

SUBMISSION

**SUBMISSION ON**

**Proposed amendments to pre-export phytosanitary requirements for fresh fruit and vegetables imported into New Zealand**

27 October 2023

**To:** MPI Horticulture Imports

**Name of Submitter:** Horticulture New Zealand

**Contact for Service:**

Eve Pleydell  
Risk Policy Manager  
Horticulture New Zealand  
PO Box 10-232 WELLINGTON  
Email: [Eve.Pleydell@hortnz.co.nz](mailto:Eve.Pleydell@hortnz.co.nz)  
Ph: 021 745 787

# OVERVIEW

## Submission structure

- 1 Part 1: HortNZ's Role
- 2 Part 2: Submission
  - General comments about the consultation
  - Comments about the proposed amendments

---

## Our submission

Horticulture New Zealand (HortNZ) thanks the Ministry for Primary Industries Horticultural Imports team for the opportunity to submit on the proposed changes to pre-export phytosanitary requirements for fresh fruit and vegetables. We welcome any opportunity to continue to work with MPI regarding these and future changes.

# HortNZ's Role

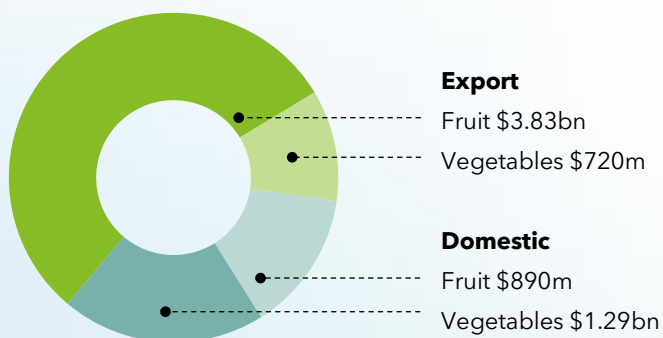
## Background to HortNZ

Horticulture New Zealand represents the interests of 6000 commercial fruit and vegetable growers in New Zealand, who grow around 100 different crop types and employ over 60,000 workers.

There is approximately 80,000 ha of horticultural land in New Zealand on which fruit, berries and vegetables are grown.

It is not just the economic benefits associated with horticultural production that are important. The rural economy supports local communities and food production defines much of the rural landscape. Food production values provide a platform for long term sustainability of communities, through the provision of food security.

HortNZ's purpose is to create an enduring environment where growers prosper. This is done through enabling, promoting, and advocating for growers in New Zealand.



**Industry value \$6.73bn**  
**Total exports \$4.55bn**  
**Total domestic \$2.18bn**

## HortNZ's Biosecurity Involvement

On behalf of its grower members, HortNZ takes a significant interest in biosecurity regulations, planning and operations. As well as advocating on behalf of growers in discussions with MPI and other regulators, HortNZ and other industry groups also work to raise the awareness of fruit and vegetable growers about the roles they themselves can play in helping to keep their farms, orchards and wider New Zealand protected from unwanted pests and diseases.

# Submission

## 1. General comments about the consultation

### 1.1. Duration of consultation periods

HortNZ appreciates having a five-week consultation period. In general, we request that when MPI sets the duration of a consultation period you consider the number of Import Health Standard (IHS) consultations that are running and that have been running in any 3-month period. All industry bodies have limited resources, the more standards that are out for consultation the less resource there will be per consultation, and that is likely to affect the quality of the feedback you receive.

### 1.2. The Risk Management Plan

In general, the risk management plan (RMP) was useful. Thank you.

Section 1.4 provided good background and context information at an appropriate level of detail. Please bear in mind that sometimes questions do arise about the general process rather than specifically about the details being changed. In these circumstances a greater depth of information would be required to answer those questions. However, rather than you adding more detail to this section of a RMP or us adding more questions to our submissions, it would be useful to have a process in place where questions could be asked and answered in real time. This would ideally be placed about midway through the consultation period.

The one area of the background section where additional detail would help to increase confidence, would be one or two sentences about the verification process MPI uses to ensure the NPPOs of exporting countries are conducting the pre-export phytosanitary inspections in the manner required to mitigate biosecurity risks.

### 1.3. Verification processes

1. HortNZ requests that more information is provided about how MPI verifies that NPPOs are conducting pre-export phytosanitary inspections in accordance with ISPM 31.

