

**PMAC weekly update 21st to 28th September**

1. **Government agencies**: Country freedom update, WTO and TBT Notifications
2. **New Zealand News:**  Primary sector exports and jobs up again; Two new diplomatic appointments announced; Rockit appoints new CEO; Rockit Global announces key partnership with Indian Suri Agro Fresh; Covid-19: Tourism's loss is agritech's win; Irish agri-tech brings spraying up to speed; New Zealand grants visa extensions; COVID restrictions create problems for NZ's largest strawberry producer; New Zealand job portal Go Horticulture; Biosecurity microcredential short course; Government support for Farm Environment Plans welcomed; Timpack keeps New Zealand supply chain working; Premium herbs delivered to New Zealanders via a new online and delivery service; Breeder of red kiwifruit scoops Innovation Award; Increasing tomato yields in winter - New project in New Zealand; Apples see the light; $4.7 million in funding for SVS from MPI; Countdown unveils contactless shopping and artificial intelligence with new Scan&Go tech; Kiwis want to know what’s in their food;
3. **International news:** GAIN reports; Chile tightens Covid-19 guidelines; ePhyto to facilitate international agricultural trade; Horticulture might guide Kenya's economic rebound from COVID; COVID resurgence in Europe worries Kenyan horti traders; The future is a combination of vertical farming and greenhouse production, Dole harnesses the sun to move closer to their carbon neutral promise; Rapid expansion of blueberry cultivation leads to water use compliance crackdown; Interest in sustainability increases among consumers during pandemic; Antioxidant found in apples and grape seeds to increase hair growth

**Comment**

A good lot of articles this week. In the New Zealand section notable this week are a number of Government supported initiatives that should make a real difference in the short and longer term. Changes to Visa extensions, the creation of a job portal and support for the writing of Farm Environment plans will provide more certainty for growers and packers and allow them to plan with more confidence. Investment in two significant research programme to determine how best to grow apples to maximise yields and another to improve crop nutrient management for vegetable growers should help to optimise yield and minimise impacts on the environment. Its good to see such support for Horticulture.

There is less of interest in the international section. Sustainability and the effect of Covid are the two main themes this week. Surprisingly the value of Kenya’s horticultural exports increased in the first half of this year and not surprisingly Kenya now sees Horticulture as once of the Industries that will help it to recover from the economic impacts of Covid

1. **Agency news** 
   1. **Country freedom update**

The Country Freedom List has been updated state that *Bruchus pisorum* (Pea Weevil) is not known to occur in New Zealand.

* 1. **WTO and TBT 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:

* Canada -MRL’s
* China – 1673 MRL’s
* Korea - Amendment of Quarantine Pest List

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

A TBT notification released in the last week is for the EU for controls and other measures ensuring traceability and compliance in organic production and the labelling of organic products. See [EN](https://agriculture.us12.list-manage.com/track/click?u=d7af3f807e82c63a8f495e991&id=6f24f81b7b&e=dc41ca1864)



1. **New Zealand News**



* 1. **Primary sector exports and jobs up again**

Primary sector exports and jobs are up again, demonstrating the sector’s underlying strength amid the COVID-19 global pandemic and US-China trade war, and supporting New Zealand’s economic recovery. Last week Stats NZ today reported New Zealand’s merchandise exports in August were up 8.6% on a year ago, driven by an increase in the value of our fruit which is up 28.2% and gold kiwifruit

Stats NZ also reported that the number of filled jobs across our primary industries reached 99,920 in August, up by 8,720 or 9.6% from a year ago.

*“People in New Zealand with expiring working holiday visas can now stay to fill short-term horticulture and viticulture roles, with Supplementary Seasonal Employment visas being automatically given to around 11,000 people holding working holiday visas that expire between 1 October 2020 and 31 March 2021.*

Across the whole year to August, against the backdrop of a global pandemic and the US-China trade war, all exports have grown by 2.8%, with fruit exports up 8.4% and vegetables exports up 6.3%.

