

**PMAC weekly update 15th to 22nd February**

1. **Government agencies**: Guidance for MAO’s, WTO Notifications
2. **New Zealand News:**  RMA reform: New laws combating housing crisis won't come at expense of farmers - Agriculture Minister, Parties concerned hope that changed Auckland border will improve produce supply, Zespri accused of attempting to intimidate Kiwifruit NZ over China deal, Equity fund raises $69 million for SunGold kiwifruit, Just 54 people have signed up for government's scheme to address fruit picking labour shortage, Ngati Hine training uri to run kiwifruit orchards, Land prices and compliance put pressure on small New Zealand farms, 2021 new onion crop now shipping to ‘normal destinations’, Pact Group acquires New Zealand’s only packaging manufacturer with integrated PET recycling capability, NZ Plant Producers acknowledges and thanks Carol Fraser, ToBRFV introduction prevented in New Zealand
3. **International news:** GAIN reports; 7 European countries team up to propel Nutri-Score rollout, Vietnam approval of new Australian biosecurity facility bears fruit for growers, COVID-19 Update: USDA, confirms no transfer of Covid on food or food packaging, German govt approves legislation to ban glyphosate starting 2024, BBC launches 8-part series on future of food & agriculture, Lunar New Year sales sluggish due to Covid-19, China: More cold-chain products required to present trace records; Perfect storm" for the logistics sector; Cargo congestion swamps Europe's airports, A.P. Moller - Maersk will operate the world’s first carbon neutral liner vessel by 2023, Shanghai Pudong Airport handling 40% more international cargo during Chinese New Year rush, Could this system make transporting goods between the EU and UK less complicated?, Clean eating: good news from a recent USDA survey; International series ‘Plants for Life, Plants to survive’, An apple a day may keep Alzheimer’s disease away; Blueberries may reduce age-related diseases; Study on use of microalgae as clean source of hydrogen production; Robot pickers could also work during night time", Photosynthesis measured from space, Scientists unlock potential to yield “diet” fruit

**Comment**

Due to a busy couple of weeks there will be no comments about articles in the weekly update for the next two weeks.

1. **Agency news** 
   1. **Guidance for MAO’s**

The MPI Certification Standard: Organisation Requirements were updated and released last year/

To assist MAOs with the updated requirements, MPI has published a guidance document on conflict of interest management. This guidance document includes a Conflicts of Interest Register template.

[Guidance for MPI Approved Organisations (MAOs) – Conflicts of Interest](https://www.mpi.govt.nz/dmsdocument/44038)

* 1. **WTO Notifications**

Please find attached the most recent WTO notifications from countries that are considering changes to their plant import requirements for specific products. If you have any concerns about the notifications being presented please contact [Plant.exports@mpi.govt.nz](mailto:Plant.exports@mpi.govt.nz) so that they can potentially make a submission to the notifying country. Changes notified over the last week include:

* Australia new emergency requirements to prevent the import of Khapra beetle on seed
* Canada MRLs

The embedded files for the last week (which has links through to the original notifications)is available here 



1. **New Zealand News**

** Commentary**

* 1. **RMA reform: New laws combating housing crisis won't come at expense of farmers - Agriculture Minister**

The Agriculture Minister says farmers have no need to be worried, with changes to the Resource Management Act on the way. Earlier this month [the Government announced the Act would be torn in three](https://www.newshub.co.nz/home/politics/2021/02/rma-reform-environment-minister-david-parker-won-t-commit-to-keeping-ability-to-block-consents.html) and replaced by the Natural and Built Environments Act, the Strategic Planning Act and the Climate Change Adaptation Act.

[It's hoped the changes will help combat the country's housing crisis](https://www.newshub.co.nz/home/politics/2021/02/rma-reform-and-housing-crisis-how-the-government-plans-to-fix-a-law-that-is-not-working.html), but there are concerns the changes could negatively impact the farming sector and those living in rural parts of the country.

Karen Williams, Federated Farmers spokesperson for the Resource Management Act, says while the current legislation is overdue, she is worried by the speed and scale of the proposed changes.

A draft of the Natural and Built Environments Act will be referred to a select committee in the middle of this year. But Williams says this does not give communities enough time to "absorb, consider and submit on the contents of the Bill".

"As we all know from our regional or district plans around the country they're complex and they're interrelated and there's trade-offs and there's pros and cons to different approaches. So all those things need to explored in the context of what we do in our business world what our aspirations are in terms of our environment, our future generations, our social impacts, employment and jobs and wellbeing, and those are difficult conversations that can't be hurried, otherwise, we can have the consequences of something poorly drafted and we're no further ahead, we're no better off," she said.

"We need a flexible, robust system that enables progression and cares for the things that are important to us, and that includes our environment," she said.

