



By Liam O'Callaghan

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Rule changes for NZ apple and pear harvest



To help combat the spread of coronavirus, new protocols will be implemented for the remainder of the season

New Zealand's apple and pear industry will continue its 2020 harvest under strict new rules in response to the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic.

The harvest of the country's apple, pear and nashi crops is already well underway, with more than 14,000 workers harvesting around 600,000 tonnes of fruit destined for domestic and global consumers, and for processing.

On 26 March, when New Zealand moved to a nationwide lockdown, the government declared the production and processing of food as an essential service, allowing the picking, packing and shipping of fruit to continue but under very strict protocols.

Alan Pollard, chief executive New Zealand Apples and Pears (NAZPI), said that the industry understands and acknowledges the privileged position it is in, particularly when other businesses cannot operate.

"Our employers and our workers take their responsibility to themselves and the

"In being able to continue to operate, we have three key priorities: the safety of our workers; the prevention of any spread of Covid-19 in our communities; and maintaining food security," said Poillard.

While the industry's priority is to provide fresh and healthy fruit for New Zealanders, Pollard said the importance of continuing to export cannot be underestimated.

"New Zealand exports a number of food products and imports a range of other essential goods," he said.

"If we continue to supply food to countries that import our food products, we are more likely to be looked after when we need essential goods such as medicines."

Pollard also acknowledged that some aspects of current industry practice may be confusing for those not engaged in the industry.

"I am aware of concerns being expressed by some members of the public about the number of people who are sometimes being transported in industry vehicles. In the same way that the community has arranged itself into bubbles often representing family units, so too have our workers," Pollard explained.

"So, when you see a group of people in a vehicle, they are most likely to be a group who live together, travel together and work together without leaving their bubble."

Pollard said NAZPI had been working with government agencies to ensure the safety of workers, the fruit and the public.

"We can assure the public that employers in the apple and pear industry are doing all they can to make their workplaces the safest they can be, whether that's in the orchard, the packhouse or in support roles," Pollard said.

<http://www.fruitnet.com/americafruit/article/1474/parts-of-san-diego-quarantined-as-psyllid-count-mounts>

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community very seriously. If people have concerns, we are happy to respond.”

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