[Full article available here](https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/primary-sector-exports-and-jobs-again)

* 1. **Two new diplomatic appointments announced:**

Michael Appleton as New Zealand’s first resident High Commissioner to Sri Lanka. Mr Appleton, a career diplomat since 2005, is currently the Senior Foreign Affairs Adviser in the Office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. He has had previous postings in India, the United States and Timor-Leste.

Tredene Dobson as New Zealand’s next Ambassador to Viet Nam. Ms Dobson, a career diplomat since 2003, has previously served as New Zealand’s Ambassador to Iraq. She has also had previous postings in Indonesia and South Korea. She is currently Unit Manager in the International Security and Disarmament Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. [Full article available here](https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/minister-foreign-affairs-makes-two-diplomatic-appointments)



* 1. **Rockit appoints new CEO**

**N**ew Zealand-headquartered Rockit Global has announced the appointment of Mark O’Donnell as its new chief executive. O’Donnell joins the company from House of Travel, where he has been chief executive. He begins as CEO in early January 2021. O’Donnell joins on the back of a record year for Rockit with volumes and turnover up around 25 per cent. It developed over 150ha of new orchards in 2020, taking its total planted area to 480 ha in New Zealand. Rockit’s proprietary miniature apples are grown in New Zealand and eight other countries and they are now sold in 28 countries, with Kuwait and India opened as new markets this year. In order to cater for rapidly increasing fruit volumes, in early 2021 Rockit is set to move into a new purpose-built, state-of-the-art coolstore and packhouse facility in Irongate, Hastings. [Full article available here](http://www.fruitnet.com/eurofruit/article/182981/rockit-appoints-new-ceo)

* 1. **Rockit Global announces key partnership with Indian Suri Agro Fresh**

In a move that further amplifies Rockit Global Limited’s reach into India, the company has announced a partnership with Suri Agro Fresh. Suri Agro Fresh is one of the largest fresh produce companies in India, importing quality fruit and vegetables from across the globe and distributing into the sub-continent. [Full article available here](https://www.freshplaza.com/article/9252274/rockit-global-announces-key-partnership-with-suri-agro-fresh/?edition=5)

* 1. **Covid-19: Tourism's loss is agritech's win**

As NZ's tourism-focused global messaging was muted by the Covid-19 pandemic, the Agritech sector has become one of the government’s priorities with more resources to step-up its international profile and lift its export earning potential. The industry received $11.4 million to implement a transformation plan, backed up with the support of New Zealand Trade & Enterprise's global network. [Full article available here](https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/business/426637/covid-19-tourism-s-loss-is-agritech-s-win)

* 1. **Irish agri-tech brings spraying up to speed**

Irish company MagGrow has won the International Innovation Award at the New Zealand National Fieldays, with its technology of reducing spray drift while maximizing efficiency and output for farmers. The technology is a two-component system that uses permanent rare earth magnets to be installed on sprayers, which changes the physical properties of the pesticides passing through to optimise the spray droplet. [Full article available here](https://www.ruralnewsgroup.co.nz/rural-news/rural-machinery-products/irish-agri-tech-brings-spraying-up-to-speed)

* 1. **New Zealand grants visa extensions**

**T**he New Zealand Government last week announced a range of immigration policy changes aimed at filling labour shortages in horticulture and viticulture, while also supporting the country’s residents who are out of work due to Covid-19. The Supplementary Seasonal Employment (SSE) visa will be automatically given to around 11,000 working holiday visa holders in New Zealand with visas expiring between 1 November 2020 and 31 March 2021. These visas will allow them to work in horticulture and viticulture roles, where there are not enough New Zealanders available to do this work.

Employers can take on these workers when there are unfilled Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme spaces with an RSE employer, or there are unfilled roles available with an accredited SSE employer. Employers will also be able to take on SSE workers for roles in regions specified on a list which the Ministry of Social Development is currently compiling.