"

Agriculture Minister Damien O'Connor said farmers had no need to fear they would be adversely affected by the changes. "There's quite a process to go through and I think we have to make sure that the aspects of rural living, the aspects of farming and land management from our perspective are considered. He said although the new legislation would split the RMA up, there would still be a crossover between land utilisation and housing regulations. [Full article available here](https://www.newshub.co.nz/home/rural/2021/02/rma-reform-new-laws-combating-housing-crisis-won-t-come-at-expense-of-farmers-agriculture-minister.html)



* 1. **Parties concerned hope that changed Auckland border will improve produce supply**

Ruth Fairhall, Ministry of Primary Industries spokesperson, has stated that the Auckland boundary – that split the larger Pukekohe growing area in two Last August- had been slightly extended south to accommodate major growing and farming areas. According to Fairhall, this should ease some of the problems caused by the divide last year.

Horticulture New Zealand's chief executive Mike Chapman said the new borders showed some lessons were hopefully learned from the last lockdown. He added that it would take some time to test if the new border would work but there were some improvements in the new system, like a QR code process he hoped would simplify and speed up travel across the zones .He was glad local fruit and vegetable shops would stay running under level 3. "For the Auckland area the independent fruit and vegetable retailers will be open which is absolutely fantastic as six percent of the vegetable and fruit produce that gets to the Auckland people comes from independent fruit and vegetable retailers and markets," Chapman told [rnz.co.nz.](https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/covid-19/436512/covid-19-hopes-changed-auckland-border-will-improve-produce-supply) [Full article available here](https://www.freshplaza.com/article/9294321/parties-concerned-hope-that-changed-auckland-border-will-improve-produce-supply/?edition=5)

* 1. **Zespri accused of attempting to intimidate Kiwifruit NZ over China deal**

Kiwifruit NZ chairwoman Kristy McDonald​, QC, has claimed that Zespri chairman Bruce Cameron​ attempted to "browbeat and intimidate” industry regulator Kiwifruit NZ into "rubber-stamping" a contentious business deal in China. The allegedly offensive and threatening phone call was documented by Ms McDonald in a November letter.

“What unfolded in your call to me was a series of threats, demands and accusations. I will say little more about your outburst as I suspect it was a reflection of poorly controlled emotion.” McDonald said it appeared Cameron and Zespri chief executive Dan Mathieson​ had since early in 2020 provided “misleading” advice that it would not seek to begin the China project until late-2021.T he company, on October 28, submitted a proposal that included supply agreements as early as November or December 2020, she said. “Your comments that this is urgent, must be approved by Christmas and that we should not (you said ”must not”) use external expert advisers is remarkable,” McDonald wrote.

In a response to media coverage of the incident Zespri Chairman Bruce Cameron said, “The letter was written following a discussion in November about the process we were going through as we sought regulatory approval to allow us to act on the plantings. I reject the way the conversation has been characterised but acknowledge the concerns raised by the Chair of KNZ. Zespri respects the critical role the regulator KNZ plays in the industry. “We do need to have an effective working relationship with KNZ. This situation demonstrates we have not yet achieved that but we will continue to strive to do so.

Zespri has been working through the regulatory process with KNZ over many months to allow us to act as fast as possible to try and limit any further increase in the scale of the plantings, while following the proper regulatory process. Zespri wants to trial the commercial arrangement with Chinese growers in the hope of commercialising some of an estimated 4000 ha of unlicensed SunGold kiwifruit being grown in China. The three-year trial has been touted both as a “win-win” for both Zespri and Chinese growers, and necessary to encourage the Chinese Government to enforce Zespri’s rights over the SunGold product. [Full article available here](https://www.freshplaza.com/article/9294119/zespri-accused-of-attempting-to-intimidate-kiwifruit-nz-over-china-deal/?edition=5)

* 1. **Equity fund raises $69 million for SunGold kiwifruit**

The purchase of three Gisborne properties as part of a new private equity fund’s multimillion investment into SunGold kiwifruit has been hailed as a “really good” boost for jobs and the entire industry here.

The private equity fund, established by Origin Capital Partners — which comprises of Paul Jones (Zespri deputy chair), Lain Jager (ex-Zespri chief executive), Craig Greenlees (ex-Zespri chair) and Dominic Jones (ex-banker) —invests exclusively in SunGold kiwifruit orchards.

Origin Capital Partners managing director Dominic Jones said after a successful first-close, a total of $69 million had been raised. Through use of debt, the fund has approximately $135m available to invest over the next three years. However, that fund could grow to as much as $100m, Mr Jones said. A second round is already under way. We have secured four properties, of which three are in Gisborne. That’s not really by design and that ratio will not remain three-quarters Gisborne as other opportunities come up.” [Full article available here](https://www.freshplaza.com/article/9295142/equity-fund-raises-69-million-for-sungold-kiwifruit/?edition=5)

* 1. **Just 54 people have signed up for scheme to address fruit picking labour shortage**

An incentive scheme for unemployed people to fill the enormous gap in the fruit picking sector has been taken up by just 54 people since launching late last year. The New Zealand Seasonal Work Scheme, which offered up to $200 a week for accommodation costs and a $1000 incentive payment for workers who completed jobs of six weeks or longer, was announced i in late November.

The scheme was available to anyone who moved off a benefit and was aimed at addressing the labour shortage in the horticulture and wine-growing industries. *Students are not covered by the scheme*. The impact of the labour shortage was of great concern to horticultural regions and orchardists have been very [vocal about the potential losses if workers cannot be found for picking season](https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/124091594/the-apple-crop-is-outstanding-but-will-there-be-enough-workers-to-pick-them), which starts about now.

