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CEO of New Zealand’s premier Māori food and beverage business to co-lead business delegation during trade mission to Japan

Rachel Taulelei (Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāti Rarua, Ngāti Koata), CEO – Kono NZ LP (Kono) will be co-leading, with Sir Graham Harrison, the business delegation during New Zealand Prime Minister Bill English’s trade mission to Japan, from 16-18 May 2017. Kono is an associated business of Wakatū Incorporation, and is a vertically integrated, family-owned Māori food and beverage producer – an artisan producer, and exporter of award-winning wine, cider, seafood, fruit and natural fruit bars.

“I am looking forward to sharing the rich history of our company and our products, including talking about my deep connection to the company, as a direct descendant of the original landowners. Our goal is to be the best indigenous food and beverage company in the world, while being kaitiaki or guardians of the resources we use,” Ms Taulelei says.

“Innovation, adaptability, and putting our customers at the centre of everything are key to ensuring success. We know that Japanese consumers are sophisticated and expect the best and freshest products, and are increasingly interested in where their food comes from, and how it is produced. Our values, including a focus on sustainability, are integral to our business. These values resonate strongly with the section of the Japanese market interested in premium products.

“Kono currently exports our Greenshell™ mussels, along with our award-winning Tohu wine, to Japan. This trade delegation provides us with the perfect opportunity to further deepen relationships and build new ones, as well as gaining a greater insight into Japanese consumers.

“This visit will help us further understand our Japanese consumers so we can tailor products to their needs,” Ms Taulelei says.

“I am also looking forward to connecting with the indigenous Ainu people. There has been a rich exchange between the Ainu and Māori for many years – we have much to share and learn from each other.”

More information about Kono: www.kono.co.nz

More information about Wakatū: www.wakatu.org

New Zealand Government's media release about the trade mission and business delegation

www.beehive.govt.nz/release/pm-visit-japan-and-hong-kong

Notes to editors

About Kono NZ LP

Kono NZ LP (Kono) is the food and beverage business of Wakatū Incorporation. Based in Nelson, Aotearoa New Zealand, Wakatū has approximately 4,000 shareholders who descend from the original Māori land owners of the Nelson, Tasman and Golden Bay Regions – Te Tau Ihu, the top of Aotearoa New Zealand's South Island.

Whenua is the foundation of Wakatū's business with 70% of assets held in land and waterspace. Wakatū manage a diverse portfolio from vineyards, orchards to residential properties, large retail developments, office buildings, marine farms and waterspace.

Kono NZ is an award-winning, family-owned Māori food and beverage exporter, ranking among Aotearoa New Zealand's top 100 food and beverage businesses. Employing 500 people and farming more than 530 hectares of land and sea, Kono exports to over 25 countries worldwide, including Japan.

A kono is a basket woven out of harakeke (New Zealand flax), traditionally used by Māori to serve food. The Kono brand represents the company's desire to provide New Zealand produce to the world, whilst being guided by Māori values.

Aotearoa New Zealand's oceans and waterways provide pristine growing environments for Kono's world-class seafood, including Kono mussels and Kiwa oysters. Picturesque landscapes also provide ideal conditions for Kono's production of wine, cider, fresh fruit and fruit products – including Tohu, Aronui and Kono wines, Tutū cider, Annies 100% Fruit Bars, and apples, pears, hops and kiwifruit of the highest export quality.

Kono uses and protects its assets in line with the Māori values of its owners: manaakitanga (hospitality), kaitiakitanga (custodianship and sustainability), rangatiratanga (integrity), and whanaungatanga (relationships). The company has a strong focus on conserving its lands and resources, to nurture them for the enjoyment and prosperity of future generations. It is particularly committed to sustainable best practice, and its wines are certified through Sustainable Winegrowing New Zealand.

Rachel Taulelei, CEO – Kono - Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāti Rarua, Ngāti Koata

Rachel Taulelei is CEO of Kono LP NZ, one of New Zealand's top 100 food and beverage companies, whose activities range from wine, cider, horticulture, and seafood, to fruit bar manufacturing. Rachel founded the sustainable seafood company Yellow Brick Road, and as such she is passionate about New Zealand's primary sector and developing values based business models. Rachel is a former NZ Trade and Enterprise US Trade Commissioner. In 2015 she received a New Zealand Order of Merit for services to food and hospitality, and in 2012 was the recipient of a Blake Leader Award from the Sir Peter Blake Trust, on whose board she now sits. Other directorships include Moana NZ, Wellington Regional Stadium Trust, New Zealand Wine Growers, Headwaters New Zealand, and the Young Enterprise Trust.

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