In addition, all RSE scheme workers stranded in New Zealand who have been granted a more flexible limited visa to be able to work part-time and do non-RSE work will be able to ‘re-enter’ the RSE scheme and work for an RSE employer with 30 hours per week average pay guaranteed. The changes are for the 2020/21 season only. [Full article available here](http://www.fruitnet.com/produceplus/article/182994/new-zealand-grants-visa-extensions)

* 1. **COVID restrictions create problems for NZ's largest strawberry producer**

The first strawberries of the season are on their way already. By October the fields will be ready for harvest but the problem is, there's virtually no one to pick them. Vital overseas workers who make up the bulk of pickers can't get here due to New Zealand's closed border. Francie Perry is the country's biggest strawberry producer, a multi-million-dollar operation. "If the Government don't allow some of these horticulture workers across the border, then the Kiwi public are going to be faced with very high prices for annual crops."

The Government says locals will take up the slack, with Labour leader Jacinda Ardern claiming some New Zealand unemployed will take up the slack, and yesterday announcing that foreigners with expiring working holiday visas can now move into horticulture. Agriculture Minister Damien O'Connor estimates that would mean around 11,000 people could move into the job. But Perry is sceptical.

Perry says she has the solution - accommodation in Auckland all set to receive workers from Covid-free Samoa. "We've got a facility that would be suitable for quarantine and we could quarantine 70 people in it and that would get us through." She's paid for it all and she'll even pay for the security staff. But the Government is still not budging. "If we don't get it organised in the next week or so, it becomes a real crisis," Perry says. Without pickers, more than 1000 Kiwi jobs in the packhouse will potentially be lost, and the Christmas favourites could be left to rot in the ground. [Full article available here](https://www.hortidaily.com/article/9252874/covid-restrictions-create-problems-for-nz-s-largest-strawberry-producer/)

* 1. **New Zealand job portal GoHorticulture**

"Not only does New Zealand produce the world’s best fruit and vegetables, we are also producing the best people to grow the best produce," says Mike Chapman, Chair of HortNZ. "This is a collective effort across product groups, district associations and growers. With support from the Provincial Growth Fund, we have managed to put in place a network of Career Progression Managers and – with redeployed MPI biosecurity staff – to expand this network, so that we cover many of our growing areas, from Northland through to Central Otago. This network is a good example of an industry-government partnership, and adapting to meet the challenges of Covid."

The Career Progression Managers’ role is to work with employers, workers and potential workers in their areas, to attract people into horticulture, create fulfilling long-lasting careers, and increase the number of apprentices and people studying for diplomas and degrees in their regions. This initiative is all about getting more and more New Zealanders involved in horticulture, long term.

GoHorticulture or GoHort went live in August, to attract people to horticulture by showcasing careers and opportunities. Since August, nearly 4,000 have visited the site and 3,200 have accessed the job board.

A group of Year 13 students from Tasman have created a card game about horticulture careers that has come up trumps, with packs of cards being distributed to schools around the country. A pack of cards is made up of 40 different horticulture jobs, with each card giving the job’s potential salary, length of training, level of hands-on work, along with job opportunity rating.

Engagement to increase Māori participation in horticulture in Northland and Hawkes Bay is increasing. One example is the Ngati Pahauwera Development Trust in Hawkes Bay, which is investing in pipfruit. The Trust has set aside 80 hectares of Māori land to plant apple trees while the Ngawha Innovation Park is in the process of seeking Provincial Growth Fund support for its horticulture development

The Career Progression Manager team is directly responsible for getting 181 people into horticulture apprenticeships, and has collectively been involved in arranging training for more than 800 people. [Full article available here](https://www.hortidaily.com/article/9252852/new-zealand-job-portal-gohorticulture/)

