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NZ produce prices set to rise

Expect the price of New Zealand-grown fresh fruit and vegetables to rise, warns industry head at Horticulture New Zealand's annual conference

New Zealanders must get used to higher prices for home-grown fruit and vegetables if they want the New Zealand produce sector to survive, Horticulture New Zealand president Andrew Fenton has warned.

Speaking at the industry's annual conference in Auckland today, he said the biggest challenge facing New Zealand's growers was providing quality fresh produce at profitable rates in the face of rising volumes of cheaper imports.

"The immediate reality is a hard message to deliver. But it must be said. New Zealand consumers are going to have to pay more, because it costs more to produce the same quality and quantity of fruit and vegetables," he said, according to the New Zealand Press Association. "Plus we are facing an unprecedented assault from cheap imported fresh and processed food from offshore."

Mr Fenton warned that if the industry were unable to grow profitably, then

it would not be long before New Zealand imported all of its fruit and vegetables from lower cost producers.

"That is a despicable thought but this could be a reality during this decade if the perception of consumers is not changed from 'buying cheap produce' to paying a fair price, as they do overseas," he said.