

New Zealand apple company Rokit Global Ltd. ([RGL](#)) has experienced exponential growth in the snack sector and now the entity is taking a huge step forward for expansion; it recently made a “significant investment” in a new site for its headquarters and post-harvest activity.

The company's new site is in Longlands, Hastings. There, it says it aims to open the state-of-the-art facility in advance of the 2021 apple harvest.

Today, Rokit Global CEO Austin Mortimer, as well as key staff and invited guests, attended a blessing of the site. Kaumātua Jerry Hapuku of Ngāti Kahungunu led the ceremonial event.

Austin says moving forward with the purpose-built coolstore, packhouse and global headquarters is a monumental milestone for Rokit Global.

He explains that the company has outgrown its current Havelock North premises.

“This project signifies the growth of the apple industry in Hawke’s Bay, and signals the coming of age of Rokit and a reflection of our confidence and belief in our product and brand,” says Austin, who took the reins at Rokit in 2015.

New Rokit facility to 'exemplify innovation'

The company says it began an exhaustive search of potential spaces last year before deciding on the Irongate opportunity.

“One of the many benefits of Irongate is the proximity to three of our existing orchards. It also gives us scope for further expansion as we continue to grow, and the site is flexible, so we are able to use the space efficiently for packing and cool storage.”

The build will take place over two stages, it notes. Stage one will create the new office suite, cool storage and highly automated, high spec packhouse, with a mezzanine level allowing packaging material to be gravity fed.

The second phase, earmarked for 2025, is likely to add in further processing technology. This will allow for further capacity for production through to 2030 and beyond, Austin explains.

“We have considered the footprint of the land and allowed provision to double the size of our packing area and finished goods storage. We’ve also considered possible expansion into

further brand extensions.”

The project team drew on Rokit’s in-house expertise to generate initial designs. The Strata Group then brought these to life, with Duncan Bruce as the key sponsor.

“The team at Strata Group has thoroughly enjoyed working on this homegrown project,” says Duncan.

“Rokit Global are market leaders and this development exemplifies the innovation and attention to detail we’ve come to expect from one of Hawke’s Bay’s most successful companies.”

MCL Consturction, which has spearheaded many successful projects across Hawke’s Bay, will lead the build.

“This is one of the largest contracts MCL Construction has been involved in and we look forward to providing a high-quality build for Rokit Global,” says John Bower of MCL.

'Doing no harm to the environment' during business growth

Earlier this year, the company launched a new kraft cardboard pack for its snack-sized apples.

The 100% biodegradable and recyclable cardboard is a more environmentally conscious packaging option. Moreover, it is sourced from sustainably managed forests and is PEFC (Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification) approved.

There has been consideration of RGL’s ambition of doing no harm to the environment as it grows the business. Particularly, this ideology has been a consideration as it builds the new facility.

“We will be dealing with the treatment and discharge of all our own wastewater, the refrigeration plant will have a zero global warming impact and we’re looking into the use and placement of solar panels as a sustainable source of electricity,” Austin says.

He expects staff to begin moving into the new premises at the end of 2020. This will give workers enough time to prepare for the following harvest.

“This is an electrifying milestone in Rokit Global’s growth and will step-change our business.

"We look forward to enjoying a new space and all that this represents."