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By Chris  
Komorek

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## Partners eye kiwifruit breeding JV



Zespri and Plant & Food Research NZ reportedly considering going into business together to turbo-charge cultivar development

**N**ew Zealand-based kiwifruit marketer Zespri and its long-time innovation partner Plant & Food Research NZ are said to be considering a partnership to help encourage the breeding search for new, tastier, healthier kiwifruit varieties.

The NZ Herald reports the two parties are discussing a proposal for a 50:50 joint venture breeding centre, dedicated to breeding new kiwifruit cultivars and strengthening their successful 30-year relationship, from which sprang the best-seller SunGold kiwifruit variety and the new Zespri Red.

Zespri chief executive Dan Mathieson has told growers investment in kiwifruit breeding was expected to increase by 50 per cent over the next 10 years - from a total of NZ\$18m per year now to more than NZ\$30m annually, with the extra investment shared by Zespri and Plant & Food.

A proposed centre at Te Puke would be set up to be a single autonomous, agile entity

It's believed the centre could open mid-next year but any final decision on its establishment would need the approval of both the boards of Zespri and Plant & Food, as well as the sign-off of shareholding ministers of the CRI.

Mathieson explained the two parties were talking to staff after a robust investigation which explored the need for, and the potential of, an upgraded breeding programme.

The NZ Herald reports the proposal would mainly affect Plant & Food staff and a small number of the Zespri staff and that the centre would be based in Te Puke, as well as operating out of Kerikeri, Motueka and Mt Albert, and would have a presence in Italy, where Zespri contracts growers, and China.

"The centre will help position us to better fulfil the growing demand from consumers for our fruit, ensuring we can continue to lead the world in the production of premium quality kiwifruit which deliver strong returns to growers and enable

contributions to our communities," Mathieson explained in a statement to growers.

"It represents our commitment to go faster, to explore promising new varieties in our research pipeline and to unlock further innovation so that we can generate even more value for New Zealand and our regions.

"It is also a response to staying ahead of increasing competition."

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which retained strong links to Zespri and positive  
Plant & Food.

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