barrier to entry often stays relatively low for those who join later, just with a different risk and reward profile.
- You don't have to start from scratch. Connect with others further along, use the resources and networks available and look for ways to collectivise effort, skills, and relationships.
- Be prepared for the long haul. Some transition journeys take a decade or more before they pay off. A willingness to sit with uncertainty, commit resources over time, and persisting through setbacks is what makes the journey possible.
- For many whānau, transition isn't a single decision or destination, it's a continual process of adapting to changing conditions, whether environmental, economic, or generational. Recognising this can take the pressure off "getting it right" once and for all, and build confidence that you'll keep adjusting as you go.
- Look at what's already changed on your whenua over generations. That history of adaptation is evidence you can do it again.

Nāu te rourou, nāku te rourou

Resources

Nāu te rourou, nāku te rourou, ka ora ai te iwi.

**With your food basket and my food basket,
the people will thrive.**

We have brought together a selection of resources to help you identify the support you may need to take the next step in your transition journey. This list is not exhaustive, and many other sources of support are also available.

Understanding your whenua & governance

- **Māori Land Court:** Helps you find, understand, and manage your Māori freehold land records www.maorilandcourt.govt.nz
- **Te Tumu Paeroa:** Manages Māori land and assets on behalf of owners, including governance and administration support www.tetumupaeroa.co.nz

Exploring land use options & data

- **Tupu.nz:** An online hub for information on Māori land use, development, and investment pathways www.tupu.nz
- **Matarau:** Provides data and insights to help compare and prioritise land use options www.matarau.nz

Policy, funding & system support

- **Bioeconomy Science Institute Maiangi Taiao:** Science and innovation support for Māori agribusinesses across primary industries and bioeconomy sectors www.bioeconomyscience.co.nz
- **Te Puni Kōkiri** – Funding, policy advice, and programmes supporting Māori economic and social development www.tpk.govt.nz
- **Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI)** – Supports Bioeconomy Science Institute development through policy and targeted programmes www.mpi.govt.nz
- **Earth Sciences New Zealand** – Provides science and insights on climate, natural resources, and resilient land use decisions www.earthsciences.nz

Research about Māori landowner perspectives

- Owners' Aspirations Regarding the Utilisation of Māori Land, published by Te Puni Kōkiri in 2011
- Māori Landowners Survey published by Kānuka Charitable Trust and AgResearch in 2025

Business growth & investment

- **Poutama Trust** – Business development support and funding for Māori enterprises www.poutama.co.nz
- **New Zealand Trade and Enterprise (NZTE)** – Support for Māori and New Zealand businesses to grow internationally www.nzte.govt.nz
- **Federation of Māori Authorities (FOMA)** – Advocacy, policy engagement, and sector support for Māori agribusinesses www.foma.org.nz

Bioeconomy Science Institute Land Transition Programme

- More information about the programme can be found here. www.agresearch.co.nz
- **Connect with Māori research partners:** The Māori research partners inside this publication welcome you to reach out to them for a kōrero.
- **Kānuka Charitable Trust and Hikurangi Bioactives:** www.hakanuka.co.nz www.hikurangibioactives.co.nz
- **Mānuka Performance Limited:** www.manukaperformance.com
- **Te Kautuku Trust:** www.toha.network/tekautuku
- **Te Pū Oranga Whenua:** www.orangawhenua.nz

Bioeconomy Science Institute summer internship and rangatahi development programme

Bioeconomy Science Institute enables Māori students to participate in paid research internships involving kaupapa Māori and mātauranga Māori and supports postgraduate research opportunities in a range of disciplines. If you or someone you know is interested in finding out more, email Louise Hennessy (Ngāti Maniapoto) at Bioeconomy Science Institute louise.hennessy@agresearch.co.nz or check out this web-page:

www.bioeconomyscience.co.nz/about-us/internships





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