

**PMAC weekly update 1st to 8th October**

1. **Government agencies**: ICPR Changes; WTO Notifications; Find out more about opportunities in the Gulf region
2. **New Zealand News:**  Tabuteau lead New Zealand’s first trade delegation to South Africa; Foreign Minister visited Indonesia and Thailand; Climate outlook; Increased RMA powers and regulation of intensive farming planned in water quality push; NZ government moves to support businesses trading with Iran; Frozen berries recalled because of foreign matter; New Zealand avocado growers concerned about thefts; Avocado industry on track to bounce back from last year's low volume season; Thailand: New Zealand avocado season takes off; Avanza to debut in China; NZ Flowers Week; Fruitful results for Vietnam’s dragonfruit industry; Vietnamese rambutan imports enter New Zealand; Kellogg Rural Leadership Programme ; Seeka staff lose more than 180kg combined in Biggest Loser challenge; Potential sale of Napier port; Auckland waterfront chaos spills over to other ports; Survey shows rural people less likely to ask for help with mental health; Seeka notifies of Australian kiwifruit orchard symptoms; Bay of Plenty collective forms to strengthen biosecurity fight
3. **International news:** GAIN reports; EU Parliament moves to ban unfair trading practices in the food supply chain; China: How to solve the problem of unmarketable fruit?; Freshfel times; Food safety conference delivers key learnings to the fresh produce industry; Listeria in fresh produce: Are we any the wiser?; Singapore recalls Malaysian iceberg lettuce over pesticide content; Xylella… a global threat to citrus

***Editors comment***

*Two areas are noticeable in the New Zealand section this week. First is the release of the Governments plan for progressing freshwater quality issues which it intends will sort problem now so it isn’t left for future generations . The article states fertiliser use and livestock farming cannot be allowed to pollute water. To progress this amongst other i9nitatives the Government will set up a new panel charged with making progress. A levy is not included in its plans..*

*The other noticeable area in the New Zealand section is the number of articles on Avocados exports. With a medium crop this year all the good work securing market access into a range of Asian countries will hopefully pay dividends. It is good to see Avana’s campaign in China aimed at differentiating our product.*

*A lower than normal number of articles in the International section. There are a couple of articles from the Food safety conference in Sydney held 2 weeks ago. They indicates there is still a lot to learn in this area and still a lot of science that is needed to answer some fairly fundamental questions. But at the end of the message the basic message is unchanged any effective food safety system is dependent on training those involved in handling food and establishing a culture where everyone in the organisation lives and breathes food safety.*

1. **Agency news**



* 1. **ICPR changes**

The ICPR for Norway has had the prohibitions list update (section 2.1) and the requirements for Cydonia spp., Fragaria spp., Malus spp., and Pyrus spp., nursery stock, (section 4.3.3).

* 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 so that they can potentially make a submission to the notifying country. Changes notified over the last week include:

* EU \_list of high risk plants and plant products
* Taiwan – MRL’s

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



* 1. **Find out more about opportunities in the Gulf region**

Kiwi horticultural exporters are invited to attend NZTE’s Gulf Opportunities Showcase being held in Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington and Christchurch in October. With limited arable land and a growing emphasis among the region’s fast-growing population on health and nutrition, there is high demand for quality, safe and healthy food products, which plays well to New Zealand’s strengths.

See <https://nzte.gulfshowcase.co.nz/register/> [Full article available here](http://www.freshplaza.com/article/9029199/New-Zealand-exporters-invited-to-find-out-more-about-opportunities-in-the-Gulf-region/)



1. **New Zealand News**



* 1. **Tabuteau lead New Zealand’s first trade delegation to South Africa**

Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs Fletcher Tabuteau travelled to South Africa last week to lead New Zealand’s first ever senior-level business delegation ( including Zespri) to the country. The visit will also provide an opportunity to discuss New Zealand’s wider relationship with South Africa. [Full article available here](https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/tabuteau-lead-new-zealand%E2%80%99s-first-trade-delegation-south-africa)

