Gold3 saves kiwifruit sector

The new Psa-resistant kiwifruit variety could herald the return of a golden age for the New Zealand kiwifruit industry.

The new kiwifruit variety Gold3 has brought New Zealand's kiwifruit industry back from the brink after the devastating Psa virus struck Bay of Plenty golden kiwifruit (Hort16A) orchards in late 2010, reports The New Zealand Herald.

Neil Treblico, president of NZ Kiwifruit Growers, told the paper that realising last November that the Gold3 variety – which had by chance been released prior to the Psa outbreak – was Psa-disease-resistant was a turning point for the industry.

Since then grower confidence has 'flooded back' to pre-Psa levels, he said.

Zespri chairman Peter McBride told the publication that the industry's Psa recovery was now well underway, with most Hort16A growers now grafted over to Gold3, and a significant number also choosing to graft from green to Gold3.

Industry representatives told the Herald that since planting the new variety, orchard prices have rebounded, investment has started again, and fruit prices are better in over a decade.

“We are very fortunate that the new Gold3 variety was released just before Psa happened,” Treblico is quoted as saying. “It meant that growers could graft across to it in a short space of time. It is a huge blessing that that variety was there, and it looks like it’s going to work.”

Psa caused New Zealand gold kiwifruit volumes to fall by 55 per cent in 2013/14 compared to the previous season, the paper said.

This season New Zealand kiwifruit marketer Zespri estimates its Gold volumes will rise from 11m trays to 17m trays thanks to Gold3 plantings.