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Samoa ships first bananas to NZ in 50 years

The trial shipment is the first banana export for the country since cyclone Gita hit in February



Five hundred cartons of bananas set sail for New Zealand from Samoa just yesterday (17 October), which the industry hopes will pave the way for further commercial volumes.

The first commercial trial shipment will spend five days in transit before clearing New Zealand customs and landing in the hands of distributor, Fresh Direct.

Samoa Observer reported the Samoan banana industry is hoping the shipment will arrive and clear customs with ease, as farmers have worked hard to recoup from cyclone Gita earlier this year.

Nearly 100 other farmers received planting materials over the course of this year, signalling a promising future for commercial banana exports from Samoa, said the president of the Banana Growers Association, Tuisuga Sofara Avea.

"This shipment is a trial for commercial sale, which hasn't been done for almost fifty years," he added.

Avea will accompany some of the banana farmers involved on a trip to New Zealand to welcome the shipment on arrival. There they will check on the container and follow it through quarantine.

The export project has been some two years in the making, and through it has seen a small trial load of bananas sent to New Zealand last June, as well as the formation of the Banana Growers Association.

Should it be successful, farm manager of Ah Liki, Johanna Coyle said she hopes to ship bananas as frequently as once a week.

"All the farmers, as a whole need to justify getting a weekly departure to New Zealand by putting up enough produce," she noted.

Currently, containers depart Samoa for New Zealand every 12-14 days.