* 1. **Foreign Minister visited Indonesia and Thailand**

Foreign Affairs visited Thailand and Indonesia last week. Mr Peters will co-chair the New Zealand-Indonesia Joint Ministerial Consultations (JMC) while in Jakarta, alongside Indonesia’s Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi.“These talks come at an important time, as we celebrate 60 years of bilateral diplomatic relations. Indonesia is a vital partner for New Zealand in the Asia Pacific region, and we share real interests across trade, security and people connections,’’[Full article available here](https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/foreign-minister-visit-indonesia-and-thailand)

**General**

* 1. **Climate Outlook**

*Last week there were a couple of farming articles speculating about the possibility of a drought. NIWA’s quarterly advice is summarised below.*

The predicted upcoming El Niño event, should it come to fruition, is not expected to be of a similar intensity or type to what was experienced during 2015-16, 1997-98, or 1982-83. The October – December 2018 atmospheric circulation around New Zealand is forecast to be characterized by higher pressure than normal to the west and southwest of New Zealand. This circulation pattern is expected to be associated with anticyclonic conditions extending over the country, interspersed by episodes of southerly and southwesterly winds. This circulation pattern may be associated with cold nights and mornings, as well as the potential for late-season frosts and fog, particularly during the month of October.

Furthermore, soil moisture is well below normal for the time of year across parts of the upper South Island and the expectation is for normal or below normal rainfall for the coming three-month period.



[More complete and regional outlooks available here](https://www.niwa.co.nz/climate/seasonal-climate-outlook/seasonal-climate-outlook-october-december-2018)

* 1. **Increased RMA powers and regulation of intensive farming planned in water quality push**

Increased RMA powers and regulation of some intensive farming practices are included in sweeping plans to increase our freshwater quality announced by the Government. The moves will result in better water quality by 2023, Environment Minister David Parker promised.

Parker announced the suite of moves in Wellington on Monday, saying the country could not leave future generations to sort out water quality.

The headline moves include an amendment to the Resource Management Act (RMA) within 12 months that would allow councils to review consents in order to more quickly implement water quality standards. Further down the track are a new National Policy Statement on Freshwater Manager and new environmental standard by 2020. These changes would aim to protect wetlands, estuaries, and regulate some activities such as intensive winter grazing and feedlots.

Another decision on the way would look at regulating nutrient allocation - usually from fertiliser and livestock urine. Parker said the vast majority of the country wanted our freshwater quality to improve.

"The work programme includes three separate working groups: Kahui Wai Māori to include a Māori voice, a Freshwater Leaders Group chaired by Synlait Milk founder John Penno, and a science group that includes crusading scientist Mike Joy.The Freshwater Leaders Group is not made up of industry representatives as these groups often are, but land users who are also experts.

Parker said he had asked the National Land and Water Forum to look at this issue after coming to Government, but they had not been able to overcome differences between different industry groups represented at the forum. This showed the "limits of the collaborative process" and it was now up to Government to act.

Crown/Māori relations Minister Kelvin Davis said the Government would work with Māori on the plan. Notably, the plans do not include a levy on water, which was Labour's election policy. [Full article available here](https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/107672193/increased-rma-powers-and-regulation-of-intensive-farming-planned-in-water-quality-push)

* 1. **NZ government moves to support businesses trading with Iran**

The New Zealand government is doing everything it can to support businesses trading with Iran, the PM said last week, as friction between Iran and US delves deeper into a tit-for-tat relationship.

