AWS New Zealand Blog
By: Amazon Staff

Aotearoa, New Zealand is known around the world as a leader in agriculture and producer of quality food. So, it's not surprising that Kiwi farmers, producers, and growers are paving the way in digital agriculture. Digital adoption in farming has increased by 59% in recent years according to a 2022 AgritechNZ report, and data is at the heart of it. Farms globally are adopting advanced technology such as internet of things (IoT) devices and artificial intelligence (AI) such as Amazon SageMaker to help predict the best time to harvest, and AWS RoboMaker for robotic or autonomous harvest solutions. But as New Zealand's agriculture sector undergoes rapid digital transformation, farmers will increasingly need to upskill and reskill.

Recent research by Gallup and AWS shows that 50% of non-tech workers in New Zealand want digital skills training, however 43% say they don't have the time.

Curated learning opportunities for the agriculture industry
Today, we are excited to launch AWS Agritech School, a one-stop shop for Kiwi farmers, producers, and growers to learn more about the cloud and pick up vital skills. AWS Agritech School provides instant access to digital skills content through AWS Skill Builder, an online learning centre for learners of all levels. It includes curated skills courses relevant to the needs of the agricultural industry including an introduction to robotics, IoT, AI and machine learning (ML), and data analytics, which are commonly used to drive digital transformation and innovation across operations.

AWS Agritech School will be hosted on AWS Connected Community, an online resource where businesses can join events, workshops, and ask AWS experts for free one-on-one consultation on business and technical issues, and enjoy discounts on a range of software and cloud services.

"Cloud computing has democratised access to technology and given small and medium-sized businesses, including those in the agriculture industry, access to tools that were once only available to larger enterprises," said Tiffany Bloomquist, commercial sector country director, AWS New Zealand. "The opportunity for Aotearoa to become leaders in the digital economy depends on having a digitally-skilled workforce who can keep pace with the incredible pace of innovation we're seeing today. That's why we're passionate about helping Kiwi farmers, producers, and growers embrace the latest technologies such as AI and ML, as they transition to running digital farms and operations."

Supporting the New Zealand government's vision to upskill Kiwi businesses
Cloud has created opportunities for Kiwi companies to invest, innovate, and grow globally, and digital skills have played a critical role in enabling this—a key goal of New Zealand's Agritech Industry Transformation plan.

AWS Agritech School aligns with the New Zealand government and private sector's drive to help the small and medium-sized business sector adopt digital ways of working, including helping farmers and the broader rural business community use online tools to increase profits and become a more sustainable and resilient business in today's fast-paced digital world.

“Helping our rural communities and businesses to increase their productivity and resilience through digitalisation, has significant potential benefits for the New Zealand economy, and we welcome the AWS Agritech School initiative and other great Digital Boost Alliance member offerings,” said Malcolm Luey, director, Digital Boost, Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE).

Hectre's artificial intelligence (AI) fruit sizing app enters the U.S
As the world’s most comprehensive and broadly adopted cloud, AWS is helping the Kiwi agriculture industry unlock new ideas and business models, and launch and export these globally.

Hectre, a New Zealand fruit technology startup has entered the United States (U.S) with their cloud based fruit sizing software called Spectre, which uses computer vision and AI to accurately detect and size fruit within seconds. Before Spectre, fruit sizing was generally done manually, with only 50 apples from a truck of 130,000 apples being measured. Size drives fruit buying decisions, with different countries preferring different sized apples, so detecting fruit size early can often lead to more revenue. Monson Fruit, one of Hectre’s U.S customers recently set the season record for the most fruit measured by the Hectre app in one day, with a total of 103,000 apples detected and sized by Spectre.

Hectre uses AWS for data processing, enabling Spectre's algorithms to operate at speed and scale. The fruit tech company recently implemented a new processing cluster using AWS to improve processing speeds and capability even further, as more enterprise level packhouses sign on for their innovative technology. Hectre is using cloud to disrupt the industry and taking their Kiwi innovation to the world.

“More agricultural producers are recognising how technology can support their success, but many are unfamiliar with how new and emerging technology such as data analytics and AI works,” said Matty Blomfield, CEO and co-founder, Hectre. “The unknown can cause fear and hesitation, so it helps to break this down and make it more accessible to farmers and growers. Initiatives like AWS Agritech School can help accelerate technology understanding and adoption, and that's a big win for New Zealand’s digital aspirations."

The launch of AWS Agritech School is part of AWS’s ongoing investment in New Zealand, and its recently announced commitment to provide cloud training opportunities for 100,000 Kiwis over five years. AWS is on track to launch an AWS Region in Auckland in 2024, a NZ$7.5 billion investment that is estimated to create 1000 jobs and NZ$10.8 billion to New Zealand’s GDP over 15 years.

AWS is a proud sponsor of Fieldays New Zealand, the Southern Hemisphere’s largest annual agricultural event and a launch pad for cutting edge technology and innovation. When Fieldays gets underway on 14 June in Hamilton, farmers can expect to hear from AWS experts, customers, and AWS Partners on how they can build digital farms, and upskill through AWS Agritech School.

Find out more about AWS Agritech School.