* 1. **Biosecurity microcredential short course**

Primary ITO with the Horticulture Capability Group have developed a biosecurity micro-credential to enhance industry capability. The programme is designed to give business owners and managers the skills to develop, implement and improve workplace biosecurity strategies and practices on their property. At the end of the qualification, people will be equipped with the skills and knowledge to identify, evaluate and prioritise biosecurity risks in the primary sector workplace; develop a plan to manage biosecurity risks for a primary industry workplace; implement and monitor the biosecurity plan, and review and update the biosecurity plan. [Full article available here](https://www.hortidaily.com/article/9252845/biosecurity-microcredential-short-course/)

* 1. **Government support for Farm Environment Plans welcomed**

Horticulture New Zealand has welcomed government support for Farm Environment Plans, saying the horticulture industry is already well on the way to implementing Farm Environment Plans across the country. "The horticulture industry sees Farm Environment Plans as powerful tools for reducing environmental impact and providing evidence to meet regulatory requirements, while maintaining if not enhancing yields and returns," says HortNZ Chief Executive, Mike Chapman.

"HortNZ has been trialling Farm Environment Plans with vegetable growers in Levin and Pukekohe – two of New Zealand’s major vegetable growing areas – to good effect. In order to encourage uptake, we have also translated the steps to meet Farm Environment Plan requirements into Traditional Chinese. Growers in Levin and Pukekohe have appreciated the greater knowledge that Farm Environment Plans provide them about their land and key inputs such as fertiliser."  [Full article available here](https://www.hortidaily.com/article/9252386/nz-government-support-for-feps-welcomed/)

* 1. **Timpack keeps New Zealand supply chain working**

Waikato company Timpack has played a key role helping businesses move their essential goods around New Zealand and export them to the world. Employing 200 staff, Timpack makes a million items of wooden packaging annually. Dairy processors and kiwifruit packers are two of their biggest clients. Its team of 200 staff quite literally takes business places with production of more than a million items of wooden packaging annually. [Full article available here](https://www.freshplaza.com/article/9252379/timpack-keeps-new-zealand-supply-chain-working/?edition=5)

* 1. **Premium herbs delivered to New Zealanders via a new online and delivery service**

New Zealand's coronavirus restrictions have led to one of the country's leading herb producers (Superb Herb) to make their range available to more consumers, through the creation of an online store. Herbs are couriered overnight nationwide. The minimum purchase is six plants."

The company, which was founded in 1974 by Jim Pike, grows 23 varieties of herbs; the most popular being Coriander, Basil, Mint and Parsley. In terms of volume, three tonnes of herbs are produced every week, using five ha of greenhouse space. The company supplies to all supermarkets, restaurants and fresh markets in New Zealand as well as a home delivery business: My Food Bag. They also export twice weekly to Hong Kong where they sell to two major supermarket chains and a fresh market.

In late 2019, Superb Herb started production its new glasshouse, which was built by world experts in greenhouse automation based in The Netherlands and scoped with the latest technology available. It is the first one of its kind in Australasia based on the amount of automation built within each growing stage. *The article also contains information about the automation that the business has invested that has streamlined all parts of the business - from planting to dispatch.* [Full article available here](https://www.freshplaza.com/article/9253162/more-new-zealanders-set-to-have-access-to-premium-herbs-thanks-to-new-online-and-delivery-service/?edition=5)

** Bits and pieces**

* 1. **Breeder of red kiwifruit scoops Innovation Award**

Esteemed New Zealand kiwifruit breeder and scientist Russell Lowe has been awarded the 2020 Kiwifruit Innovation Award for his work breeding the first commercialised red kiwifruit cultivar, Zespri Red. Mr Lowe, who has recently retired from his role at Crown Research Institute Plant & Food Research, first began working on the challenge of breeding a new red kiwifruit in 1993, for the new varieties breeding programme jointly run by Plant & Food Research and Zespri.

This award is about recognising a contribution that will create enduring value for the kiwifruit industry.

