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## Turbo charged leaf blower helps T&G

Trial of new leaf blower paves way for better quality apples and an increase in volume harvested



**A** turbo charged leaf blower being trialled at T&G Global is paving the way for better quality apples and an increase in fruit being picked off the trees this season.

T&G has partnered with Fruition Horticulture to trial a leaf blower machine which uses alternating pulses of air to strip off leaves on the lower part of trees, exposing the fruit to sunlight, which is important for fruit colour and the ability to command a premium price in export markets.

"We're always looking for better fruit colour and to get as much quality fruit off the trees as possible," said Craig Betty, head of operations at T&G Global.

"We've been really impressed with the new machine and

excited about its performance. It removes around 30 per cent of the leaves on the tree and we're seeing 15 per cent more fruit being picked on the first pick with a higher colour percentage."

The pneumatic defoliator replaces the manual work done by orchard crews to remove leaves off the trees.

Wine growers from across the world have used pneumatic defoliation machines for canopy control for years, but the bursts of air generated by those machines weren't powerful enough to be effective in apple orchards, where the leaves have a stronger attachment.

The defoliation system creates a localised air current reaching an air speed that can

96 kilometres per hour which is effective at leaf removal but is still gentle on the tree and the fruit.

"The machine enables us to enhance the colour and quality of our apples on our premium export varieties, like Jazz, Envy and Poppi, where a rich colour is important to generate a premium price."

Betty says given the productivity gains achieved from the trial, the company will look to invest in turbo charged leaf blowers in 2022.

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