

# New Zealand Winegrower

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ORGANIC GROWTH

### Holistic approach to soil, land and climate

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Car-pooling to work seems a far cry from stirring Preparation 500 at dawn. But carbon counter James Coleman says there's plenty of common ground between biodynamics and Felton Road's emission-reduction initiatives, with holistic outcomes in both.

"If we have electric vehicles, make sure staff can use them, and ask them to car-pool, there's a financial, ecological and social impact," says James, who is one of the speakers at the Organic & Biodynamic Winegrowing Conference in Blenheim in June. "It is applying a biodynamic approach to your own emissions space."

Last year Felton Road became the second wine company in New Zealand to join International Wineries for Climate Action (IWCA) following in the (carbon reduced) footsteps of Yealands in Marlborough. James, who is Winemaking Assistant and Technical Viticulturist at the prestigious Felton Road, is also charged with driving sustainability and emissions reductions, with support from owner Nigel Greening and Winemaker Blair Walter. "The motivation for us to join the IWCA is to say 'well, we are taking care of our land but there are things we do on that land that have effects that extend well beyond it in terms of carbon emissions," he says. "It's an extension really of the care we take within the boundaries of our farm."

That care includes a switch to direct shipping of wine to Australia after realising their agent was flying it across the Tasman at an emissions cost greater than that of a year's diesel use in the vineyard. Some "more fossil fuel positive clients" were unhappy with the change, but the response



Felton Road. Photo Andrea Johnson

was overwhelmingly positive, James says. Meanwhile, cellar door customers wanting to arrive by helicopter will need to rethink their plans. "If they like the wines they'll find a more ecologically sound way of getting to us."

Felton Road started its IWCA journey by measuring its impacts and tackling the heaviest hitters – packaging, freight and vehicles. They've also measured other Scope 3 emissions, including the cost of wine refrigeration in restaurants, along with closer to home Scope 1 and 2 emissions, such as company vehicles, tractor passes and global travel.

James says the work has yet to impact on the way they farm, because despite potential for extra tractor passes in an organic vineyard, reducing those emissions is far less effective than using light weight bottles, for example.

As low hanging fruit disappears – such as the gains from efficient freight, lighter glass, and an electrified fleet where possible – decisions will get more difficult, James adds, acknowledging that "shifting a product from a small, isolated part of the world

takes a lot of energy". The IWCA does not allow for offsetting by buying carbon credits, but Felton Road is considering ways of sequestering carbon through onsite plantations that could count against their emissions. They will also continue their work to sequester carbon in soil, which doesn't come into the accounting, but is the right thing to do, and a natural process in organic farming, he says. "You just have to have faith that the procedures and capacity to measure it will catch up, and if you have already sorted out the process to fix carbon, all the better."

He's also excited that as technology grows and more companies get on board with carbon consciousness, there'll be collective action to ensure better solutions to transportation and packaging. "Then the fruit that was high hanging drops into your hands." 🍷

*James Coleman will be speaking at the Organic & Biodynamic Winegrowing Conference on Wednesday 21 June, as part of a series of climate change and carbon emission discussions. [organicwineconference.com](http://organicwineconference.com)*