Russell has put a huge amount of work into breeding a successful red kiwifruit which in itself marks a significant milestone for the industry, [Full article available here](https://www.freshplaza.com/article/9252695/breeder-of-red-kiwifruit-scoops-innovation-award/?edition=5)

* 1. **Increasing tomato yields in winter - New project in New Zealand**

Rohe Produce Limited is planning to build a $70 million, 8.9-hectare, high-tech glasshouse at Marsden Point, focused on growing organic speciality tomatoes. The glasshouse will be the first of its kind in New Zealand. It will be set up, using of 100 percent LED lights, which Rohe Produce said would increase yields by 50 percent per square meter.

The company received $14 million loan from the Provincial Growth Fund. It is estimated about 200 construction jobs will be created for 12 to 18 months during the glasshouse build, and about 110 permanent jobs once operational year-round. [Full article available here](https://www.freshplaza.com/article/9253233/increasing-tomato-yields-in-winter-new-project-in-new-zealand/?edition=5)

* 1. **Apples see the light**

Plant and Food Research scientists in Hawkes Bay have been working on an MBIE funded research programme -Future Orchard Planting Systems -to design an orchard system that allows the fruiting canopy to capture more sunlight to improve production and sustainability. The programme is led by Dr Stuart Tustin, who said the new design with the innovation of narrowing tree rows can utilise up to 85% of the sunlight energy while the conventional orchard designs only utilise between 60% to 65%. [Full article available here](https://www.ruralnewsgroup.co.nz/hort-news/hort-general-news/apples-see-the-light)

* 1. **$4.7 million in funding for SVS from MPI**

A project to boost vegetable growers’ efforts to care for the health of the environment while supplying fresh, healthy food, has received $4.7 million in government backing from MPI. The funding adds to the $2.8 million already invested by industry into Sustainable Vegetable Systems, a four-year project, focused on improving crop nutrient management for the growing of potatoes, onions, brassicas, butternut squash, carrots, and leafy greens.

The project was established by Potatoes NZ, partnering with Horticulture New Zealand and vegetable groups Onions New Zealand, Vegetables New Zealand, Processed Vegetables New Zealand, and NZ Buttercup Squash, under their umbrella of the Vegetable Research and Innovation Board. The project will give growers the ability to accurately manage nutrient flows, while meeting demand for quality produce, meaning better environmental outcomes”,

Plant & Food Research is undertaking the work to quantify and model nitrate leaching. The project will engage with vegetable growers around New Zealand, providing tools to help them apply effective nitrate management techniques suited to their land and operations. The Sustainable Vegetable Systems project will have nine commercial field sites across the country in Canterbury, Hawke’s Bay, Horowhenua, Waikato and Pukekohe as well as trials at Plant & Food Research facilities in Lincoln and Hawke’s Bay.

Chris Claridge said this project will give the vegetable growing sector improved tools to estimate nitrate leaching, an area where the sector is currently underserved. “This project will enable growers to assess which management techniques will best reduce their risk of nitrate leaching, so they can confidently make changes in practice”, Chris Claridge said. [Full article available here](https://www.plantandfood.co.nz/page/news/media-release/story/4.7-million-in-funding-for-svs-from-mpi/?utm_source=Plant+%26+Food+Research+E-Newsletter&utm_campaign=0c969ddc06-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_02_11_COPY_02&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_5919b8ee23-0c969ddc06-21882009)

* 1. **Countdown unveils contactless shopping and artificial intelligence with new Scan&Go tech**

Countdown is testing out a contactless Scan&Go service where hi-tech scales know what you’re buying and customers can skip the regular checkout for an easy in-store shopping experience. Available at Countdown’s busy Ponsonby store in Auckland, Scan&Go lets customers shop via an app - scanning, bagging and paying for their groceries all from their smartphone. Specially-designed scales in the produce area use image recognition to identify which type of fresh fruit and vegetables customers choose, including letting you know if you’ve left your keys or phone on the scales, or telling the difference between different types of apples. Source: [countdown.co.nz](https://www.countdown.co.nz/news-and-media-releases/2020/september/countdown-unveils-contactless-shopping-and-artificial-intelligence-with-new-scango-tech)

* 1. **Kiwis want to know what’s in their food**

Detailed information about the nutritional value of New Zealand foods, beyond what is available on a food label, has not always been easy to find making this simpler, the new and improved New Zealand Food Composition Database (NZFCD) is increasingly becoming a go-to resource for professionals, educators and consumers looking for a reliable source of up-to-date nutrient data for New Zealand foods. Over the past year more people have discovered the NZFCD – thanks to the enhanced search functionality and the addition of data on free and added sugars. Website visits increased 46% and page views increased 79% over the past year.

