

**PMAC weekly update 1st to 7th January 2019**

1. **Government agencies**: New agreement to protect fresh tomato industry; Brexit information for exporters
2. **New Zealand News:**  New Zealanders wary of organic food fraudsters; Fears part of bumper apple crop may be lost; Rush to plant cherries in Central Otago shows no sign of slowing; Wrapped vegetables and the fuss around plastic packaging; Shipping line Maersk withdraws Port Nelson direct service to New Zealand; Stink bug discovery affects imports, trade deficit
3. **International news:** GAIN reports; India's retaliatory tariffs to hit US exports for $900 million; Maersk Container Industry to focus on reefer technology; Food irradiation technology not widely used with fresh produce, but it could be; Recycling potato peelings into MDF substitute; Oranges better than carrots at preventing Macular Degeneration; ‘Metabolic syndrome patients need more vitamin C’; Eating better = hearing better; Five green vegetables that may help manage blood pressure

***Editors comments***

*Happy New Year to you all . 2019 promises to be a very interesting year. News via the International web sites and from New Zealand has been very quiet over the New Year period.*

*In New Zealand there is news of a desperate labour shortage to pick apples, reports of increased cherry plantings despite significant rain damage to this years crop and the promise of an Organics standards for New Zealand at some stage in 2019 .*

*In the International media the USA has closed access to its Gain reports until the standoff between the Congress and President is resolved. Fruit and vegetables continue to show very strong health benefits both in maintaining health and for relief of +a range of conditions.*

1. **Agency news**



* 1. **New agreement to protect fresh tomato industry**

Biosecurity New Zealand and Tomatoes New Zealand have reached an agreement on the pathway forward to better prepare for future biosecurity responses. Both parties signed a Sector Readiness Operational Agreement on the 21 December.

"This agreement solidifies the organisations' existing GIA (Government Industry Agreement) partnership that has developed over the past few years."Under the agreement, Biosecurity New Zealand and TomatoesNZ will jointly agree and fund readiness activities to improve preparedness for incursions of pests and pathogens that are considered a major concern to the fresh tomato industry.

Biosecurity New Zealand and TomatoesNZ joined the GIA in 2014 and 2016 respectively.

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The agreement will initially focus on preparing for incursions of tomato leafminer (Tuta absoluta) and the tomato strain of pepino mosaic virus. These have been identified as high priority by TomatoesNZ and Biosecurity New Zealand. More pests and pathogens will be added over time. Tomato leafminer and pepino mosaic virus are not currently present in New Zealand. [Full article available here](https://www.mpi.govt.nz/news-and-resources/media-releases/new-agreement-to-protect-fresh-tomato-industry/)

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| * 1. **Brexit information for exporters**   In preparation for Brexit, Customs have established a specialist Customs Counsellor role at the New Zealand High Commission in London. From January 2019, this experienced New Zealand Customs Service official will work closely with the United Kingdom Government and our EU-focused Customs Counsellor based in Brussels, to help facilitate New Zealand trade with the United Kingdom during Brexit. Read more about what we are doing to prepare, and what it means for New Zealand business and [trade here](https://www.customs.govt.nz/business/export/brexit/) |



1. **New Zealand News**

**General**

* 1. **New Zealanders wary of organic food fraudsters**

A set of new rules is designed to protect NZ consumers from untrustworthy suppliers in the first big shake-up of the $600 million organics industry. The sector has grown 30 per cent over the past couple of years. Consumers are still happy to cough up a premium for products branded organic, despite there being no regulated definition of what it is or many consumers even knowing what means. But scepticism has been slowly brewing, too.

Despite the "clean green" reputation, complaints about organic food have triggered more than 30 investigations by the Commerce Commission over the past decade. And studies also suggest distrust and lack of understanding around the term organic is halting sales. "When you buy something that's organic or ‘New Zealand made’, you're pretty much reliant on the information given by the trader," Commerce Commission head of strategy, intelligence and advocacy Ritchie Hutton said. "If a competitor can get away with making bogus claims about their free-range or organic product then you're at a competitive disadvantage. A national standard for organic production will be introduced in 2019. It means any product claiming to be organic will have to prove it. [Full article available here](https://www.freshplaza.com/article/9057694/new-zealanders-wary-of-organic-food-fraudsters/)

**Crop news**

* 1. **Fears part of bumper apple crop may be lost**

New Zealand's apple growers fear a bumper crop coupled with a shortage of workers could mean some of the summer harvest is lost.

