

Lifetime Achievement Award – Brent Vautier

This award, recognises long and exceptional service and/or contribution to a New Zealand Food Industry sector in a scientific, technical, teaching, marketing or managerial role; and is specifically for industry personnel approaching, or in retirement.

Our first winner is a distinguished professional in the dairy industry, with over 50 years of experience at Fonterra and its predecessor, NZDRI. His career has been marked by significant contributions to the development and technical support of new-to-world protein ingredients, which underpin Fonterra's NZMP brand position as a world leader. His expertise spans commercial production, development, product performance, and customer support, making him one of Fonterra's few end-to-end dairy protein ingredient experts. His achievements include the successful process development and commercialisation of several caseinate products and the TMP proteinate range. He supported the design and commissioning of multiple manufacturing plants, facilitated technology transfer between facilities, and developed functional whey protein ingredients that have set new benchmarks in the market. His innovative work led to the creation of world-first whey protein crisps and functional whey protein concentrates, significantly enhancing the NZMP Protein Portfolio. Throughout his career, he played an active leadership role in mentoring and supporting less experienced researchers and technical staff. His passion, enthusiasm, and can-do attitude have been a driving force in ensuring the success of numerous projects. His unique ability to translate theory into practical solutions has made him a sought-after expert in the dairy industry, and his contributions have been instrumental in Fonterra's global success.



Lifetime Achievement Award – Dave Mael

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Our second winner has dedicated an extraordinary 51-year career to Griffin's Foods, making significant contributions to the baking and New Zealand food industry. Starting as a baking cadet at 17, he worked his way up to Factory Manager in Whanganui and later became Production Manager in Papakura, overseeing 150 staff and managing production, repairs, maintenance, and training. Since 1996, he served as Technical Projects Manager, commissioning new lines and equipment, driving continuous improvement, and supporting production throughout Asia Pacific. His hands-on baking knowledge, mechanical expertise, and calm leadership were key to him playing a key role in modernising production processes, upgrading cutters, change parts, and line components, making operations more efficient and robust. As part of the R&D team, he supports food technologists with trial work, ensuring innovation is practical, scalable, and successful. Over five decades, he mentored countless team members, shaping many careers with his patience, humour, and encyclopaedic baking knowledge. His humility, dedication, and passion for baking have made him a role model to all who have worked with him. For his decades of quiet excellence, innovation, mentorship, and unwavering service to the New Zealand food industry, we proudly award “Super Dave” David Mael the NZIFST Lifetime Achievement Award.

