

## **NATURAL PRODUCT INDUSTRY AWARD WINNERS ANNOUNCED**

Natural Products NZ this evening announced the winners of its annual industry awards, including the inaugural Supreme Award for the best overall entry:

**SUPREME AWARD:**

**ABSOLUTE ESSENTIAL**

**Label & Litho Sustainability Award:**

**Absolute Essential**

**James & Wells Innovation in Marketing Award:**

**Vitaco Health (NZ)**

**Cawthron Institute Innovation in Science & Technology Award:**

**Forest Herbs Research /**

**Phytomed Medicinal Herbs**

**NZ Trade & Enterprise Exporter of the Year Award:**

**SeaDragon**

Natural Products NZ (NPNZ) is a national industry organisation representing this country's natural products, functional foods, complementary medicines, cosmeceuticals and nutraceuticals industries.

Announcing the winners, NPNZ's Executive Director Alison Quesnel said ongoing increases in the number and quality of entrants had led to the NPNZ Board deciding to introduce a Supreme Award, for which all category winners are eligible.

"The natural products industry is a significant contributor to New Zealand's economy with earnings of over \$1.4 billion per annum. Adding a Supreme Award to our annual industry awards is a sign of the industry's maturity and its positive ongoing evolution," she says.

Ms Quesnel commented that this year's awards attracted a strong field that was representative of the natural products sector. Entrants ranged from large FMCG (fast-moving consumer goods) companies, through to retailers and smaller companies.

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## **Award winner overviews**

### **SUPREME AWARD + LABEL & LITHO SUSTAINABILITY AWARD: ABSOLUTE ESSENTIAL**

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The Label & Litho Sustainability Award celebrates the entrant that has either; a) best implemented the principles of sustainability throughout their company, products and people; and / or b) applied considerable changes across several platforms to demonstrate a move toward becoming a sustainable business.

Absolute Essential, which is based at Muriwai (north-west Auckland) produces fair-trade aromatherapy, pure essential oils, organic natural skin care and natural health products that are sourced from small, organic farms and sustainable wild harvests. Every aspect of the company's operations – from its people, its product and its interface with the environment – is managed in a sustainable manner.

The company – which also won this award category last year - has continued to build upon its strong, multi-faceted sustainability programme and over the past year expanded its programmes for donating to international charities, investing in small artisan production, supporting supplier economies and using targeted, eco-conscious marketing material.

The judges were highly impressed with Absolute Essential's focus and achievement and they were unanimous in awarding it both the Label & Litho Sustainability Award, and the Supreme Award.

Activities included a fundraising campaign that raised a five-figure sum for Nepalese earthquake relief, using personal contacts to deliver emergency food to 90 isolated families, investing in 'Trade, not Aid' by personally overseeing funds allocation and supporting a family towards their winter roof project.

In addition, the company introduced a range of sustainability measures in New Zealand, including develop more environmentally-friendly store displays and point-of-sale material that generated less waste. It also upgraded product packaging to use 100% recycled materials.

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### ***NPNZ award winners / 3***

The judging panel applauded Absolute Essential for doing an outstanding job of supporting small ingredient producers in a fragile economy, saying: “This is a living and breathing ethically sustainable company. This entry was a head and shoulders winner for Natural Products NZ’s inaugural Supreme Award”.

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### **JAMES & WELLS INNOVATION IN MARKETING AWARD: VITACO HEALTH (NZ)**

This award recognises a company or employee of the company who has achieved exceptional results from the innovative marketing, advertising or promotion of a service or product achieving significant market growth or market access.

Vitaco Health (NZ) develops, manufactures and markets vitamins, dietary supplements, sports nutrition and health food products. It was formed in 2007 following a merger of two Australasian health and wellness companies - Nutra-Life Health & Fitness (a leading supplement and sports nutrition manufacturer) and Healtheries of New Zealand (one of New Zealand’s most trusted brands and largest and oldest health food and supplement manufacturers). The company’s New Zealand headquarters are in East Tamaki, Auckland.

Judges said Vitaco did well to win what was a “very tight race” with lots of excellent entries.

“Vitaco demonstrated a clear increase in sales related to the special campaign for their new joint care product and made good use of social media and consumer engagement, and also effectively used a credible brand ambassador (ex All Black Ian Jones).

“Vitaco, through this campaign, turned around a declining sector (joint care), which benefits the industry as a whole.”

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This award recognises innovation in scientific research conducted in support of the natural products industry or for individual product(s); or for the successful development of a novel process/processes or technological advancement/s. This year it was jointly awarded to Forest Herbs and Phytomed.

**Forest Herbs Research:** Nelson based Forest Herbs Research is dedicated to bringing the benefits of New Zealand's native Horopito to the world. It has spent 20 years researching the plant's properties and developing useful products from it. Forest Herbs surveyed all of Horopito's major wild populations and found enormous variation in plant activity so it only cultivates and harvests Kolorex Horopito. Each batch of leaf is assayed against a standard to confirm superior activity.

Forest Herbs brand of Kolorex Horopito products has established a niche in markets as diverse as Kazakhstan, Israel and Italy. The company holds a patent over the best method for extracting Kolorex Horopito (super critical CO<sub>2</sub>) and owns the only cultivated plantation.

Award judges said Forest Herb's entry was "extensive and impressive", and noted the excellent detail about research into the product.

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**Phytomed Medicinal Herbs:** West Auckland company Phytomed Medicinal Herbs produces a large range of herbal liquid extracts, capsules and dried herbs for practitioner dispensing, along with the popular Kiwiherb retail product range. Phytomed's roots are embedded in traditional herbal philosophy, combining this time-honoured wisdom with the latest scientific research to produce herbal medicines of the highest quality and efficacy.

Award judges were impressed with the company's excellent use of New Zealand-grown herbs, and the extensive research that was conducted – ranging from literature reviews to in-clinic trialling.

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**NZ TRADE & ENTERPRISE EXPORTER OF THE YEAR AWARD:      SEADRAGON**

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For the company with the most significant export growth and/or who has successfully conquered new market/s in 2015.

Nelson-based SeaDragon is New Zealand's only refiner and blender of high-quality fish oils and fractions (i.e. distilled derivatives) for human consumption, including Omega-3 oils. The company obtains its raw materials from sustainably managed fishing zones, and uses by-product that previously would have been commercially unusable.

SeaDragon achieved impressive export growth in 2015, enjoying major revenue growth and also growing the proportion of income from exports. 77% of SeaDragon's sales for the 2015 calendar year were through direct export, a year-on-year growth in export sales of 345%. The relative export sales contribution as a percentage of total SeaDragon sales increased from 46% in 2014 to 77% in 2015.

Judges commented on SeaDragon's impressive sales growth, especially exports to Australia and noted that it was deserving of an award for outstanding success in export revenue growth.

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