New Zealand Apples and Pears, which represents the pip fruit industry, wants the government to step in and allow tourists to pick fruit without a working visa. Group spokesperson Gary Jones said this could happen if the government declares a seasonal labour shortage in the country's primary apple growing regions of Hawke's Bay and Nelson. This would allow overseas visitors in the country on tourist visas to work in the horticulture industry without obtaining the usual work permits.

"We're expecting another 30,000 tonnes more apples, nationally. That's getting up over 600,000 tonnes of fruit. "That increase in Hawke's Bay alone, for example, is around 500 more workers, just to pick the increase." The industry was hit with similar regional shortages in [Tasman](https://www.radionz.co.nz/news/national/354228/official-worker-shortage-declared-in-tasman-region) and [Hawke's Bay](https://www.radionz.co.nz/news/national/351515/slim-pickings-worker-shortage-leaves-apple-farms-frantic) last year. Mr Jones said he'd like to see a permanent regime put in place so growers don't have to plead with the government each time more workers were needed. [Full article available here](https://www.radionz.co.nz/news/national/379584/fears-part-of-bumper-apple-crop-may-be-lost)

* 1. **Rush to plant cherries in Central Otago shows no sign of slowing**

A dismal season for growers and soaring land prices haven't stopped Kiwis lining up for a slice of horticulture's hottest pie. More than 60 New Zealander investors have stumped up a total of $10.5 million for a share in the largest modern cherry orchard development in Central Otago.Central Cherry Orchard Limited Partnership will begin development of the 96-hectare bareland block in the Waikerikeri Valley, north of Alexandra, in autumn. Land to grow cherries is in hot demand in Central Otago, with buyers paying as much as $500,000 a hectare.

Andrew Watters, chief executive of MyFarm, said the Central Cherry Orchard development was the first cherry operation offered by the rural investment business and had been popular with New Zealand investors. "Investment prospects for the New Zealand horticultural sector are particularly strong right now," he said.

"The world wants our high quality, healthy produce and cherries' time has come with that. We are witnessing a significant increase in export demand that this venture is going to help meet," says Watters. The investment is forecast to return 12 per cent per annum from year six, increasing to over 30 per cent by year 10 as the orchard reaches full maturity.

New Zealand exported more than 4000 tonnes of cherries to Asia, Europe, the United States and the Middle East in the 2017/18 season. Central Otago produce accounted for about 90 per cent of that.

Some growers reported crop losses of up to 50 per cent after wet weather caused the stone fruit to split and rot. Those figures could take a hit this season after wet weather during late spring and early summer caused crops of the stone fruit to split and rot, with some orchard owners reporting crop losses of up to 50 per cent of early fruiting varieties.   However, the rush to plant orchards in Central Otago shows no sign of slowing, with another investment company, Hortinvest, last month releasing a $15.5 million cherry orchard project. [Full article available here](https://www.stuff.co.nz/business/farming/109721652/cherry-orchards-still-hot-property-despite-miserable-season)

**Other**

* 1. **Wrapped vegetables and the fuss around plastic packaging**

Individually wrapped onions wrapped in a Wellington Pak 'n Save store garnered outcries and outrage on Twitter. But it's a complex matter getting supermarkets and suppliers to switch to packaging that's affordable, sustainable and still keeps customers safe from bugs, leakage and saboteurs.

A problem often cited with recycling food packaging is the risk of contamination. And "It's not simply a matter of quickly swapping out plastic for compostable materials, for example, because there simply aren't the commercial composting facilities available in New Zealand needed to process it at scale."

Countdown was unable to force suppliers to change their packaging but it was exercising that right over its own brand products, she said. But supermarkets do have considerable sway over suppliers and manufacturers.

