



By John Hey

Monday 26th June 2017, 12:03 GMT

## T&G celebrates 120 years in NZ

### T&G celebration in Auckland spotlights group's pioneering role in New Zealand industry

**T**&G Global marked 120 years in business last week with a special ceremony at its Auckland Market Floor attended by New Zealand growers, customers, suppliers and staff.

Turners & Growers was founded in 1897 by Edward Turner who migrated to New Zealand from Cambridge in the UK with his wife Maude. The company, which changed its name to T&G Global in 2014 to reflect its growing global footprint, is an integral part of the New Zealand business with a reputation for industry leadership.

"Edward Turner was certainly ahead of his time in many ways, establishing a flourishing fruit and flower business on K Road in Auckland with the support of his nine sons," said T&G CEO Alastair Hulbert. "Fast forward to 2017 and T&G has a footprint the length and breadth of the country plus 12 offices offshore."

In a speech tracing T&G's history, Hulbert drew out several key milestones.

Having established a thriving fruit and flower shop and begun importing and auctioning fruit from the Pacific Islands in its first two decades, the Turner family business moved into Auckland's first produce market in 1918.

Originally known as E Turner & Sons, the Turners joined forces with Auckland Growers at the end of 1920. A few months later, Turners & Growers was established and shifted from being a private company to a public entity.

Hulbert reflected on a tradition of innovation for the group. In 1946, T&G made the first long distance delivery of strawberries anywhere in the world with an airfreight shipment to the UK that was distributed to children in a London Hospital by then New Zealand Prime Minister Peter Fraser.

In 1959, Jack and Graham Turner, Edward's grandsons, identified the potential for an emerging category – Chinese gooseberries – coining the name kiwifruit and exporting the first serious consignment in 1961. In 1974, the



Celebrating 120 Years of T&G are (left to right): Masterchef 2014 winners Karena and Kasey Bird; T&G Global CEO Alastair Hulbert; Louise Upston, Associate Minister of Primary Industries; Andrew Kearney, executive GM of New Zealand at T&G Global; BayWa chairman Professor Klaus Josef Lutz; and Joy Wing Mau chairman Mau Wah Liu

company became the first to charter a plane to export kiwifruit to Europe, with two T&G directors on board huddled under blankets. New Zealand kiwifruit exports have since become a billion-dollar business.

T&G led the way in several other trades, Hulbert noted: the first New Zealand company to import Californian grapes and stonefruit; the first to export New Zealand buttercup squash and onions to Japan under Don Turner, who chaired the company from 1987; a pioneer in shipping New Zealand strawberries and asparagus to the US in the off-season.

"Looking back on the history of T&G, the main things that resonate for me are the connection with the grower base and the innovation we've always had," Hulbert told Fruitnet.

"On the one hand, there is the understanding of the grower and what they go through, the actions that the marketing partner can have on their fortunes. And then on the other side, the constant thinking of the customer and

<http://www.fruitnet.com/americafruit/article/1474/parts-of-san-diego-quarantined-as-psyllid-count-mounts>

© Copyright Market Intelligence Ltd - Fruitnet.com 2014. The copyright on this article and all content published on Market Intelligence Ltd - Fruitnet.com is held by Market Intelligence Ltd - Fruitnet.com Limited, a joint venture between Market Intelligence Limited and Dr Rolf M Wolf Media GmbH. All rights reserved. Neither this article nor any part of it may be reproduced, stored or transmitted in any form, including print-outs, screen grabs and information retrieval systems, without the prior permission of the copyright owners.

FRUITNET.COM

seeking to exceed their expectations.

"T&G has always been a leader in exports – I remember early on in my career they were always the company you wanted to emulate or beat. They had the King Kiwi brand in the 1980s and 1990s, which had started out in the 1960s. So many export items out of New Zealand could be traced back to T&G being the innovator or leader."

Hulbert said the tradition continues to this day. "If you look at Jazz and Envy apples and what we're doing around the world with our in-market offices, we're always striving to continue that market-leading position. Exceeding customers' expectations and innovating but with an honesty, integrity and transparency back to our suppliers."

Andrew Kearney, executive GM of New Zealand at T&G Global, highlighted the depth of the group's relationships within New Zealand, and thanked its suppliers and customers. "We're privileged to represent over 1,000 local growers and we're growers ourselves, so we understand the challenges growers face," he said. "We're equally proud of the 1,500 active customer accounts we have in our business."

#### **"Vital for healthy living"**

Some of T&G's latest innovations were on display at the 120 Years celebration, including the company's first lower carb potato (Lotatoes) and its Beekist and Ruby's brand snacking tomatoes.

Fresh food was a focus of the celebration, with Karena and Kasey Bird – Masterchef New Zealand winners 2014 – creating a menu showcasing the best of T&G and New Zealand produce.

"In an age where obesity and heart disease are rampant, I'm proud T&G

provides people with healthy food options," Hulbert said. "As our founder Edward Turner said: 'Our industry is vital for healthy living, is essential to mankind and does no one any harm.'"

The Turner family exited the T&G business some years ago, selling their remaining shares after the company was listed on the New Zealand stock exchange in September 2004, but several members of the family attended the celebration.

Don Turner, the last Turner to lead the business as managing director, was acknowledged for his contribution to T&G and the wider industry, particularly in developing export opportunities. Hulbert also acknowledged Jeffrey and Peter Turner, who remain active in the fresh produce business as owners of Fresh Direct/JP Exports, and were in attendance.

#### **BayWa committed to future**

T&G has been majority owned by BayWa since 2012, and the German agribusiness giant's chairman Professor Klaus Josef Lutz was on-hand to confirm its long-term commitment to the company. Lutz delivered a unique tribute to T&G spelling out the meaning of the numbers 120 to BayWa.

"One means T&G is one of the leading companies in fruit and vegetable trading with a global reach and global sourcing, but its roots firmly in New Zealand, where they'll stay.

"Two means the two companies are perfectly matched – the reason for our investment in 2011 was to become more global, especially to establish a gateway to the Asian markets, which is made possible through T&G Global and New Zealand because they're so well connected in the region.

"And zero means no regrets. We're so happy to have invested in T&G and this is a cooperation and alliance where the future is bright. The people and management are in such good shape and are so international we have learned a lot from them.

"BayWa has Bavarian roots and we're a very local company but we're now all over the world with our fruit business, grains and renewable energy. We have stakes in 217 companies around the world, and T&G is a cornerstone company in our business portfolio.

"We're grateful to have all these brilliant employees, especially our dear growers, because they're the backbone and without them T&G doesn't make sense."

Chinese group Joy Wing Mau purchased close to a 20 per cent stake in T&G last year, and the group's president Mau Wah Liu – recently appointed a T&G director – joined the celebrations.

Employing 1,300 people across New Zealand and 200 overseas, T&G also recruits around 2,000 seasonal workers each year and is on target to achieve N\$2bn in revenue by 2022.

Total New Zealand horticulture exports recently exceeded NZ\$8bn for the first time, outperforming wine exports and making the industry's target of NZ\$10bn by 2020 possible. Associate Minister of Primary Industries Louise Upston, who cut the cake on the 120th anniversary celebrations, applauded T&G for its key contribution to the industry as New Zealand's largest fruit and vegetable exporter.