Last month Hawke’s Bay orchard owner Paul Paynter​ told Stuff he was [“terrified” for the upcoming apple season](https://www.stuff.co.nz/dominion-post/news/hawkes-bay/123890453/orchard-owner-terrified-for-upcoming-apple-season-predicts-100m-loss-for-hawkes-bay) and predicted the region would lose close to $100 million .Paynter said the region needed at least “10,000 people to magic out of nowhere” in order for a successful apple season.

The Ministry’s group general manager employment, Jayne Russell, said it was too early to consider how successful the scheme was. [Full article available here](https://www.stuff.co.nz/business/124194782/just-54-people-have-signed-up-for-governments-scheme-to-address-fruitpicking-labour-shortage)

* 1. **Ngati Hine training uri to run kiwifruit orchards**

Ngā Ngāhere o Ngāti Hine is looking at increasing iwi employment numbers through a new kiwifruit enterprise, chief executive Huhana Lyndon said t at the launch of a new orchard in Waipapa.  This is the sixth Kiwifruit orchard bought by Ngā Ngahere o Ngāti Hine in the Kerikeri area, increasing the iwi landholding to 40,000 ha and increasing iwi employment numbers.

The tribe is working in collaboration with Seeka to upskill the Ngāti Hine workforce in horticulture, particularly the cultivation of kiwifruit with the aim of securing qualifications and future employment.

Over the next fortnight, more than 60 of the Ngāti Hine workforce will start their mahi. [Full article available here](https://www.teaomaori.news/ngati-hine-training-uri-run-kiwifruit-orchards)

* 1. **Land prices and compliance put pressure on small New Zealand farms**

Originally, horticulture used to be dominated by small growing operations. Now, a more limited number of growers increasingly control the market. *This article discussed how smaller growers have ben forced out of growing* by bigger, more high-tech operators *and the demand for land for housing* . [Full article available here](https://www.freshplaza.com/article/9294265/land-prices-and-compliance-put-pressure-on-small-new-zealand-farms/?edition=5)

* 1. **2021 new onion crop now shipping to ‘normal destinations’**

Mike Blake with New Zealand Onion Co. *provides an update on the start of the season. His business send product to* Spain, United Kingdom, Germany, Holland and Indonesia. I would describe the market to be somewhat hesitant for commitments due to the global uncertainty.”

He continued, “It is obvious that overseas markets want to go as long as possible on domestic supplies, which puts the uncertainty into the market as to when the window will be for Southern Hemisphere suppliers.” He said the change back to domestic sources for those markets “will be controlled by the spring weather in the Northern Hemisphere, which is somewhat uncertain at this time.”

Quality, he said, “generally can be described as excellent, hard and clean and with many skins and without any internal issues, so we are expecting a good storage crop.” Mike said he does not expect a surplus of onions sized less than 70 mm. [Full article available here](https://onionbusiness.com/new-zealand-2021-new-crop-now-shipping-to-normal-destinations/)

** Bits and pieces**

* 1. **Pact Group acquires NZ’s only packaging manufacturer with integrated PET recycling capability**

Pact Group has completed the acquisition of Flight Plastics, a leading provider of packaging for the fresh food segment and New Zealand’s only packaging manufacturer with integrated PET recycling capability. The acquisition will complement and enhance Pact’s leading capability in recycling in Australia and New Zealand and enables the Company to provide customers packaging containing food grade recycled content which supports the New Zealand local circular economy. Flight has capability to process more than 5,000 tonnes of recycled PET.

We are investing across our platform to develop the recycling capability our customers will need to deliver their 2025 sustainability commitments. Our target is 30% recycled content across our portfolio, which means we will need more than 60,000 tonnes of recycling capacity by 2025.[Full article available here](https://www.freshplaza.com/article/9293782/pact-group-acquires-new-zealand-s-only-packaging-manufacturer-with-integrated-pet-recycling-capability/?edition=5)

* 1. **NZ Plant Producers acknowledges and thanks Carol Fraser**

Carol Fraser, NZ Plant Producers’ ninth Honorary Life Member, passed away at home last week.

NZPPI acknowledges the profound contribution Carol made to the plant production industry, as a nursery owner, as a trainer and mentor of young growers, and for her selfless involvement with industry groups. [Full article available here](https://www.floraldaily.com/article/9294767/nz-plant-producers-acknowledges-and-thanks-carol-fraser/)

 **Biosecurity**

* 1. **ToBRFV introduction prevented in New Zealand**

Early detection of an unwanted virus – the Tomato brown rugose fruit virus (ToBRFV) – in a small tomato seed lot has allowed quick action to be taken to contain and prevent it taking hold in New Zealand. All the seeds and resulting plants and plant material have been destroyed.

