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Biz awards finalist

By LUKE KIRKEBY

MAKING the finals of the 2015 New Zealand International Business Awards would be a long shot for most businesses after only four years in operation.

But that is exactly what Taupo dairy exporter Miraka has achieved after setting up in 2011 and following Maori based values and customs.

The predominantly Maori-owned business, which manufactures milk powder and Ultra Heat Treated (UHT) milk products for export to 23 countries around the world, is one of three New Zealand companies to make the finals in the He Kai Kei Aku Ringa for Maori Excellence in export category of the awards. Auckland seafood giant, Sealord and Nelson food and beverage company, Kono General Partner are also finalists.

Miraka chief executive officer Richard Wyeth said the company was excited by the announcement.

"We were asked to put an appli-



PROUD: Miraka chief executive officer Richard Wyeth is excited that the company has made the finals of the 2015 New Zealand International Business Awards.

cation in and we are pretty excited to be one of only three to become finalists in the category, especially considering Sealord has been around for a fair amount of time

and is well known in New Zealand," he said.

As part of the awards later this month each finalist will have the opportunity to make a winning impression in a 30 minute pitching and question/answer session in front of a judging panel featuring some of New Zealand's top business minds.

Wyeth said despite feeling a little apprehensive about the session he was also looking forward to it.

"We will have a 10 minute presentation, presenting our case and the balance of the time will be taken up by the judges' questions. It is an exciting time selling yourself in a pressure cooker environment," he said.

He was pleased with the direction the company was taking and proud of what it had accomplished in such a short space of time.

"We have around 100 staff and the majority of them are locals and it has been good that we have been able to continue to employ local

people and contribute to the local economy," he said.

That contribution has seen \$5 million injected into the local rural economy over the last three years which will no doubt be an impressive factor for the judges to consider.

Wyeth said the company was currently working on further developing its UHT milk production and recently signed a five year contract with Chinese company Shanghai Pengxin to increase its production line.

"The thing with a growing company is that you never get bored and there are always challenges but that keeps things exciting," he said.

He said while the company's main focus was on exporting there are also plans to eventually tap into the New Zealand market.

The 2015 New Zealand International Business Award winners will be announced at a black tie ceremony on March 25 at Sky City in Auckland.