

# Mike brings Japanese market knowledge home

It's not all doom and gloom in the New Zealand flower exporting market - if you take a little time to think about your marketing strategy.

That's the advice from New Zealand Bloom, and they have just the man to help you with marketing to Japan. Mike Limbrick has recently returned to New Zealand after four years in Japan establishing New Zealand Bloom's Osaka office. In his time in Japan, Mike has built a distribution network and established New Zealand Bloom as a leading brand throughout the country. Mike says the rewards for quality in Japan are still high, with significant price premiums available for product that fits into the luxury end of the market.

"Our goal is to use our market knowledge to lift more New Zealand product into the luxury bracket."

Mike will now be based at the company's Auckland office, while a staff of three remains in Osaka. He will be available to work with New Zealand growers to improve their crops, and their value in Japan. To have someone with the experience of managing a Japanese importing business available to growers represents a great opportunity, says New Zealand Bloom Managing Director David Ballard.

"Growers now have the chance to work with Mike on how to position themselves better with sound marketing advice."

David says there is a lot of poorly targeted product in the New Zealand export market, which, with just a little more attention to detail, could be turned around. He stresses the importance of diversifying into more than one export market.

"A lot of people have put a lot of work into building their position in one market, such as the States, which is great, but it's important growers have a backstop market, you are very exposed with just one market."

Although the Japanese market has been difficult for some years, there has been a notable improvement in the last six months. While the improvement in the Yen prices has been recently eroded by the exchange rate, Mike said the concern is that growers who decrease investment might miss this turn in the market, and they will not be able to meet the market demand over the next few years when the exchange rate turns.

The Japan office is New Zealand Bloom's second offshore office after

Los Angeles. David says it has been a substantial investment for New Zealand Bloom.

"But it follows our strategy of extending our reach further down the distribution channel, to enable us to position our brand firmly in the luxury end of the market. This has now been achieved in Japan, which is a critical market for New Zealand flowers. We now have excellent distribution available through our own importing companies in New Zealand's two largest flower markets."

David says the Japanese market is still the largest market for New Zealand flowers.

"There is a lot of opportunity to improve the position of New Zealand flowers in Japan, and growers of most of the major crops should look at how they are positioned in the market.

"Most growers need a Japan strategy to ensure the success of their business, as it is still the cornerstone market of the New Zealand industry."

Mike can be contacted on (09) 275 6324.



Mike Limbrick with Helen Clark on her visit to Japan last year - New Zealand Bloom supplied flowers for the Embassy reception.



A typical Japanese funeral display - which includes New Zealand cymbidium orchids.