[Stuff.co.nz](https://www.stuff.co.nz/business/industries/109424080/wrapped-veges-highlights-the-blame-game-around-plastic-packaging) quoted Farrelly, a Massey University environmental anthropologist who made world headlines last year for saying glitter should be banned, as saying : "Why should manufacturers be allowed to release products into the market without first proving they are safe? At the very least, they should ensure their plastic products are recyclable. [Full article available here](https://www.hortidaily.com/article/9055987/wrapped-vegetables-and-the-fuss-around-plastic-packaging/)

* 1. **Shipping line Maersk withdraws Port Nelson direct service to New Zealand**

Maersk's Northern Star service between Tanjung Pelepas, Malaysia and Auckland previously called directly to Nelson for freight services. It was one of four shipping lines calling in to the city. Now, Maersk announced an end to the stopover in late July. Container traffic shipped through Nelson now went via a feeder service to Tauranga with the Pacifica line to meet onward connections to Asia, the Americas, Pacific Islands and Australia.

The move is understood to be in line with a global trend within the shipping industry to use larger vessels in most trades to reduce costs, following heavy financial losses in recent times.

Customs Brokers and Freight Forwarders Federation of NZ executive director Rosemarie Dawson said New Zealand was over-serviced in terms of the number of ports it has relative to market size. Due to the high costs involved in port visits, carriers were looking to reduce the number of calls they made.

Nelson was one of the smallest ports with the least volume and was heavily reliant on export cargoes, unlike other ports which had a more balanced trade in terms of imports, she told [stuff.co.nz](https://www.stuff.co.nz/nelson-mail/news/109052670/shipping-line-maersk-withdraws-port-nelson-direct-service).

[Full article available here](https://www.freshplaza.com/article/9057132/shipping-line-maersk-withdraws-port-nelson-direct-service-to-new-zealand/)

**Biosecurity**

* 1. **Stink bug discovery affects imports, trade deficit**

New Zealand's trade deficit narrowed in November as a stink bug discovery reduced imports, while exports rose sharply. November imports eased 0.6 per cent on the year to $5.8 billion with the largest fall being in passenger motor car imports, down 35 per cent due to a delay in final unloading of one cargo ship in November. "In a repeat of events in February this year, another vessel was ordered to leave New Zealand waters in November due to the discovery of stink bugs," international statistics manager Tehseen Islam said.

Fruit exports climbed $32 million, or 60 per cent, to $86 million. That was led by green kiwifruit, up $34 million, or 167 per cent in value and 162 per cent in quantity. [Full article available here](https://www.nzherald.co.nz/the-country/rural-business/news/article.cfm?c_id=1504329&objectid=12180285)



1. **International news**

**Comment**

* 1. **GAIN reports**

Note Gain reports have been suspended due to the USA Government shut down.

**Regulatory**

* 1. **India's retaliatory tariffs to hit US exports for $900 million**

According to the latest Congressional report, India's proposed retaliatory tariffs against US agricultural products -including apples, almonds and lentils- will have an adverse impact on American exports worth nearly $900 million. India last year announced higher import duties on many US products in retaliation to President Trump's decision to impose heavy tariffs on imported steel and aluminium items, a move that sparked fears of a global trade war. However, India is the only major country which has been continuously postponing the implementation of the retaliatory tariffs despite announcing it more than six months ago.

In October last year, Trump described India as a "tariff king" as he reiterated his allegations that New Delhi has a high tariff rate on various American products. India's proposed retaliatory tariffs is far less than that by China on more than 800 American agricultural products, which accounted for approximately $20.6 billion in exports to the US in 2017. China is followed by Canada ($2.6 billion), Mexico ($2.5 billion), the European Union (EU) ($1 billion) and Turkey ($250 million) in slapping retaliatory tariffs on the agricultural products from the US. According to [news18.com](https://www.news18.com/news/world/indias-retaliatory-tariffs-to-hit-us-exports-worth-900-million-dollars-congressional-report-1989217.html), India's exports to the US in 2017-18 stood at $47.9 billion, while [imports were $26.7 billion. The trade balance is in favour of India. Full article available here](https://www.freshplaza.com/article/9057544/india-s-retaliatory-tariffs-to-hit-us-exports-for-900-million/)

**Business**

* 1. **Maersk Container Industry to focus on reefer technology**

Maersk Container Industry (MCI) has decided to fully focus on growing its highly successful cold chain business. Currently, one out of three refrigerated containers used in global perishable transportation uses Star Cool container technology manufactured by MCI. With the recent launch of Sekstant® Global Guidance solutions, the company is entering the IoT space, transforming reefer operations through the use of operational data .“MCI’s strategy is to grow in cold chain where our Star Cool technology is a clear leader.