*This article describes the steps taken to ensure that ToBRFV did not establish in NZ* [Full article available here](https://www.hortidaily.com/article/9294642/tobrfv-introduction-prevented-in-new-zealand/)



1. **International news**

**Comment**

* 1. **GAIN reports**

Gain reports are from the “Global Agricultural Information Network” and are produced by the USDA. They are designed to provide timely information on the economy, products and issues in foreign countries that are likely to have an impact on United States agricultural production and trade. The information in them is written for USA exporters but the majority is equally relevant to New Zealand. With regard to import regulations for a particular market New Zealand exporters should first check the countries ICPR on MPI’s web site. These are collated specifically for New Zealand product. However the Gain reports often provide additional information that is useful e.g. on grading and labelling, economic profiles. To see the full report click on the link in each notification This week see:

1. **Sri Lanka Export Certificate Report** [FAIRS Export Certificate Report Annual\_Colombo\_Sri Lanka\_12-31-2020](https://apps.fas.usda.gov/newgainapi/api/Report/DownloadReportByFileName?fileName=FAIRS%20Export%20Certificate%20Report%20Annual_Colombo_Sri%20Lanka_12-31-2020)
2. **Sri Lanka Country Report** [FAIRS Annual Country Report Annual\_Colombo\_Sri Lanka\_12-31-2020](https://apps.fas.usda.gov/newgainapi/api/Report/DownloadReportByFileName?fileName=FAIRS%20Annual%20Country%20Report%20Annual_Colombo_Sri%20Lanka_12-31-2020)

 **Regulatory**

* 1. **[7 European countries team up to propel Nutri-Score rollout](https://www.foodnavigator.com/Article/2021/02/12/7-European-countries-team-up-to-propel-Nutri-Score-rollout)**

Nutri-Score (developed in France ) is a Translational Coordination Mechanism promoting front-of-pack nutrition label that has been set up in Europe with 7 countries pledged to support it. Nutri-Score ranks food from the ‘healthiest’ with a -15 score to the ‘less healthy’ with a +50 score, and grades the product with a corresponding code from dark green (A) to dark red (F). [Full article available here](https://www.foodnavigator.com/Article/2021/02/12/7-European-countries-team-up-to-propel-Nutri-Score-rollout)

* 1. **Vietnam approval of new Australian biosecurity facility bears fruit for growers**

Australian horticultural exporters to Vietnam now have access to two onshore irradiation facilities which will increase speed to market and decrease export freight costs for farmers in southern growing regions. In some cases, Australian fruit will be arriving in Vietnam just 72hrs after picking.

“Vietnam already receives produce from the Brisbane treatment facility and Australian farmers have exported over 10,000 tonnes of premium fresh produce to Vietnam through the Brisbane facility since its approval in 2016. “Approval to receive produce from Melbourne opens up more market access opportunities for growers in a key emerging market. [Full article available here](https://www.freshplaza.com/article/9294271/vietnam-approval-of-new-australian-biosecurity-facility-bears-fruit-for-growers/?edition=5)

* 1. **COVID-19 Update: USDA, confirms no transfer of Covid on food or food packaging**