The NZFCD is the most comprehensive collection of nutrition data for over 2,700 commonly-consumed New Zealand foods and provides reliable data on macronutrients (like carbohydrates, protein, fat and dietary fibre) and micronutrients (like vitamins and minerals). Around 100 new or updated food records are added to the NZFCD every year with food analysis conducted by accredited laboratories in New Zealand and Australia.

Users can search for a single food or compare up to three foods in a side-by-side comparison. They can also choose the level of detail – from a simple nutrient information panel to a detailed breakdown with up to 363 components. The top most searched five are: bananas, almonds, Braeburn apples, carrots and dried apricots. [Full article available here](https://www.plantandfood.co.nz/page/news/media-release/story/kiwis-want-to-know-whats-in-their-food/?utm_source=Plant+%26+Food+Research+E-Newsletter&utm_campaign=0c969ddc06-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_02_11_COPY_02&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_5919b8ee23-0c969ddc06-21882009)



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. **Canada Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and Standards Country Report**

[Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and Standards Country Report\_Ottawa\_Canada\_06-30-2020](https://apps.fas.usda.gov/newgainapi/api/Report/DownloadReportByFileName?fileName=Food%20and%20Agricultural%20Import%20Regulations%20and%20Standards%20Country%20Report_Ottawa_Canada_06-30-2020)

1. **EU Launches Consultation on Future Organics Action Plan** [EU Launches Consultation on Future Organics Action Plan \_Brussels USEU\_European Union\_09-16-2020](https://apps.fas.usda.gov/newgainapi/api/Report/DownloadReportByFileName?fileName=EU%20Launches%20Consultation%20on%20Future%20Organics%20Action%20Plan%20_Brussels%20USEU_European%20Union_09-16-2020)
2. **COVID-19 in India - Weekly Port Situation Update** [COVID-19 in India - Weekly Port Situation Update\_Mumbai\_India\_09-17-2020](https://apps.fas.usda.gov/newgainapi/api/Report/DownloadReportByFileName?fileName=COVID-19%20in%20India%20-%20Weekly%20Port%20Situation%20Update_Mumbai_India_09-17-2020)
3. **Italy Food Service - Hotel Restaurant Institutional**  When choosing an eatery, Italian consumers are increasingly looking for food and beverages that they consider healthy, including locally sourced products that combine good nutritional value and farm to fork traceability. [Food Service - Hotel Restaurant Institutional\_Rome\_Italy\_09-30-2020](https://apps.fas.usda.gov/newgainapi/api/Report/DownloadReportByFileName?fileName=Food%20Service%20-%20Hotel%20Restaurant%20Institutional_Rome_Italy_09-30-2020)
4. **Netherlands Food Service - Hotel Restaurant Institutional** [Food Service - Hotel Restaurant Institutional\_The Hague\_Netherlands\_09-30-2020](https://apps.fas.usda.gov/newgainapi/api/Report/DownloadReportByFileName?fileName=Food%20Service%20-%20Hotel%20Restaurant%20Institutional_The%20Hague_Netherlands_09-30-2020)

 **Regulatory**

* 1. **Chile tightens Covid-19 guidelines**

**C**hile has reinforced coronavirus safety guidelines for the fresh produce industry by publishing an updated version of its Good Practice Manual. Asoex president Ronald Bown said the new measures reflect the importance of protecting the health of the workers and ensuring the continuity of food supply.