Ardern told reporters, We will keep promoting a move away from any tit-for-tat trade wars, anything that removes that predictability that we rely on so heavily.” [Full article available here](http://www.freshplaza.com/article/9028745/New-Zealand-government-moves-to-support-businesses-trading-with-Iran/)

* 1. **Frozen berries recalled because of foreign matter**

A brand of frozen mixed berries has been recalled because of "foreign matter", namely metal, found in the product. MPI said Nelson-based FSL Foods Ltd recalled a specific batch of Fruzio brand premium mixed berries. MPI says customers should return the products to their retailer for a full refund. [Full article available here](http://www.freshplaza.com/article/9029727/Frozen-berries-recalled-because-of-foreign-matter-says-New-Zealand-Ministry/)

**Industry news**

* 1. **New Zealand avocado growers concerned about thefts**

The NZ avocado industry is suffering from large scale theft as orchard raiders try to cash in on the fruit's high returns. But growers are fighting back. Dave Flett is part of a police and rural stakeholders group and says avocado thefts started out small with a few people with bucks and bags stealing. "But now it's grown out of proportion altogether. In a limited time they could walk away with a couple of thousand avocados quite easily," A crate of avocados is worth at least $200.

David Stewart of The Fresh Market says he gets occasional phone calls asking if he wants to buy some avocados. "The other days it's asparagus. The season's only a few weeks old and there's already stuff disappearing out of paddocks. People need to lock things up now. You need cameras like we do in the shops here. Security is paramount now." As the price of a commodity increases so does the temptation to steal it. [Full article available here](http://www.freshplaza.com/article/9028143/New-Zealand-avocado-growers-fight-back-against-thieves/)

* 1. **Avocado industry on track to bounce back from last year's low volume season**

New Zealand Avocado growers are expecting volumes to be around 25 per cent higher than last season.NZ Avocado Chief Executive Jen Scoular says the current season is a medium volume season, following on from a low volume season in 2017-18 and a record high volume season in the year prior.

"The season’s total harvest volume is forecast at 5.2million trays (5.5kg), of which 3.6million trays are forecast for export, accounting for around 60 per cent increase on the previous seasons export volumes," she said. [Full article available here](http://www.freshplaza.com/article/9029549/New-Zealand-avocado-industry-on-track-to-bounce-back-from-last-year-s-low-volume-season/)

* 1. **Thailand: New Zealand avocado season takes off**

Winston Peters opened the New Zealand Avocado official season launch event in Thailand this week, heralding the growing consumption of this fruit in Thailand. The event showcased the increasing popularity of New Zealand avocados in Thailand and was hosted by New Zealand avocado ambassador Patcharasri “Kalamare” Benjamas and catered by celebrity Thai chef Ian Kittichai at his Cuisine Concept kitchen in Bangkok. [Full article available here](http://www.freshplaza.com/article/9029731/Thailand-New-Zealand-avocado-season-takes-off/)

* 1. **Avanza to debut in China**

A strategic promotional campaign targeting affluent and aspirational young families will be used to drive sales of Avanza avocados in China this season. AVOCO’s marketing and communications manager Steve Trickett says the campaign, supported by in-store demonstrations and the WeChat app, will position Avanza as the supplier of premium quality New Zealand avocados and tap into the desires of Chinese ‘supermums’ who want to be seen as upper-middle class.

Avoco is exporting avocados to China under its Avanza brand for the first time – this month – since NZ gained market access earlier this year. About 50,000 trays are planned for its debut.

Steve says the promotional plan and its niche market focus would help to differentiate Avanza avocados from fruit sourced from South American heavyweights, including Chile and Peru.

Avanza, with around 65 per cent projected share of NZ exports, will be the industry leader in China.

In preparation, Avanza appointed Shanghai-based branding agency, Resonance China, to conduct research to better understand consumer behaviours and attitudes towards avocados. *The article talks about the different demographics and the messages that will be promoted to each demographic.*

[Full article available here](http://www.freshplaza.com/article/9029754/Avanza-to-debut-in-China/)

* 1. **NZ Flowers Week**

New Zealand Flowers Week is an event that dedicates itself to showcasing the best that the flower industry has to offer. This year it runs from November 5th-11th 2018. The organizers behind the week hope to encourage growers, wholesalers, florists and the NZ consumer to become more passionate than ever about local and seasonal flowers.

