

Tuesday, June 18, 2013

SPECIAL LIFTOUT

Business

PLUS: ■ Weather: p25 ■ Puzzles: p26-27 ■ Television: p28

Major mushroom move



p1

Te Mata Mushrooms in Havelock North has launched a multi-million-dollar development, thanks to new owner and successful entrepreneur Michael Whittaker.

PHOTO/PAUL TAYLOR H

Big mushroom expansion plan

By Patrick O'Sullivan
patrick.osullivan@hbtoday.co.nz

THE MATA MUSHROOMS in Havelock North has started a multi-million dollar development under the new ownership of Michael Whittaker.

An area the size of a football field has been cleared for the first of three new buildings as the business ramps up production.

He said the business, which had been family-run for 45 years, still had the involvement of previous owners including Martin Speeden as managing director. Mr Whittaker said the business had "good bones" when he bought it. It employs 110 people.

Te Mata Mushrooms is the second-biggest mushroom producer in New Zealand. Twenty tonnes a week are produced, requiring a huge amount of compost to be made on site.

He said he does not envisage a new housing development bordering the business will limit production should there be complaints over any odours from the Brookvale Rd business.

"It is manageable they can co-locate," he said.

"The bottom line is we have consents and we have to comply with them."

He is hoping new technology will grow the mushroom market in New Zealand.

"Mushrooms are the only vegetable that has vitamin D. There is an enzyme in them that produces vitamin D when exposed to ultraviolet light."

The trick is how much light is needed and he has invested \$100,000 in a box to flash the optimum amount.



BUILDINGS: Michael Whittaker is transforming Te Mata Mushrooms with a multi-million dollar development plan on the Brookvale Rd site in Havelock North.

PHOTO/PAUL TAYLOR HBT131955-02

Vitamin D is then produced while the vegetable is on its way to market. With skin cancer concerns making many shy away from sunlight, he expects the innovation to be popular.

"Three button mushrooms and you get 100 per cent of your daily requirement of vitamin D."

He doesn't seek to have a separate vitamin-rich range. "All mushrooms should be exposed to ultraviolet light."

Mr Whittaker is a son of former Havelock North Borough mayor and pharmacist, Jeff Whittaker.

Michael founded multinational Atlantis Healthcare and returned to Hawke's Bay after an exhausting 250 flights a year with Atlantis.

"Whatever we did next had to be locally-based and preferably not export based — I've done my fair share of exports."

Own your business and build your future with our success

We're inviting you to share in the future of New Zealand's market leader for garages, a farm and commercial buildings.

As a franchisee, you'll have Versatile backing system, and quantifiable financial benefits.

Your success starts here

At Versatile everything is set up for you to the infrastructure, the profile, and a national

- PLUS:**
- Comprehensive on-going training
 - A market-leading CRM package
 - Coordinated national marketing

The most successful Versatile franchisees share

You should have sound business acumen, know your way around a computer system business background.



Areas available:
Hastings and other local areas

Contact: Jon Paul Ferris on 027 534 29 or franchise@versatile.co.nz, for more information, visit www.versatile.co.nz