



By Mike Knowles

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US relaxes kiwifruit import rules

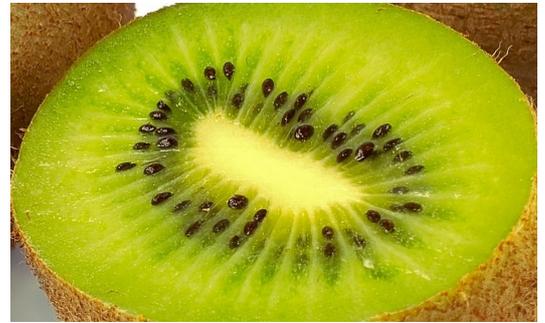


Photo: Luc Viatour

Change to marketing order should reduce packing costs and increase volume of fruit available to import, says USDA

More imported kiwifruit could potentially be shipped to the US in future after the USDA relaxed its minimum grade requirement for "badly misshapen" fruit destined for the fresh market.

The change, which applies primarily to kiwifruit growers in California, sees the tolerance level for lower-grade product increase from 7 per cent to 16 per cent, is expected to remove cost from the supply chain.

The USDA said the action would not add cost in terms of meeting order requirements or the kiwifruit import regulation.

"Rather, this action is expected to reduce costs to handlers and growers of kiwifruit, and to increase efficiencies in the packing process," the agency stated.

"Increasing the tolerance for misshapen fruit will reduce the amount of product that fails to meet the minimum grade, thus reducing re-sorting and repacking costs and reducing inefficiencies in the packing process. The quality of fruit to consumers is not expected to be significantly affected."

Importers would also benefit from the change as a greater volume of fruit would become available for shipment to the US, it added.

"The opportunities and benefits of this rule are equally available to all kiwifruit handlers, growers, and importers, regardless of their size."

According to the USDA, there are more than 50 kiwifruit importers in the US bringing in shipments worth a total of around US\$7m each year.