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| *In a form email circulated by the USDA the following information was provided* The U.S. Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention continue to underscore that there is no credible evidence of food or food packaging associated with or as a likely source of viral transmission of severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), the virus causing COVID-19.  It’s particularly important to note that COVID-19 is a respiratory illness that is spread from person to person, unlike foodborne or gastrointestinal viruses, such as norovirus and hepatitis A that often make people ill through contaminated food. While there are relatively few reports of the virus being detected on food and packaging, most studies focus primarily on the detection of the virus’ genetic fingerprint rather than evidence of transmission of virus resulting in human infection. Given that the number of virus particles that could be theoretically picked up by touching a surface would be very small and the amount needed for infection via oral inhalation would be very high, the chances of infection by touching the surface of food packaging or eating food is considered to be extremely low.  The USDA and the FDA are sharing this update based upon the best available information from scientific bodies across the globe, including a continued international consensus that the risk is exceedingly low for transmission of SARS-CoV-2 to humans via food and food packaging. For example, a recent opinion from the [International Commission on Microbiological Specifications for Foods (ICMSF)](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001h-n-RyoTDgP2P1IWmlbNKLBhEpXShuKjAybka6Ti3zVy-hhOwmtqzfmD_hpxfepc4czU0hgSAAYVWm5LLhE5UZ3ED06SEVRaBgaLSmCedxpj12C03QYdFqjw1yeYx-PLqk-mjkIpktNa4lvpGhrRDgOhU3ST63mzYmEPNM20kRUE3ETkXYQUFudRGkV-OdPvBfvYWDkB84acE_Eiw1VJtxqjVnbgaaWdgxxAk8tgxcEUf72AU-7GaEkKDpAwfmrl3gadUA3DnuDCmeQQyTUzlw==&c=wnvJPMSZ82S_vB339HUvEGtTRt83h9UhdDy4UmdJb6-pU_lRps99dA==&ch=O2K6iCC332_UT6YfWEQdj0sHqZnr8GLMrEyfEqKzaYx7NIc-kORgsw==) (PDF, 352 KB), stated: “Despite the billions of meals and food packages handled since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, to date there has not been any evidence that food, food packaging or food handling is a source or important transmission route for SARS-CoV-2 resulting in COVID-19.” Additional [literature reviews](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001h-n-RyoTDgP2P1IWmlbNKLBhEpXShuKjAybka6Ti3zVy-hhOwmtqzfmD_hpxfepcMOElR6e77QnSDVgDMjLLIng6xPw93wOH63TUjik2ApNw6ap0Sti0NSBhTz7FaeHeU_fYwY_YPYfhkp-NejjYQQ==&c=wnvJPMSZ82S_vB339HUvEGtTRt83h9UhdDy4UmdJb6-pU_lRps99dA==&ch=O2K6iCC332_UT6YfWEQdj0sHqZnr8GLMrEyfEqKzaYx7NIc-kORgsw==) and [analyses](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001h-n-RyoTDgP2P1IWmlbNKLBhEpXShuKjAybka6Ti3zVy-hhOwmtqzfmD_hpxfepcRu-2j0jvBDQLvvbayKRwK8Ym5rItruK8d5FmZyErO6tqnNn9XNkDGUvdGNXzx4znfpI83Rl6HH5J6F1jzYaZtPHvXKcMksGktUMVxzdlU0Cx7YjMvJQq-t57t-vgo7QhHivvBIwu2OhNBr7WuVohWY3CDULtFvIagQEcf8i38X1MIiAUAF0YfnkH9I_6lqITVXC5yrsYPa1uXKyclX2mfm3IDBR3Wkhqd3VX-Vn0BvOTON7yZ2mpAILo0G12b2MIP0NMe1b_Mrw0MT4XZLxM3w==&c=wnvJPMSZ82S_vB339HUvEGtTRt83h9UhdDy4UmdJb6-pU_lRps99dA==&ch=O2K6iCC332_UT6YfWEQdj0sHqZnr8GLMrEyfEqKzaYx7NIc-kORgsw==) from other countries agree.  In addition, considering the more than 100 million cases of COVID-19, we have not seen epidemiological evidence of food or food packaging as the source of SARS-CoV-2 transmission to humans. Furthermore, transmission has not been attributed to food products or packaging through national and international surveillance systems. Food business operations continue to produce a steady supply of safe food following current Good Manufacturing Practices and preventive controls, focusing on good hygiene practices and keeping workers safe.  *Two weeks ago the following information from NZ was included in this update* The New Zealand Food Safety Science and Research Centre (FSSRC) has produced a further literature review update on the potential relationship between foodborne transmissions and SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19). [**Click here**](https://hortnz.us14.list-manage.com/track/click?u=aecda7aaa04d433b3c1267c8e&id=dd0187dcfa&e=2b699d0a67) to read the full report. |

* 1. **German govt approves legislation to ban glyphosate starting 2024**

German growers will have to gradually reduce their use of glyphosate and stop using it completely, starting 2024 in order to preserve clean habitats for insects. Growers have criticised the planned law, saying it puts the livelihoods of family-run farms at risk and that bans would be less effective in fostering biodiversity than cooperation between farmers and conservationists.

Under the draft German legislation, the use of herbicides and insecticides that could harm bees will be banned from certain areas. In addition, new installations of certain types of lights will be forbidden to reduce light pollution. [Full article available here](https://www.hortidaily.com/article/9294230/german-govt-approves-legislation-to-ban-glyphosate-starting-2024/)

* 1. **BBC launches 8-part series on future of food & agriculture**

In a new eight-part multi-platform series called Follow the Food, sponsored by Corteva Agriscience, BBC World News, and BBC.com explore the stories behind feeding the world’s ever-growing population. Presented by renowned Botanist James Wong, the series will examine how farming, science, AI technology, and the consumer can overcome this challenge, while also asking whether the ag industry can do so in a way that doesn’t harm the planet. From a transformative water conservation project in India to the scientists breeding super plants in California, Follow the Food takes audiences on a journey from [farm to fork.](https://www.agdaily.com/insights/bbc-launches-8-part-series-future-food-agriculture/)

 **Business/ Industry**

* 1. **Lunar New Year sales sluggish due to Covid-19**

Fresh fruit sales across South-East Asia down during important period, as concerns regarding counterfeit products remain. An outbreak of the highly contagious UK variant of Covid-19 in Vietnam’s Hai Duong province on 28 January decimated fresh fruit sales on the eve of Tet (Lunar New Year), according to leading market sources.

The response from the Vietnamese government was fast, but the damage had already been done. A further 483 new cases have been confirmed in more than 10 Vietnamese provinces and cities, including Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh, since the first case was reported.  “The fresh fruit demand for the whole market is believed to have reduced by 30 per cent, and up to 50 per cent in some cases.

“In general, over the last 10 days (1-11 February 2021), the prices of imported fresh fruit of all kinds have dropped dramatically, especially Chilean cherries. ”New Zealand cherries appear to have been hit the hardest, according to Nguyen. “This is a very hard year for New Zealand cherries. Excessive rainfall over a longer period just before harvest saw yields drop from 30 per cent to 60 per cent, and prices for the remaining cherries increased by up to 30 to 40 per cent above the annual export prices,” he explained.