HortNZ thanks MPI for only permitting the importation of fresh ginger and rambutan from countries *“where the National Plant Protection Agency (NPPO) has provided evidence to the satisfaction of a chief technical officer that the exporting country has a phytosanitary certification system that complies with ISPM 7. Phytosanitary certification system”*. Further to this, ISPM 7 requires the NPPO to *“verify that appropriate phytosanitary procedures have been established and correctly applied”*.

To increase industry and public confidence that these proposed changes will not increase biosecurity risks to New Zealand, HortNZ requests more details about the processes used to verify that the pre-export phytosanitary procedures of countries covered by the IHSs under consultation are being correctly applied. We would like to understand:

- i) How MPI checks that the lots being defined are homogeneous

- ii) How MPI verifies that the sampling and inspection methodology of an exporting country meets the requirements of these ISPMs
- iii) How frequently and in what manner MPI engages in verification activities to ensure that the standard of pre-export phytosanitary procedures remains at the level required to provide 95% confidence of <0.5 infested units in every lot.

While ongoing verification is important for all exporting countries, it becomes critically important when a new country is added to an import health standard. As this occurrence happens relatively frequently, HortNZ would like assurance that MPI works alongside new countries that are added to IHSs and ensures that they do understand and implement the procedures required.

## 1.4. Inconsistency in standards

### 2. HortNZ requests more information about future changes planned for fresh produce IHSs

The RMP mentions that inconsistency between standards creates uncertainty for MPI during audits and when assessing equivalence requests. HortNZ suggests it also creates uncertainty for exporting countries. However, there are marked differences between the format and content of Standard 152.02 compared to the newer standards for ginger and rambutan. HortNZ assumes these inconsistencies will be addressed over time and we would like to know more about the envisioned end point for these standards. For example, will there be a single standard for all commodities and countries?

## 2. Comments about the proposed amendments

### 2.1. Sweetcorn from Australia

As it is internationally recognised that *Peronosclerospora sorghi* is not present in Australia, HortNZ supports the removal of targeted measures for this specific pathogen for fresh sweetcorn arriving from Australia.

We support the ongoing requirement for targeted measures for maize downy mildew and corn smut on sweetcorn from Australia. Thank you.

### 2.2. Changes to pre-export phytosanitary inspection

This consultation relates to proposed amendments to three standards: Standard 152.02 *Importation and Clearance of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables into New Zealand*; IHS *Fresh Ginger* (*Zingiber officinale* and *Z. zerumbet*) for Human Consumption; and IHS *Fresh Rambutan for Human Consumption*.

#### 2.2.1. PRE-EXPORT LOT INSPECTION

HortNZ understands and supports MPI's intention to align terminology and methods with the International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPMs) published by the International Plant Protection Convention.

However, we are concerned that the provision of too little specificity within the import health standards could contribute to less robust pre-export phytosanitary inspections

being conducted in some exporting countries and a corresponding increase in biosecurity risks posed by imported fresh produce.

The areas of the standards where changes are being proposed include guidance about choosing sample sizes and assessing homogeneity of a lot. In both areas, the addition of slightly more information to the standards would ensure that the requirements are very clear to all countries regardless of the levels of experience of and resourcing for their NPPOs. More details about our recommended additional information are provided in the sections below.

### **2.2.1.1. Sample size**

3. HortNZ requests that all standards take a clear and consistent approach that maximises the likelihood that NPPOs use appropriate sample sizes when conducting pre-export inspections.
4. As ISPM 31 requires some interpretation, HortNZ recommends that MPI specifies required sample sizes based upon the principles and statistical tables provided in ISPM 31.

HortNZ supports the proposal to add more specific details about the requirements for pre-export phytosanitary inspections of fresh produce to Section 2.3 in Standard 152.02. Thank you.

However, the approach being taken to explain the sample size requirements in Standard 152.02 (which is relatively prescriptive) differs to the approach taken in the standards for ginger and rambutan (which barely suggest anything). Standard 152.02 directs the NPPO to visually inspect 600 units for any consignment consisting of more than 5000 units and refers them to ISPM 31 Appendix 2 to find a suitable sample size for smaller consignments. In contrast, the draft standards for ginger and rambutan direct the NPPO to ISPM 31 to select an appropriate sample size regardless of consignment size, although additional guidance is provided that 600 units is typically the minimum sample size.