New Zealand flower growers have been under pressure in recent years to compete with an ever-expanding market for imported flowers and foliage. "[Full article available here](http://www.floraldaily.com/article/9028780/NZ-Flowers-Week-What-s-it-all-about/)

**Other**

* 1. **Fruitful results for Vietnam’s dragonfruit industry**

Scientists from New Zealand believed they had found a way to double dragonfruit production. This would be achieved through changing the way the plants are trained. Plant and Food Research scientists worked in Vietnam for five years as part of an aid programme to improve returns for dragonfruit growers.

The Vietnamese dragonfruit industry is worth USD1 billion. Around eighty percent of the crop was exported. It was now recommended that growers use T-bars and train the cladodes to them.

This is similar to the system employed by kiwifruit orchards. Its anticipated production could double with the new system. New Zealand scientists and their partners also found simple ways to control a new dragonfruit disease. [Full article available here](https://www.radionz.co.nz/national/programmes/countrylife/audio/2018664551/fruitful-results-for-vietnam-s-dragonfruit-industry)

* 1. **Vietnamese rambutan imports enter New Zealand**

Vietnam shipped its first boxes of rambutan to New Zealand on October 3 after seven years of negotiation on exporting this fruit to the market. This was reported by the Vietnamese Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. [Full article available here](http://www.freshplaza.com/article/9029025/Vietnamese-rambutan-imports-enter-New-Zealand/)

* 1. **Kellogg Rural Leadership Programme**

Applications are open for The Kellogg Rural Leadership Programme. The programme is designed to develop rural leaders for New Zealand in the agribusiness and agrifood sectors and has been successful in doing so for almost 40 years. The programme is looking for individuals who want to grow their leadership knowledge and skills, industry knowledge, and networks.

The programme looks fo r people who have a desire to contribute to the community, business, or industry. Programmes are six months long, and are from either January to July or June to November. The course is undertaken in three phases. Individual contributions to enter the programme were heavily subsidised. For more information please visit [here:](https://ruralleaders.co.nz/kellogg-home/)

* 1. **Seeka staff lose more than 180kg combined in Biggest Loser challenge**

Staff at Seeka have collectively lost more than 180kg in a "Biggest Loser" challenge set up to encourage employees to improve their health and wellbeing.The programme, said to be the only one of its kind in New Zealand, provides a free nursing outreach service in partnership with medical centres. It includes on-the-spot free heart, diabetes and women's health checks, as well as vaccinations, immunisations and assistance for smokers wanting to quit the habit.

"A lot of our employees are shift and seasonal workers, so getting to see a doctor can be difficult," Seeka's Ange Storck said.

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Between October last year and June 30 this year, 17 businesses were involved in the Workplace Wellness programme, a lot of them in the packhouse and construction industries. The Workplace Wellness checks will be offered to Seeka staff annually. [Full article available here](https://www.nzherald.co.nz/the-country/news/article.cfm?c_id=16&objectid=12135013)

* 1. **Potential sale of Napier port**

Investors may get a chance to buy $181 million worth of shares in New Zealand’s fourth-largest container port, Napier. Hawke’s Bay Regional Council is recommending to its 70,000 ratepayers that the council sell up to 45 percent of the Port of Napier in order to free up capital and diversify the council's investment base. The share sale, one of four options ratepayers will be asked to consider, could raise $83 million for the council after port-related debt of almost $87 million is repaid and sale costs of about $11 million are met. [Full article available here](http://www.freshplaza.com/article/9028677/Potential-sale-of-Napier-port-New-Zealand/)