While the market for dry containers has been challenged and has been under enormous pressure for some time, reefer volumes continue to grow due to global demand for fresh produce and other commodities. [Full article available here](https://www.freshplaza.com/article/9057469/maersk-container-industry-to-focus-on-reefer-technology/)

* 1. **Food irradiation technology not widely used with fresh produce, but it could be**

Food irradiation technology has been around for more than 50 years as a way to kill pathogens, although it is not widely used in the food processing industry. Now, a growing firm called [ScanTech Sciences](https://www.scantechsciences.com/en/) is marketing its irradiation services for use with fresh produce.

ScanTech Sciences is building its first facility in McAllen, Texas’ Rio Grande Valley [ECP Center.](https://www.scantechsciences.com/en/services/ecp/) It opened for commercial operations during the summer 2018. The facility can process between 120-160 cases of produce per minute. The company plans to open other facilities in ports of entry, such as New York/New Jersey and Nogales, Arizona, she said. Eventually, the company’s plans are to expand to areas such as of secondary import and export markets. Savannah, Georgia, Houston and California are among its targets.

Irradiation has been proven it can reduce the count of salmonella and listeria by more than 99.99 percent,” “It’s capable of killing viruses. It also helps to reduce microorganisms that could have an influence in spoilage.” The technology, however, isn’t widespread in its use.

Although the technology has been around for quite some time, it was not economical for use as a commercial application until the early 2000s.. In 2004, Australia shipped half a ton of irradiated mangoes to New Zealand, which was the first international use of food irradiation.

Food irradiation is approved by dozens of reputable organizations, including the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Food and Drug Administration, the Centers for Disease Control, the American Medical Association and the United Nations World Health Organization, Eierman said. It’s also currently used as a post-harvest food process in more than 40 countries.

There are two primary reasons that food irradiation is not more widely used. The first issue is intellectual property and investment. The technology is very complicated and requires expertise in nuclear engineering, mechanical engineering, and food science. Food irradiation can include the use of gamma rays, X-rays or electron beams, called e-beams. ScanTech Sciences’ patented form of e-beam food irradiation is Electronic Cold-Pasteurization, so-called because it allows product to be kept cold throughout the process. Not breaking the cold chain of storage is an added value for food processors.

The second reason food irradiation is uncommon is simply capacity. The technology is expensive, and there have not been very many successful food irradiation ventures.

But that isn’t to say that food irradiation is rare. About a third of spices imported into the United States are irradiated. Many imported tropical fruits, such as guava, dragon fruit, persimmons and mangos, are irradiated. Also, much of the food consumed by NASA astronauts are irradiated to prevent sickness, according to the FDA’s website. [Full article available here](https://produceprocessing.net/article/food-irradiation-fresh-produce/)



**Sustainability**

* 1. **Recycling potato peelings into MDF substitute**

London-based designers Rowan Minkley and Robert Nicoll use waste potato peelings to create an [eco-friendly](https://www.dezeen.com/tag/sustainable-design/) alternative to single-use materials like MDF and chipboard, called Chip[s] Board.

The new material is biodegradable post-use and, unlike MDF, doesn't contain formaldehyde or other toxic resins and chemicals. While MDF is a useful material, it is also damaging to the environment, with the UK furniture sector currently disposing of or incinerating 140,000 tonnes of MDF per year, due to its inability to be recycled. The material is made from a potato peel binding agent mixed with fibres from potatoes, bamboo, wood or hops

The composite is heat-pressed into a sheet of sturdy board that can be used for a variety of purposes

After collecting the peelings from manufacturers, they put the raw potato peel through various refinement processes to create a binding agent that can be applied to their fibres – which include potato skins, bamboo, recycled wood or beer hops. Once the resulting product has reached the end of its life span, the product can be sent to industrial compost to be biodegraded into fertiliser. [Full article available here](https://www.dezeen.com/2018/12/12/rowan-minkley-robert-nicoll-recycle-potato-peelings-mdf-substitute/)

