

TigerTurf

Product development gives global advantage

TechNZ supports the manufacturing sector to develop new products, processes and services and improve technical knowledge and R&D ability. Up to \$50 million is invested each year in New Zealand businesses to grow world-class companies through innovative technology.



The Company

TigerTurf designs, manufactures and installs high-quality synthetic sports and landscaping turfs, which are sold in 80 countries. Founded by former international cricketer Graham Vivian and his wife Helen in 1981, TigerTurf targeted emerging opportunities for synthetic tennis and cricket surfaces. It set up its own manufacturing operation in 1984 and expanded offshore in 1990.

In 2007, the company commissioned a plant in Austin, Texas to access the lucrative North American market. The company aims to locate close to customers, but partners with others, with stringent quality standards, in markets where it doesn't have captive manufacturing plants. TigerTurf is among the world's top 10 synthetic turf manufacturers.

The Research and Development

TigerTurf (formerly Astrograss) was working with European synthetic turf company Desso when the opportunity to start manufacturing in New Zealand arose, with TigerTurf servicing its Australasian market for the demanding summer season and using off-season capacity to export to Europe and Asia.

In 2005, TechNZ – the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology's business investment programme – invested more than \$1 million in a TigerTurf project to create a new generation of materials to give the company a unique point of difference for the football market.

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“ TigerTurf's philosophy has been to locate close to its customers, but it partners with companies that are held to its stringent quality standards in markets where it doesn't have captive manufacturing plants. Its products are sold in 80 countries, and it is one of the world's top 10 synthetic turf manufacturers. ”

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New Zealand Government



Fact File

Location: Auckland, with manufacturing plants in UK and US

Staff: 75 in New Zealand, approximately 300 internationally

Exporting: About 80% of business generated offshore

First TechNZ investment: 2005

Value of TechNZ investment: \$1.2 million

Projected revenue from latest R&D: \$20 million at 2008 with further benefits to flow as project is completed

“ The research and product development, supported by TechNZ, gives TigerTurf a unique selling point in a competitive market. It has built a team of experienced staff and a strong network of external partners, and it identifies global opportunities and commercialises new products quickly. ”

Stephen Flint, Business Manager, TechNZ.

The project aimed to develop better performing fibres and coatings, new shock pads that sit beneath the surface and improved manufacturing techniques. The project is nearing completion and will provide improved playing surfaces and a base construction system that can be installed faster than existing models. Water is no longer needed in large quantities to reduce fibre abrasiveness, particularly on hockey fields.

TigerTurf, committed to replicating a product that had the feel and look of natural grass, wanted a synthetic surface that could absorb the impact of a rugby player landing awkwardly from a lineout and protect players from abrasions when they hit the ground, but offered enough resistance for players to sprint, step and swerve as they do on a natural surface.

The popularity of synthetic surfaces over grass has grown because they are resilient, suitable for all weather play, low maintenance and suitable in regions of severe water shortage and where park maintenance knowledge is lacking.

A key driver for TigerTurf's latest research is entry into the international football market and plans by football ruling body FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association) to install synthetic pitches in each of its 53 African member nations and to play future World Cups on synthetic turfs.

TigerTurf has established product testing capabilities at its custom-designed research facility in the UK where products are tested to meet FIFA, Federation of International Hockey (FIH) and other sporting body

regulations. Each new product is tested for ball roll, speed, bounce and aspects such as friction on players' bodies during the game and whenever they fall.

The Achievements

TigerTurf achieved annual growth of 40 per cent during the past three years, each year committing more money to its ongoing R&D.

New products and techniques helped TigerTurf become a major player in football markets, and it now offers a range of 15 products tested and approved by FIFA.

Turnover has doubled since 2005 through rapid development of its export business, with exports now accounting for more than 80 per cent of the group's revenue. With new products continuing to come on stream, revenues are projected to double over the next five years.

Spin-offs include TigerTurf's ability to build rugby fields. It has already installed a dozen in England and South Africa, and is eyeing opportunities with Gaelic and American football and the Australian AFL code.

Another growth area is landscaping, particularly in American states such as Nevada where homeowners receive state subsidies to lay synthetic lawns and verges and the use of natural grass is prohibited to conserve water.

TigerTurf is investigating methods to incorporate more recycled products into its materials.

www.tigerturfworld.com



Above and previous page: TigerTurf designs, manufactures and installs synthetic sports and landscaping turfs.

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