* 1. **Auckland waterfront chaos spills over to other ports**

Auckland's cargo chaos is affecting other ports around the country as they cope with their own congestion problems. Port of Auckland and freight companies have advised clients of delays and congestion. Some ships had been diverted to Port of Tauranga. Centreport in Wellington also reported some knock on effects with ship calls sometimes doubling up rather than arriving in sequence. [Full article available here](http://www.freshplaza.com/article/9028259/New-Zealand-Auckland-waterfront-chaos-spills-over-to-other-ports/)

* 1. **Survey shows rural people less likely to ask for help with mental health**

"Seven out of 10 rural New Zealanders have felt more stress over the last five years, according to a survey. The *State of the Rural Nation Survey*, conducted by Bayer New Zealand and Country TV, asked participants several questions regarding their views on critical topics impacting rural New Zealand today, including a series of questions around mental health.

Of those who responded that they had felt increased stress over the last five years, over half (54 per cent) attributed financial pressures as the main reason, while the impact of environmental factors (i.e. droughts, flooding, hail) on people's work and livelihoods came in at a close second (49 per cent).

The survey highlighted that our younger generation (aged 18 – 39) were the most affected by stress and anxiety. A staggering 85 per cent of respondents in this age bracket indicated they had felt more personal stress in the last five years - significantly more than those 55 and above at 64 per cent.

The survey showed that those living rurally were significantly less likely than urban dwellers to consider talking to a health professional if they experienced signs of stress or anxiety. "More than half of respondents found it difficult to talk about mental health issues. What's more, 56 per cent claimed they'd rather deal with things themselves, while just under half responded that the stigma associated with mental health was the reason for their discomfort in talking about it. [Full article available here](https://www.nzherald.co.nz/the-country/news/article.cfm?c_id=16&objectid=12137586)

**Biosecurity**

* 1. **Seeka notifies of Australian kiwifruit orchard symptoms**

Seeka advises that, as a result of its on-orchard monitoring system in Australia, it has notified Agriculture Victoria of unusual bacterial related symptoms in the orchards under development. The symptoms are consistent with the PSA disease (pseudomonas syringae pv actinidiae) – although the presence of this disease is still to be positively confirmed.  Seeka has advised Agriculture Victoria, who are now moving to take samples for analysis.

In total, Seeka has 154 hectares of kiwifruit in Australia of which 93 hectares are the Hayward variety [green] and in production.  The remaining 61 hectares are in development, with 47 hectares planted in root stock and ungrafted, and 14 hectares grafted two years go.  As part of preventative measures, Seeka has removed the grafted canopy from 4.5 hectares of the 2-year-old vines, with the remainder under watch.  The Hayward variety in production does not appear to be affected and Seekas’ experience in New Zealand is that Hayward can tolerate PSA.

EO Michael Franks said the removal of 4.5 hectare of grafted canopy includes the new red and gold varieties they grafted there, “These are varieties we consider to be susceptible to PSA and the removal is a precautionary measure. We have advised the Chief plant health officer of the symptoms and they are arranging to take samples, and in due course will confirm if we have PSA or not.

“The belief is that PSA naturally dies off in hotter temperatures and where we grow kiwifruit in Australia it is not uncommon to reach temperatures above 40 degrees, so our belief is that we just have to get through the spring period, remove those plants which are infected and wait for the hot weather. We are not nervous about what is happening, we think our protocols should work. [Full article available here](http://www.freshplaza.com/article/9028168/We-are-not-nervous-about-what-is-happening-we-think-our-protocols-should-work/)

* 1. **Bay of Plenty collective forms to strengthen biosecurity fight**

The threat of losing Mauao's iconic pohutukawa to a foreign virus has prompted the coming together of 19 Tauranga-based organisations in what is believed to be a New Zealand first. This ‘Tauranga Moana Biosecurity Capital’ is tasked with strengthening protection for New Zealand’s borders from invasive pests and devastating viruses. The collective plans to increase awareness among the local population and advocate for better biosecurity. .[Full article available here](http://www.freshplaza.com/article/9027801/NZ-Bay-of-Plenty-collective-forms-to-strengthen-biosecurity-fight/)