Bown stressed that although to date there is no evidence that the virus is transmitted by food, “it is the responsibility of the industry to maintain a work environment that minimises risks to people and continues to deliver products that respond to the nutritional and safety needs that are common in Chilean fruit growing”. [Full article available here](http://www.fruitnet.com/americafruit/article/183000/chile-tightens-covid-19-guidelines)

* 1. **ePhyto to facilitate international agricultural trade**

The Industry Advisory Group (IAG) of the IPPC ePhyto Solution calls on governments to support the adoption of ePhyto to facilitate international agricultural trade, which would be crucial in safeguarding global food security beyond the Covid-19 recovery period.

Global trading operations of plant products rely on crucial communication and transparency of phytosanitary requirements to protect plant health and ensure international unrestricted and safe trade of goods. Phytosanitary certificates facilitate such trade and benefit plant production sectors as well as consumers. Electronic certification as part of a broader endeavour for trade facilitation has proven itself indispensable during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic to maintain continuity of agricultural trade despite limitations on air traffic and courier services. Full

 **Business/ Industry**

* 1. **Horticulture might guide Kenya's economic rebound from COVID**

Experts have expressed their hope that Kenya’s horticulture sector will guide the rebound of that nation’s economy, as the country rediscovers growth amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

New data indicates that for the first seven months of the year, earnings from the export of cut flowers, fruits and vegetables increased by 8.6 per cent to Ksh.93.4 billion (€728.5 mln). The improved revenues, supported by better prices for cut flowers and fruits, was set against lower volumes of 185,215 tons compared to 206,127 tons of these goods sold last year. [Full article available here](https://www.hortidaily.com/article/9251151/horticulture-might-guide-kenya-s-economic-rebound-from-covid/)

* 1. **COVID resurgence in Europe worries Kenyan horti traders**

Kenyan fresh produce exporters are concerned about the possibility of a second Covid-19 lockdown in Europe, which would most certainly hurt their sales.

The flower sector was the hardest hit as the world’s largest auction in Amsterdam was shut during the pandemic. Kenya sells nearly all of its flowers through this market. The auction has, however, been fully opened following the easing of the Covid-19 containment measures that had been put in place earlier.

As explained on [businessdailyafrica.com](https://www.businessdailyafrica.com/bd/markets/commodities/covid-19-resurgence-in-europe-worries-horticulture-traders-2305654), September marks the beginning of high season for the country’s horticulture produce to European market, which accounts for over 60 percent of the total exports. [Full article available here](https://www.hortidaily.com/article/9252877/covid-resurgence-in-europe-worries-kenyan-horti-traders/)

* 1. **The future is a combination of vertical farming and greenhouse production,**

“Rabobank has been studying the vertical farming market for a couple of years now. Vertical farms continue to improve with more high-tech systems than greenhouse growers

The Netherlands have not yet moved into vertical farming but the USA which is not very familiar with glass greenhouses has switched to vertical more readily. The only disadvantage a greenhouse has, compared to vertical farming, is that it needs more space and it is less easy to control because it still uses sunlight. In the indoor farming market, there are a lot of small-scale companies. In comparison to the Dutch greenhouses, it’s not as profitable as it could be. When stacking multiple layers vertically it will increase production. “However, it's not large-scale enough. Now there is a limited range of products, such as luxury lettuces and herbs, for which there is only a narrow market”.

“The vertical farming market is currently in a development phase. Before that type of farming matures it will need to increase efficiency and more uniformity is needed. Currently large sums of money are being put into the sector while very little working proof that vertical farming can be profitable.

The investment costs for a vertical farm are more or less starting at € 2000 per m2 in comparison to a greenhouse which is about € 200-500 per m2. There is a huge difference between investment costs which is a major disadvantage for farmers looking for funding. Efficient herb plant factories could possibly compete with a greenhouse at the same cost price. Unfortunately, there’s so little transparency in the industry that not much is known about it. ***The article also discusses the pros and cons of an inner city location for a vertical farm***

“In the end the author of the article considers that vertical farming is most suitable for leafy greens, such as lettuce and herbs. Young plants and starting materials are also very suitable for this kind of growing environment. These greens are well suited for this type of cultivation, in terms of hygiene requirements and product quality. The crops can easily be stacked in multiple layers. This results in a higher value per kilogram, which is great looking at the cost price of these farming techniques”.

