



By Matthew Jones

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Zespri begins NZ export campaign

Kiwifruit marketer says ports in Japan, Korea and Europe are functioning well, with labour available

New Zealand's 2020 kiwifruit export campaign is officially underway, with single desk marketer Zespri shipping its first consignment of the new season.

Carrying just over 1m trays of SunGold kiwifruit, the Baltic Pearl departed Tauranga Harbour earlier this week destined for Japan. The vessel – one of 47 chartered shipments Zespri plans to make this season – will reach Tokyo and Kobe in late March.

Zespri's chief global supply officer, Blair Hamill, said despite ongoing challenges associated with coronavirus (Covid-19), all ports in Japan, Korea and Europe were functioning well and had labour available.

"We're continuing to monitor the situation closely and adopting a precautionous approach, with our contingency planning taking account of the rapidly changing environment," said Hamill.

"We're seeing positive signs in China in terms of the improving consumer metrics, and we expect our charter reefer vessels to run as planned."

With harvest now underway, Hamill said the industry was working hard to deliver another high-quality crop, which has benefitted from warm weather and excellent pollination.

"This season we're expecting to supply around 155m trays, or around 600,000 tonnes, of our premium Zespri kiwifruit to our consumers across the world," explained Hamill.

"Our latest estimates show we're on track to supply over 80m trays of SunGold, and around 70m trays of green this year. That's up from around 74m trays of SunGold and 73m trays of green last year, which marked the first time we've supplied more SunGold to the markets."

In total, Zespri expects to send over 18,500 containers of kiwifruit this season. Asia will absorb the lion's share of the export crop, with 32 of the 47 charter vessels destined for this region. Four sailings will depart for North Europe, while a further 11 will service Zespri's Mediterranean customers.

"We'll continue to monitor the developing COVID-19 situation closely,

and if we see any change in demand or disruption to a port, we will make adjustments to our fruit allocations accordingly," said Hamill.