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. This week see:

1. **Burma Notification on the Registration of New Plant Varieties**The Department of Agriculture made changes to the process for registering new plant varieties.  It changed the type of information required, and also limited the requirement for field trial data to only 17 target crops.
[Notification on the Registration of New Plant Varieties\_Rangoon\_Burma - Union of\_9-28-2018](http://gain.fas.usda.gov/Recent%20GAIN%20Publications/Notification%20on%20the%20Registration%20of%20New%20Plant%20Varieties_Rangoon_Burma%20-%20Union%20of_9-28-2018.pdf)
2. **Canada Potatoes and Potato Products Annual 2018** FAS/Ottawa forecasts a one percent decline in total potato production for marketing year 2018/19, following a challenging growing year for potato growers across Canada due to high temperatures and below average precipitation.  Canadian imports of fresh potatoes are forecast to grow one percent in the year ahead
[Potatoes and Potato Products Annual 2018\_Ottawa\_Canada\_9-24-2018](http://gain.fas.usda.gov/Recent%20GAIN%20Publications/Potatoes%20and%20Potato%20Products%20Annual%202018_Ottawa_Canada_9-24-2018.pdf)
3. **Morocco Phytosanitary Control for Seed Potatoes** This report contains the unofficial translation of the phytosanitary control procedures for seed potato imports.  The imported seed potato market is valued at $25 million and the U.S. currently does not have commercial market access.  [Phytosanitary Control for Seed Potatoes\_Rabat\_Morocco\_9-25-2018](http://gain.fas.usda.gov/Recent%20GAIN%20Publications/Phytosanitary%20Control%20for%20Seed%20Potatoes_Rabat_Morocco_9-25-2018.pdf)

**Regulatory**

* 1. **EU Parliament moves to ban unfair trading practices in the food supply chain**

The EU Parliament Agriculture Committee voted with an overwhelming majority for a fair food supply chain benefiting all actors and consumers. l. The legislation guarantees that agreed contracts between farmers, producers and retailers are respected and that no party can apply Unfair Trading Practices (UTPs). The proposal will complement existing legislation against Unfair Trading Practices in 20 Member States protecting all actors from the direct or indirect effects of UTPs, and avoid legal fragmentation and forum shopping. [Full article available here](http://www.hortidaily.com/article/9029077/EU-Parliament-moves-to-ban-unfair-trading-practices-in-the-food-supply-chain/)

  **China**

* 1. **China: How to solve the problem of unmarketable fruit?**

Looking back on 2017 and 2018, the fruit marketin China has suffered from unmarketable fruit at an unprecedented scale. The phenomenon of unmarketable fruit has changed from individual cases to a universal feature of the fruit market, occurring with greater frequency in recent years, at first only in certain areas, but now spreading across the country. Initially only a few fruit varieties were affected, but the phenomenon has spread across the industry. And some are weak all year round. This is thought to be due to

1. Farmers blindly expanding the surface area planted, which led to a situation where supply exceeded demand.

2. Low-price, high-quality imported fruit seizes market shares from domestic fruit.

3. The domestic fruit market lacks transparency and requires an improved information structure.

4. Agricultural e-commerce is rapidly developing with decentralized traders, WeChat shops, and fast delivery. E-commerce rapidly replaces traditional marketing and retail channels.

[Full article available here](http://www.freshplaza.com/article/9029481/China-How-to-solve-the-problem-of-unmarketable-fruit/)

 **Marketing**

* 1. **Freshfel times**

The Freshfel time is produced every two to three months by the European fresh producers association. The Headlines for the latest period [can be found here](http://freshfel.org/freshfel-headlines-5-2018/).

