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Media Release

## **From the sea to the land**

Mussel farms and vineyards have been put together in what may prove a very virtuous circle.

Marine Farming Association president Jonathan Large has always been looking for ways to better dispose of the waste stream of shells and other material from his mussel farms.

Last week, he hosted a demonstration on his Riverlands vineyard for the Marlborough Grape Growers Cooperative of which he's a member. This saw mussel waste mixed with mushroom straw compost spread across two-thirds of his vineyard.

This followed an earlier application in March which saw a third of his block receive the mix for almost immediate benefits. "The canopy stayed on longer and the vines stayed much greener. Now the magic will begin on the rest of the vineyard."

Yvette Herd, of H & H Contractors 2018 Ltd which spread the mix, believes he's right. The contracting company has been spreading the mushroom compost for the last 18 months and getting some startling results.

A recent comparison of soils on the vineyard her and husband Tim own on Hawkesbury Rd showed huge benefit in the rows where compost had been spread in late 2019.

"It was just totally different soil. It was moist and full of worms."

Nearby rows which hadn't received the compost were dry, with no worms.

H+H Contractors, owned by Yvette and Tim and her brother Jim Hagen and wife Kristy, is getting increasing demand from growers for the mushroom compost. They sometimes ask for their own additions to the mix, so Jonathan's request was not unusual.

He's convinced the mussel waste will add to the benefits of the mushroom compost.

Jonathan says "You've got to have a mix because straight mussel waste would provide too much calcium (lime) to the soil."

He says his vineyard has been planted for 15 years and tests of the soil had shown it was slowly depleting the nutrient base. "If you keep feeding them, you'd have to think the plants will last longer and continue being productive."

Yvette says her and Tim's vineyard, planted 30 years ago, was also showing signs of depletion until the compost started restoring the balance.

While Jonathan mixed his mussel waste and the mushroom compost with a tractor bucket, H+H Contracting has just taken delivery of a mixer wagon which does that task before unloading onto a compost spreader.

"The compost is becoming popular," says Yvette. "We've been very busy with it particularly post-harvest."

The mushroom compost is bought from Meadow Mushrooms near Christchurch.

Jonathan says if the mussel waste proves to be the effective additive he's already seeing, there'd be no shortage of supply.

“Otherwise much of it is going to landfill. This is cross-utilisation of a waste stream from one industry which benefits another. It’s especially good that we can do that within one region which is blessed to have both aquaculture and vineyards.”

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*Jim Hagen explaining the benefits of compost to growers.*



*Spreading the 'magic' mix of mussel waste and mushroom compost.*



*Marlborough Grape Growers Coop members watching the application.*