This lack of consistency across different standards may be confusing for some NPPOs and result in inappropriate sample sizes being used. If an inadequate number of units are inspected, then the target of 95% confidence that not more than 0.5% of a consignment is infested will not be achieved.

HortNZ recommends that ISPM 31 is used to provide more information about the sample sizes required to attain the stated level of confidence that a consignment is not infested. Areas that require consideration are: i) the definition of a smaller consignment; ii) using a more realistic value for inspection efficacy; iii) providing clearer direction on the sample sizes needed for consignments of different sizes. These are discussed below.

#### ***Recalculate the cut-off for delineating smaller consignments***

Appendix 2 of ISPM 31 defines a relatively smaller lot as one for which the required sample size is more than 5% of the lot size. Therefore, for a minimum sample size of 600 this would equate to the cut-off between smaller and larger lots of 12,000 units. This is rather larger than the current cut-off of 5000 units provided in Standard 152.02.

### **Use an efficacy of less than 100% to calculate sample sizes**

All three standards highlight 600 units as a typical sample size. However, this sample size assumes that the efficacy of detection is 100%, which is unlikely to be true.

Section 3.1.1.4 of ISPM 31 clearly states that “*in general the efficacy [of detection] should not be assumed to be 100%*”. It lists three reasons why this may be the case: pests may be difficult to see, visible disease symptoms may not be present, and human error.

Table 3 in ISPM 31 Appendix 3 shows that for larger lots an inspection efficacy of 85% equates to a minimum sample size of approximately 700 units, not 600. Therefore, a minimum sample size of 700 units would be more likely to achieve the required 95% confidence level that no more than 0.5% of units in the lot are infested with regulated organisms.

Unfortunately, ISPM 31 does not provide sufficient operational guidance to NPPOs on how to incorporate a more realistic level of inspection efficacy into sample size selection for smaller consignments.

### **Consider providing sample sizes for different sized consignments**

As the statistical tables in ISPM31 do not provide sufficient information to select a sample size for smaller lots at an inspection efficacy of lower than 100%, HortNZ recommends that the two principles outlined above are used to produce required sample sizes and include these in the standards. Providing a simple table of required sample sizes stratified by consignment size would eliminate ambiguity and be totally aligned with the methodologies set out in ISPM 31.

An example of a simple table of required sample sizes that could be included within import health standards to guide NPPOs. These sample sizes have been rounded up to easy-to-use numbers that allow for imperfect inspection efficacies.

<i>Size of Consignment</i>	<i>Sample size for phytosanitary inspection</i>	<i>Acceptance level of infestation</i>
<i>&gt;10,000 units</i>	700 units	0 units
<i>2,000-9,999 units</i>	600 units	0 units
<i>700-1,999 units</i>	500 units	0 units
<i>400-699 units</i>	400 units	0 units
<i>&lt;400 units</i>	Sample all units	0 units

#### **2.2.1.2. Change in the requirement to sample a “homogeneous grower lot”**

5. HortNZ requests that all three standards incorporate the wording from ISPM 31 that lists the criteria that can be used to identify homogeneous lots.
6. HortNZ would like MPI to provide more explanation about the reassessment of the previous risk analysis for ginger and why you now conclude that “grower” does not need to be a specified homogeneity factor for this commodity.

Alongside an adequate sample size, homogeneity within a sampled lot is vital to obtaining the 95% confidence level that no more than 0.5% of the units in a lot are infested with quarantine pests. As stated in ISPM 31, this level of confidence is based on assumptions that: i) the pest is uniformly distributed through the lot and not aggregated into certain areas within the lot, and ii) random sampling is used.

Truly random sampling of a consignment, which is likely to be packed and palletised for export, may be difficult to achieve for operational reasons. If in addition the lot is not homogeneous in nature, then a larger number of units would need to be sampled to provide the required 95% confidence that the lot is not infested.

Although all three standards do include the word homogeneous, no further detail on what that means is included in the standards themselves. The clarity of requirements would be enhanced without removing any flexibility from the NPPOs by including the following wording from ISPM 31 in the IHSs as guidance: *A lot to be sampled should be a number of units of a single commodity identifiable by its homogeneity in factors such as: origin, grower, packing facility, species, variety, degree of maturity, exporter, area of production, regulated pests and their characteristics, treatment at origin, or type of processing.*