In this edition Freshfel recounts the following:

* Freshfel Europe holds 2nd Thematic Network webinar
* Freshfel Europe presents residue limits at the Chicory Biennial 2018
* UTPs: Freshfel Europe position paper & follow up in European Parliament
* Freshfel Europe responds to Commission consultation on market transparency
* Freshfel Europe discusses EU-USA trade tensions & way forward at DG TRADE
* Freshfel Europe continues to focus on emerging Asian markets
* Freshfel Europe meets with Commissioner Hogan’s Cabinet on trade policy
* Freshfel Europe participates in expert group on ‘Plant Health Awareness Raising’
* Freshfel Europe holds stand at 40th EFAD Conference in Rotterdam
* Freshfel Europe Board Member re-elected at Civil Dialogue Group on Fruit and Vegetables

 **Food safety**

* 1. **Food safety conference delivers key learnings to the fresh produce industry**

The theme of this year’s Fresh Produce Safety Conference, in Sydney two weeks ago was ‘Food Safety: It’s Your Responsibility’. **Key learnings for the fresh produce industry are:**

• Suresh DeCosta, Director of Food Safety, Lipman Family Farms (USA) and member of the Technical Committee of the US Center for Produce Safety, said acceptable risk is about prevention and mitigation. Initiatives include:

* New mapping tools used on the Lipman Farms allows supervisors to better understand and react to pest incursions (animal intrusions) by “socialising” the real-time information.
* Changing the culture of food safety training across all staff (using online interactive training tools) increased compliance from 37 per cent to nearly 90 per cent.
* Listeria continues to be problematic in the fresh produce industry with collaborations with equipment manufacturers (equipment used in packing houses) and the meat industry being the next frontier in countering future Listeria outbreaks.

• Professor Sylvain Charlebois, Professor in Food Distribution and Policy, Dalhousie University (Canada), highlighted food fraud and the role that blockchain technologies will play in ensuring the true provenance of food . One solution was blockchain, which will bring a new level of transparency to the food industry. Traceability, he warned, was not enough. An open economy like Australia’s made blockchain ‘crucial’, with Walmart currently trialling blockchain technologies in mangoes.

• Steve Hather, Director of the Recall Institute, has a clear message about irrational consumers and over-enthusiastic regulators turning an incident into a crisis and asking, ‘Can your business survive a recall?’ Social media has the power to multiply reputational damage a thousandfold yet can be the key to managing a food safety incident. Among the crucial factors Mr Hather said, preparation, decisive action and creating a ‘single source of truth’ to explain the incident, preferably online and regularly updated.

• Catherine Richardson, Market and Quality Assurance Manager, Zespri International, said The only way to maintain a culture of food safety is to live and breathe it. ‘Certification is not enough to ensure food safety,’ she said. ‘People have to GET IT!’ [Full article available here](http://www.freshplaza.com/article/9028114/Food-safety-conference-delivers-key-learnings-to-the-fresh-produce-industry/)

* 1. **Listeria in fresh produce: Are we any the wiser?**

‘The role of food safety staff must go beyond compliance and keeping the regulatory guys happy,’ said Suresh DeCosta, Director of Food Safety, Lipman Family Farms (USA) and Technical Committee, Center for Produce Safety (USA), at the 5th Annual Fresh Produce Safety Conference in Sydney.

It was explained there are 17 species of Listeria but most are harmless and only two are implicated in human infections. The most dangerous is Listeria monocytogenes, yet even this has a virulent and non-virulent form. There are three factors that make Listeria a key issue for fresh produce.

* The first concerned the source of infections, Sheep and cattle and humans are responsible for spreading both environmental (non-virulent) Listeria and infectious (virulent) Listeria, but what triggers the shedding of virulent L. monocytogenes in animals? Could it be drought-induced stress? Feedlots? Anti-biotic treatment? Nobody is sure.
* Testing is another major factor. Rapid testing is prone to false positives, while the more rigorous Australian standard method test takes up to a week, a crucial delay during a crisis.
* A third factor is the ability of Listeria to persist on the surface of fruit with inedible skins, such as rockmelons due to its natural unevenness and skin texture.

