By Fruitnet.com Staff

Wednesday 20th August 2008, 16:41 GMT

New chairman for Zespri Group

Global kiwifruit marketer Zespri has elected John Loughlin as group chairman to replace Craig Greenlees, whose departure was announced today.

Zespri Group Ltd chairman Craig Greenlees has stepped down after six years in the role, global kiwifruit marketer Zespri announced today.

The Zespri board has elected John Loughlin – an independent director of six years and former Richmond Ltd ceo – as his replacement. Peter McBride was appointed deputy chairman, after six years as a director.

In a press release announcing the move, Zespri said Mr Greenlees had decided to make this year his last as chairman, and had advised the board of his decision at its first meeting following the AGM. Mr Greenlees will continue as a director of Zespri Group Ltd and G6 Kiwi Ltd.

"I am very pleased that the company is now ready to move into another strong growth phase after more challenging market environments over the last two years, and believe it is the right time for new leadership at board and executive level to secure those gains," Mr Greenlees said in the release. "It is also a good time for an independent director to take over the chairmanship at a time of industry consolidation, particularly in the post-harvest sector."

In-coming chairman Mr Loughlin said he was honoured to be asked by the board to take up the chairmanship. "I am tremendously excited about Zespri’s prospects," he said. "I am looking forward to meeting with employees today, and growers during the two-week roadshow starting on Monday to outline the particular perspective I will bring as chairman, being initially from outside the kiwifruit industry."

"I am pleased to have Peter McBride as my deputy given his deep links, history and knowledge of this industry over his entire career," he added.

Mr Loughlin said the Zespri board was continuing the process to appoint a permanent ceo following the resignation of Tony Nowell in June.