

[The NextGen Fruit Group](#) - a networking and educational association of likeminded youngsters working across the UK fresh fruit supply chain - officially launched during [The London Produce Show and Conference 2019 \(LPS19\)](#) last week. Current chairman Ben Bardsley, Managing Director of topfruit grower-packer [Bardsley England](#), gave an inspiring presentation as part of the LPS19 Educational Seminar Programme, during which he called on the industry to join in and lend its support for the benefit of all players throughout the fresh fruit trade.

“The next generation of our industry is relying on us to power people through into their businesses,” pointed out Bardsley, who became chairman in February (2019).

“We want to bring together the industry through the power of young people. The industry is very fractured, and there are a lot of competitors but everyone has young people in common. Together we are all stronger.”

Since becoming chairman, Bardsley has made it his objective to turn the NextGen Fruit Group (NextGen) into a much larger and global organization in scope, with 350 members in total.

“This movement is happening,” he affirmed. “I promise you that by the time I hand over to Oli Pascall in two years’ time, this group will be very powerful, and full of bright individuals who really want to get stuck in.”

Bardsley explained that he decided to rebrand the Under 40s Fruit Growers group to make it more tangible, and less limited as an organization for those only under 40 years of age.

Furthermore, to begin with, the group will remain focused on the U.K. fruit sector, although some members work for companies involved in the trade of both fruits and vegetables. In the future, however, the organization could open up to the vegetable industry too.

For now, Bardsley revealed that NextGen’s core values fall under the acronym F.R.U.I.T.S.; fun, respect, understanding, inspire, trust and sustainability.

“NextGen is all about having fun, getting together and having a conversation, and being excited about what we do,” highlighted Bardsley. “We are passionate about the future of the fruit industry.”

Over the course of the next two years, Bardsley said NextGen has an exciting schedule planned, announcing that the group’s traditional, biennial overseas trip will be heading to

New Zealand in 2021.

“New Zealand is pioneering some fascinating stuff, and we can’t wait to go,” Bardsley exclaimed.

In the run up to that trip will be a series of national trips and events designed to provide a networking and educational platform from which to shape the future of the U.K. fruit sector.

NextGen will host seven events in total, including two interim trips to Herefordshire and Scotland, a Winter Wonderland Ball in November 2019, and a ball in London where Bardsley expects 750 people will come together for young people.

The group will also make visits to Bardsley England, Biddenden Vineyards, Chambers and Berry Gardens.

The trips are aimed at giving members the opportunity to learn about the different fruit growing methods, growing systems and marketing strategies being utilized across the various regions of the U.K. to canvass ideas that they can bring back into their own businesses and places of work.

Free to join, NextGen already comprises range of individuals working in different areas of the U.K.’s fresh fruit industry.

At the same time, Bardsley said the organization is open to working with similar groups in other countries to create a global community of people with common interests and goals.

Additionally, NextGen has incorporated as a charity to fund young people through education. The aim is to recruit new talent into the fruit sector while giving back to the industry as a whole.

The group aims to develop an active online community, setting itself the target of achieving 700 posts on social media in the next two years. To keep up with the latest developments, follow @nextgenfruitgroup on Instagram and/or Facebook.