While Listeria is often found in the routine testing of fresh produce – with the exception of rockmelons – it has not been linked to outbreaks in Australia. While the differences between virulent and non-virulent strains of L. monocytogenes are still not fully understood, what has been learnt from recent outbreaks is the fresh produce and meat industries require collaboration to solve this problem.

Listeriosis is a notifiable disease, but its long incubation (typically two to four weeks but up to 70 days) made it very difficult to identify the food or environmental source. The use of whole genome sequencing, however, had been a game-changer in outbreak surveillance and detection.

Dr Shadbolt highlights the need for better understanding of the importance of washing and sanitising. Among other things, the role of chemical sanitiser concentrations and problems with dust and hygiene in packing houses. Mixing fungicide and chemical sanitiser Dr Shadbolt said, has the potential of one cancelling out the other. The investigation into the 2018 rockmelon Listeria outbreak found that the packing house in the Griffith was hygienic and well run. In Griffith, environmental factors were thought to have been responsible, with heavy rain and dust storms likely to have boosted the bacterial load before harvest and compromised the effectiveness of washing systems. Extra washing to cope with soil loading and higher sanitiser concentration may help mitigate such factors in future.

At Lipman Family Farms, Mr DeCosta identified cleaning and sanitising as key issues. Too often, he said, the job of sanitising equipment was performed as overtime by ordinary workers. For the job to be done properly, it needed dedicated staff, properly trained and paid a premium – a change that could only be achieved with the full co-operation of management. Effective training was the key. ‘Staff should be consulted in making investments and improvements,’ [Full article available here](http://www.hortidaily.com/article/9028135/Listeria-in-fresh-produce-Are-we-any-the-wiser/)

* 1. **Singapore recalls Malaysian iceberg lettuce over pesticide content**

The Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority of Singapore (AVA) has issued a recall for iceberg lettuce after it detected high levels of pesticide in the vegetable imported from a Malaysian farm. “The AVA has detected high levels of Fipronil, a wide-spectrum pesticide, in (the) iceberg lettuce,” said the agency, which has directed the importer to recall the product. The recall is ongoing. [Full article available here](http://www.freshplaza.com/article/9029671/Singapore-recalls-Malaysian-iceberg-lettuce-over-pesticide-content/)



 **Sustainability**

* 1. **Xylella**… a global threat to citrus

CVC is caused by the bacteria Xylella fastidiosa subsp. pauca. It is a serious disease of sweet orange and other citrus species, leading to tree decline and reduced production. The bacteria get into the xylem (water) tubes of the trees which then transport the bacteria throughout the tree.

Symptoms include yellowing and mottling patterns on the leaves indicative of nutrient deficiency (mainly zinc) with corresponding brown, gummy lesions on the underside of leaves. Fruit on infected trees are small with hard, thin rinds and colour early but ripening is inhibited. The disease spreads by grafting of infected material or by insect vectors.

Xylella is not yet present in New Zealand. Different subspecies of Xylella fastidiosa cause disease in over 350 commercial and ornamental plant species, with new hosts regularly added to the list. Diseases caused by Xylella include Pierce’s disease in grapevine, quick decline in olives and leaf scorch in coffee and almonds.

The glassy-winged sharpshooter is one vector associated with the spread of CVC and whilst we don’t have the sharpshooter here yet, any insect which feeds on the xylem sap of infected plants can spread the bacteria. Take the case in southern Italy where ancient olive trees are dying due to transmission of the Xylella bacteria by an insect commonly found there, the Meadow spittle bug.

In the absence of a cure, prevention is the key to management of graft-transmitted diseases like CVC. Controlling populations of insect vectors and removal of infected trees are important for in-field management but it is important to keep these diseases out of citrus orchards by planting disease-free nursery trees. [Full article available here](http://www.freshplaza.com/article/9027764/Xylella-a-global-threat-to-citrus/)

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