“Cherries from New Zealand are considered to be the best quality, with large fruit sizes that are firm and juicy. The Vietnamese market believes New Zealand cherries are premium cherries that have superior qualities to fruit from Australia and Chile, and as such, are usually double the price of Australian premium cherries.”

Speaking of Chilean cherries, 2021 marks the arrival of the fruit in Vietnam, after [Chile gained market access in October 2020](http://www.fruitnet.com/asiafruit/article/183311/vietnam-opens-for-chilean-cherries). Backed by an [ambitious marketing campaign](http://www.fruitnet.com/asiafruit/article/183646/chile-unveils-inaugural-cherry-promotion-in-vietnam), Nguyen said the quality of the fruit has varied so far .“Although the real quality upon arrival is only average because the fruit is soft and sometimes have yellow stems, the Chilean cherries have a relatively cheaper price, and so big volumes have been sold.” The lower price has seen an increase in counterfeit products, according to Nguyen.

“On the market, many stores have printed fake boxes of New Zealand cherries and Tasmanian cherries, and they replace the fruit with Chilean cherries in order to trick consumers, so they can sell it at twice the price,” he explained.

***In Thailand,*** managing director for importer and retailer Vachamon Food, Wipavee Watcharakorn, remarked that sales have been low during the Lunar New Year celebrations.“Overall, sales are not high as Covid-19 has impacted our economy, and consumers have a much smaller budget this year,” she noted.

***In Malaysia***, a second lockdown due to an increase in Covid-19 cases has impacted sales considerably. The movement control order currently in place to stop the further spread of the virus has seen sales fall compared to last year. “Import volume has also decreased substantially and therefore there is no oversupply in the market as all importers have been relatively cautious due to the foreseeable slowdown in sales,” [Full article available here](http://www.fruitnet.com/asiafruit/article/184318/lunar-new-year-sales-sluggish-due-to-covid-19)

 **China**

* 1. **China: More cold-chain products required to present trace records**

Recently, Beijing implemented a regulation determining that all imported frozen food at or below zero degrees Celsius must have full logistic information. It went into full effect last Friday. The city had already requested that imported cold-chain meat and seafood be trace, but now all imported cold-chain food at or under zero degrees Celsius have been included. The new rules will be applied to more frozen products, including grain products, dairy, vegetables, fruit, desserts, and beverages.

On Friday, QR codes were set next to imported frozen products in supermarkets – from durians to ice creams – allowing buyers to track the logistic history, Beijing News reported. By scanning the code via WeChat, buyers can access the items' origin, date of production, import check certificate, and the result of the nucleic acid test. [Full article available here](China:%20More%20cold-chain%20products%20required%20to%20present%20trace%20records)

From February 12, data on the Beijing Cold Chain Food Traceability Platform will be expanded from imported refrigerated and frozen meats and aquatic products to all imported foods stored below or at zero degrees Celsius. In the Hema Fresh supermarkets, consumers can use WeChat to scan the tracking code and check the safety and traceability information of the product, the entry inspection and quarantine certificates, Covid test results, and disinfection certificates.

During the Spring Festival, consumers have a strong demand for imported seafood and meats. In order to reduce direct contact with the products, the supermarkets offer disposable gloves for customers to use when selecting products. Although imported fruits such as cherries were not included this time, the supermarkets will make the entry inspection and quarantine certificates and Covid test reports public. [Full article available here](https://www.freshplaza.com/article/9294935/beijing-making-all-imported-foods-stored-below-or-at-0-traceable/?edition=5)

[](http://upload.evocdn.co.uk/fruitnet/uploads/asset_image/2_1216358_e.jpg) **Freight**

* 1. **Perfect storm" for the logistics sector**

FreshPlaza talked about the current situation in the international logistic sector with Linda Carobbi, Corporate Director Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Vertical Market at Savino Del Bene S.p.A., a global logistic and shipping company.. *This article contains a lot of information* In short

The pandemic continues to affect international maritime logistics. Over the last three months of 2020, China has gone back to standard production levels and, with America and Europe continuing working from home, demand for so-called 'stay-at-home' products, which are mostly made in Asia, gradually increased. Carriers, however, have not returned to pre-Covid hold capacity levels.

The huge hold demand for Transpacific trade (i.e. from the Far East to the US West Coast) continues to push carriers to prioritize placing empty containers in the Far East to benefit from the incredibly high market rates. This has led to a lack of empty containers in other parts of the world.

North America is also experiencing difficulties at the moment. The huge volumes arriving to American ports have had an impact also on the productivity and efficiency of the ports themselves. Various ports in North America started experiencing heavy congestion. – *compounding the problems with containers*.

There is difficulty in maintaining regular ship schedules on a global level. Recently, some carriers have announced they are not taking new bookings for Canada and Mexico at existing rates, meaning "spot" rates must be requested for each booking. Other carriers are not accepting loads for Colombo in Sri Lanka or have no availability for 2-3 weeks.

Sea freight costshave increased all over the world: many observers predicted the situation would continue until the Chinese New Year's Eve. For example sea fright between Shanghai and Rotterdam skyrocketed by over 220%. Congestion Surcharges or Equipment Imbalance Surcharges amounting to hundreds of Euros are frequently applied overnight.

