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New Zealand clamps down on tomato disease



Authorities hope to resume exports by October as efforts to control the spread of Pepino mosaic virus continue

New Zealand's tomato exports may return to full capacity by the end of 2021 with the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) encouraged by the progress of a Pepino mosaic virus (PepMV) outbreak.

New Zealand tomato exports to five countries – Australia, Japan, Thailand, Fiji, Tonga, and New Caledonia – were suspended while Japan was partially closed, after the discovery of the virus in April.

According to a report from RNZ, MPI response controller David Yard said PepMV had now been detected in four glasshouses and work was continuing to control the spread.

"The key efforts will be in preventing the spread between different operations between different greenhouse complexes, and particularly between indoor and outdoor tomato growing units,"

"We will be looking at having on-farm

biosecurity plans for individual operators. Those will include measures such as good hygiene around equipment, and properties, for example, keeping equipment sterilised, keeping records of peoples movements, around the farm and onto other properties."

"We'll also be looking at the cleaning of equipment that's shared between businesses such as crates that they use to transport the fruit between farms and retail."

Although exports can still continue to countries that do not view PepMV a quarantine concern Yard said he is hopeful the export ban to some countries will be lifted before the season starts in October.

"I think it's important, so the exports can continue to many markets, including our largest market for fresh tomatoes, which is Japan, which came in at about 43 percent of the 2020 volume," said Yard.

"We're going to have continued discussions with markets where restrictions remain, hopefully with the aim of reopening trade ahead of the export season in October.

"Discussions are ongoing, but we cannot give any guarantees because they're on a case-by-case basis with each country."

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