Large farms can process this type of production better than a small farm growing plants. These farms can pack and deliver the products immediately because only then it becomes logistically efficient. “For ‘fresh-cut companies’ it could be useful if they could grow some of their raw materials within their factory, such as expensive types of lettuce. In small businesses, I see more potential for local markets and the hospitality industry. [Full article available here](https://www.hortidaily.com/article/9251871/vertical-farming-won-t-replace-all-greenhouse-production-but-it-s-more-a-combination-of-all-of-them/)



* 1. **Dole harnesses the sun to move closer to their carbon neutral promise**

Dole Asia Holdings has made a significant step forward to achieving Net Zero Carbon with the signing of a contract with Symbior Solar to expand its renewable energy sourcing to its processing facilities in the Philippines. Symbior Solar is to install over 33,000 square meters of solar panels at Dole facilities in Thailand and the Philippines.

It is an important step towards Dole's commitment to achieve carbon neutrality in its operations by 2030, a key goal laid down in the Dole Promise made in June this year. Their climate Promise is to source 100% renewable energy for our processing facilities and to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by 50% from 2019 levels. [Full article available here](https://www.freshplaza.com/article/9252009/dole-harnesses-the-sun-to-move-closer-to-their-carbon-neutral-promise/?edition=5)

* 1. **Rapid expansion of blueberry cultivation leads to water use compliance crackdown**

The rapid growth of blueberry and other intensive farming in northern New South Wales has prompted a crackdown on illegal water use. It has also led to concerns about pollution in rivers and in the state's first marine conservation area. According to the Natural Resources Access Regulator, 28 of 31 inspected farms around the Coffs Harbour region were allegedly non-compliant with water laws.

[Full article available here](https://www.freshplaza.com/article/9251895/rapid-expansion-of-blueberry-cultivation-leads-to-compliance-crackdown/?edition=5)

* 1. **Interest in sustainability increases among consumers during pandemic**

Few industries have not experienced an impact from Covid19 in one way or another. For the horticultural industry, there's been a [resurgence of the home gardener](https://sustainability.asu.edu/food/news/archive/gardening-in-confinement-covid-19-and-the-resurgence-of-home-gardening/) and an interest in sustainability.

Another surprising result of the pandemic is a somewhat drastic shift in consumers interest in sustainability, their attitude towards [environmental practices](https://www.environmentalscience.org/sustainability) and the repercussions of what they do and how they live.

In a [recent survey](https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/as-earth-day-turns-50-new-kearney-research-indicates-covid-19-has-not-reduced-consumers-demands-for-sustainable-solutions-301045136.html) conducted by [Kearney Management Consultants](https://www.kearney.com/), participants were asked about their interest in sustainability and environmental products, and whether their opinions had changed due to COVID-19. The survey revealed:

* 48% said the pandemic had made them more concerned about the environment
* 55% said that as a result of their COVID-19 experiences they were “more likely to purchase environmentally friendly products”
* And a whopping 78% of consumers now believe that companies could be doing more to help them make decisions that improve environmental outcomes.

[Full article available here](https://www.floraldaily.com/article/9251356/interest-in-sustainability-increases-among-consumers-during-pandemic/)

  **Health**

* 1. **Antioxidant found in apples and grape seeds to increase hair growth**

Procyanidin is a type of flavonoid antioxidant that is said to have powerful therapeutic effects on hair follicles. These polyphenol compounds which are commonly found in apples, barley and grape seeds have been suggested to produce hair growth and possess stimulating effects by promoting hair epithelial cell growth. [Full article available here](https://www.freshplaza.com/article/9252832/antioxidant-found-in-apples-and-grape-seeds-to-increase-hair-growth/?edition=5)

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