In the medium term analysts forecast a re-balance of the current trend after the Chinese New Year's Eve. If carriers choose to not reposition empty containers in Asia quickly and will not start building new boxes, the current situation may continue well beyond February. [Full article available here](https://www.freshplaza.com/article/9293634/perfect-storm-for-the-logistics-sector/?edition=5)

* 1. **Cargo congestion swamps Europe's airports**

Forwarders and other stakeholders are being urged to help stem the chaos at airports, as multiple hubs and handlers across western Europe face severe congestion, with no sign of flows easing despite China’s holiday. Cargo flows continue to be high – but also unpredictable – and handlers say they expect volumes to continue throughout the Chinese new year break. [Full article available here](https://www.floraldaily.com/article/9294188/cargo-congestion-swamps-europe-s-airports/)

* 1. **A.P. Moller - Maersk will operate the world’s first carbon neutral liner vessel by 2023**

Fast-tracked by advances in technology and increasing customer demand for sustainable supply chains, A.P. Moller - Maersk accelerates the efforts to decarbonise marine operations with the launch of the world’s first carbon neutral liner vessel in 2023 - seven years ahead of the initial 2030-ambition. Their ambition to have a carbon neutral fleet by 2050 is seen as a challenging, yet achievable target to reach,”.  
  
Around half of Maersk’s 200 largest customers have set – or are in the process of setting – ambitious science-based or zero carbon targets for their supply chains, and the figure is on the rise.

Maersk’s methanol feeder vessel will have a capacity of around 2000 TEU and be deployed in one of its intra-regional networks. While the vessel will be able to operate on standard VLSFO, the plan is to operate the vessel on carbon neutral e-methanol or sustainable bio-methanol from day one. “It will be a significant challenge to source an adequate supply of carbon neutral methanol within our timeline to pioneer this technology. Our success relies on customers embracing this ground breaking product and strengthened collaboration with fuel manufacturers, technology partners and developers to ramp up production fast enough. [Full article available here](https://www.freshplaza.com/article/9294681/a-p-moller-maersk-will-operate-the-world-s-first-carbon-neutral-liner-vessel-by-2023/?edition=5)

* 1. **Shanghai Pudong Airport handling 40% more international cargo during Chinese New Year rush**

Driven by the strong demand for air transportation during the Spring Festival rush, since January 28, Pudong Airport has been operating at a high level of cargo flights and volume, ensuring a daily average of 284 all-cargo flights, flights converted from passenger flights to cargo flights, and temporary cargo charter flights. As of February 7, the peak flight number per day reached 314, and the volume of inbound and outbound cargo increased by nearly 40% year-on-year.

During the rush period this year, the prevention of Covid-19 and safety are the top priority. To this end, more than 60 companies operating in the cargo area of ​​Pudong Airport are carrying out at least two rounds of thorough disinfection of all incoming goods, and all operators are subject to health management. The health information of all employees is connected to the "Healthy Airport" big data mobile app so personal health information can be updated and managed online.

Recently, Shanghai Pudong Airport has put into use two temporary centralized disinfection areas of more than 12,000 square meters. Two more areas with over 13,000 square meters will also be completed and put into use. [Full article available here](https://www.freshplaza.com/article/9294483/shanghai-pudong-airport-handling-40-more-international-cargo-during-chinese-new-year-rush/?edition=5)

* 1. **Could this system make transporting goods between the EU and UK less complicated?**

TIR, which stands for Transports Internationaux Routiers (International Road Transport), is the only global transit system. The TIR system is currently used in 64 countries, with more set to join. The core principle of TIR is to allow goods to be transported around the world quickly and securely, transiting through countries without having to undergo cumbersome checks at border points.

TIR provides a customs guarantee so that goods can cross international borders and pass through transit countries without paying duties and taxes at each border. Under TIR, at least one part of the journey must be completed by road, but other transport modes can be used as part of a multimodal operation. The TIR system is centrally managed by the International Road Transport Union (IRU) in Geneva, Switzerland.

Loads will of course still have to have all the necessary phytosanitary certificates and export declarations; the real advantages are that they are not stopped at borders, which can be very time consuming, and do not have to complete any supplementary customs procedure. Dover also has a special green lane for TIR transport. [Full article available here](https://www.freshplaza.com/article/9294827/could-this-system-make-transporting-goods-between-the-eu-and-uk-less-complicated/?edition=5)

 **Food safety**

* 1. **Clean eating: good news from a recent USDA survey**

In late October, USDA’s Agricultural Marketing Service released its 2019 Pesticide Data Program summary. The PDP is an ongoing program wherein USDA conducts tests of common commodities to determine to what extent that food may expose a consumer to pesticides. The PDP is a source of high-quality data that represents a national snapshot of the safety of our food supply. And once again, we learned some very good news.