  **Health**

* 1. **Oranges better than carrots at preventing Macular Degeneration**

A study by the Westmead Institute for Medical Research has shown that oranges reduce the risk of developing late macular degeneration by as much as 60 percent. That means that for older adults, eating a serving of oranges each day may be the best safeguard against age-related vision loss. Even eating an orange once a week seems to offer significant benefits. [Full article available here](https://www.freshplaza.com/article/9058094/oranges-better-than-carrots-at-preventing-macular-degeneration/)

* 1. **Metabolic syndrome patients need more vitamin C’**

A higher intake of vitamin C is crucial for metabolic syndrome patients trying to halt a potentially deadly cycle of antioxidant disruption and health-related problems, an Oregon State University researcher says. That’s important news for the estimated 35 percent of the U.S. adult population that suffers from the syndrome.

A diet high in saturated fat results in chronic low-grade inflammation in the body that in turn leads to the development of metabolic syndrome, a serious condition associated with cognitive dysfunction and dementia as well as being a major risk factor for cardiovascular disease, fatty liver disease and type 2 diabetes. A patient is considered to have metabolic syndrome if he or she has at least three of the following conditions: abdominal obesity, high blood pressure, high blood sugar, low levels of “good” cholesterol, and high levels of triglycerides. Five to 10 servings of fruit and vegatables a day is recommended to prevent these conditions. [Full article available here](https://www.freshplaza.com/article/9057707/metabolic-syndrome-patients-need-more-vitamin-c/)

* 1. **Eating better = hearing better**

Diets high in sugar and cholesterol can contribute to hearing loss as people age, according the Journal of Nutrition. Studies show that nutrient deficiencies, including B12 and folic acid, can impair hearing loss significantly. Experts report that boosting these nutrients can protect hearing by as much as 20 per cent.

Nutrition experts say the solution is eating an antioxidant-rich diet, including leafy greens, lentils, avocados, and bananas. Eating foods rich in vitamins C, E, and D support hearing health. Red bell peppers, broccoli, oranges, and grapefruit contribute vitamins for good overall and hearing health.

The mineral potassium helps regulate fluid in the inner ear, and prevents it from dropping as we age, to avoid hearing loss. Potassium-rich foods include potatoes, spinach, lima beans, tomatoes, melons, oranges, and raisins. The American Academy of Audiology (AAA) also claims that a deficiency in magnesium “may contribute to a metabolic cellular cascade of events.” The AAA studied links between permanent and temporary changes in auditory function to a nutritional deficiency of magnesium.  Foods rich in magnesium include artichokes, bananas, potatoes, spinach, and broccoli.

[Full article available here](https://www.hortidaily.com/article/9057705/eating-better-hearing-better/)

* 1. **Five green vegetables that may help manage blood pressure**

High blood pressure or hypertension is a condition where the pressure of the blood against the artery walls is higher than it is supposed to be. According to WHO, raised blood pressure affects 1.13 billion people worldwide. Monitoring diet and lifestyle habits is a crucial component of blood pressure management. People are advised to include fruits and vegetables that are rich in fibres and antioxidants. According to experts, green and leafy vegetables are an ideal bet for high blood pressure patients. Hereare 5 of the most valuable

**1. *Spinach*:** Spinach is an excellent source of potassium. Potassium helps negate the ill-effects of sodium in the body. It also helps the kidney eliminate excess sodium from the body through urination. In addition to potassium, spinach is enriched with heart-friendly nutrients like folate and magnesium. **2. *Celery:*** This negative-calorie food is an excellent addition. Celery is purported to be a good source of coumarin, which helps lower blood pressure  and aid water balance, and anti-coagulants that reduce the risk of blood clots and stroke and lower stress-hormone levels.

**3. *Cabbage:*** is a one versatile veggie that should find a place in your diet for a variety of reasons, one of them being its ability to keep a check on blood pressure.

**4. *Romaine Lettuce:*** The salad staple can do wonders for your heart health too by checking your blood pressure levels.

**5. *Kale:*** With 348 mg of potassium in 100 grams, kale is an ideal leafy addition you can make to your high BP diet. It is also rich in heart-friendly nutrients and antioxidants such as lutein, omega-3 fatty acids and flavonoids. [Full article available here](https://www.hortidaily.com/article/9054545/five-green-vegetables-that-may-help-manage-blood-pressure/)

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