For calendar year 2019, nearly 99% of the commodities tested in the PDP survey had residues below the allowable EPA tolerances for those substances. That means that 99% of the food examined by USDA has either no pesticide residue or had minimal levels of residue that fell well within or below the EPA’s tolerance levels. Only 1.25% of the samples tested had residue levels exceeding the tolerance. About 45.2% of the samples had no detectable residue at all. [Full article available here](https://www.hortidaily.com/article/9295126/clean-eating-good-news-from-a-recent-usda-survey/)



* 1. **International series ‘Plants for Life, Plants to survive’**

To mark the Year of Plant Health, Koppert Biological Systems initiated the webinar series ‘Plants for Life, Plants to survive’ in December last year to highlight the importance of plant health and how it is linked to human health. In this inspiring series, keynote speakers shine their light on various aspects of plant and human health, and discuss their viewpoints with an online audience of young professionals, scientists, entrepreneurs, activists, creatives, chefs and government reps; in short anyone with a passion for plants and people.

This webinar series is facilitated by a horticultural webinar organizer, Jungle Talks. If you wish to join this session on March 2, please register via this [link.](https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/8850058565441507856) Did you miss the previous sessions? Watch the recordings here: <https://bit.ly/RECPlantsforlifesession1> and [https://bit.ly/RECPlantsforLifesession2.](https://bit.ly/RECPlantsforLifesession2)

[Full article available here](https://www.hortidaily.com/article/9294582/international-series-plants-for-life-plants-to-survive/)

  **Health**

* 1. **An apple a day may keep Alzheimer’s disease away**

‘An apple a day’ might keep dementia at bay. According to an international study the fruit is rich in chemicals that fuel neurons, improving learning and memory. Recent experiments on natural compounds found in apples and other fruits may help to stimulate the production of new brain cells, which could have implications for learning and memory, according to a new study by researchers at the University of Queensland, and the German Center for Neurodegenerative Diseases. [Full article available here](https://www.freshplaza.com/article/9293759/an-apple-a-day-may-keep-alzheimer-s-disease-away/?edition=5)

* 1. **Blueberries may reduce age-related diseases**

It has been shown that after supplementation with blueberry extract, lab animals lived an average of 28 percent longer, and the maximum life span increased by 14 percent. The supplemented animals showed a 20 percent reduction in an age-related protein that impairs function, and vastly improved tolerance of stress in their environment. [Full article available here](https://www.freshplaza.com/article/9295118/blueberries-may-reduce-age-related-diseases/?edition=5)

 **Innovation**

* 1. **Study on use of microalgae as clean source of hydrogen production**

Researchers show the greenhouse gas emissions of hydrogen production using RFV on microalgae is 36% less compared to the steam reforming of methane gas—the current best practice for hydrogen production. With additional renewable energy processes, such as hydro-electricity, integrated with the researchers' hydrogen production process, carbon emissions could drop by as much as 87%.

The research, published in the Journal of Cleaner Production, also shows that with the prevailing cost of hydrogen at $10 per kilo, and using RFV to produce the gas, the payback period of initial investment was just 3.78 years with a 22% internal rate of return.

Currently, the production of microalgae does not meet commercial demand. However, microalgae cultivation for energy applications could also provide additional revenue streams for rural communities, potentially making them self-sufficient, researchers say. [Full article available here](https://www.verticalfarmdaily.com/article/9294330/study-on-use-of-microalgae-as-clean-source-of-hydrogen-production/)

* 1. **Robot pickers could also work during night time"**

One example in this article states skilled humans can pick a cucumber every 3-4 seconds, compared with 10 seconds per fruit t for a robots. *But robots can work for 16 hours a day or more. And potentially slowly through the night*. [Full article available here](https://www.hortidaily.com/article/9294654/robot-pickers-could-also-work-during-night-time/)

* 1. **Photosynthesis measured from space**

Because of their ability to make valuable products from organic compounds like CO2, plants are known as "primary producers." Gross primary production (GPP), which quantifies the rate of CO2 fixation in plants through photosynthesis, is a key metric to track the health and performance of any plant-based ecosystem.

University research has developed a product to accurately measure GPP: the SatelLite Only Photosynthesis Estimation Gross Primary Production (SLOPE GPP) product at a daily time step and field-scale spatial resolution. They say "Quantifying the rate at which plants in a given area process CO2 is critical to a global understanding of carbon cycling, terrestrial land management, and water and soil health -- especially given the erratic conditions of a warming planet,"

"Measuring photosynthesis is especially pertinent to agricultural ecosystems, where plant productivity and biomass levels are directly tied to crop yield and therefore food security. Our research directly applies to not only ecosystem service, but also societal well-being," [Full article available here](https://www.verticalfarmdaily.com/article/9295168/out-of-this-world-photosynthesis-measured-from-space/)

* 1. **Scientists unlock potential to yield “diet” fruit**

A new study has demystified sugar distribution in plants, paving the way to create low sugar or ‘diet’ fruits. The team have identified the indicators that governed how much sugar is transported to the vacuole or ‘storage warehouse’ of a plant cell. “It opens the door to increase or reduce the amount of sugars in plants, helping farmers to increase the quality and yield of fresh products such as fruits and sugar cane or produce low sugar, high sweetness fruit for a diabetic patient.” [Full article available here](https://www.freshplaza.com/article/9295188/scientists-unlock-potential-to-yield-diet-fruit/?edition=5)

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