



SEMAPHORE

Newsletter of the Maritime Law

Association of Australia and New Zealand



Rodents Ruin First Zespri Consignment

Zespri has written off its first export kiwifruit shipment after an “extensive mice presence” was discovered onboard the 152-metre and 10,519-GT reefer charter ship Crown Garnet upon arrival at Zeebrugge (Belgium) in late April.

In a 15 May statement, Zespri chief operating officer Jason Te Brake (who is to soon become the co-operative’s chief executive) said the 1.2 million-tray shipment of Sungold conventional kiwifruit would be turned into biofuel.

“Since the discovery, Zespri has been working to understand the extent of the impact and our options for the fruit, with a focus on exploring opportunities to salvage as much value as possible,” he said.

“We have also been working closely with our insurers throughout this process. In recognition of both the value of the fruit onboard and the potential brand risk associated with releasing any of it, this process has been incredibly thorough.

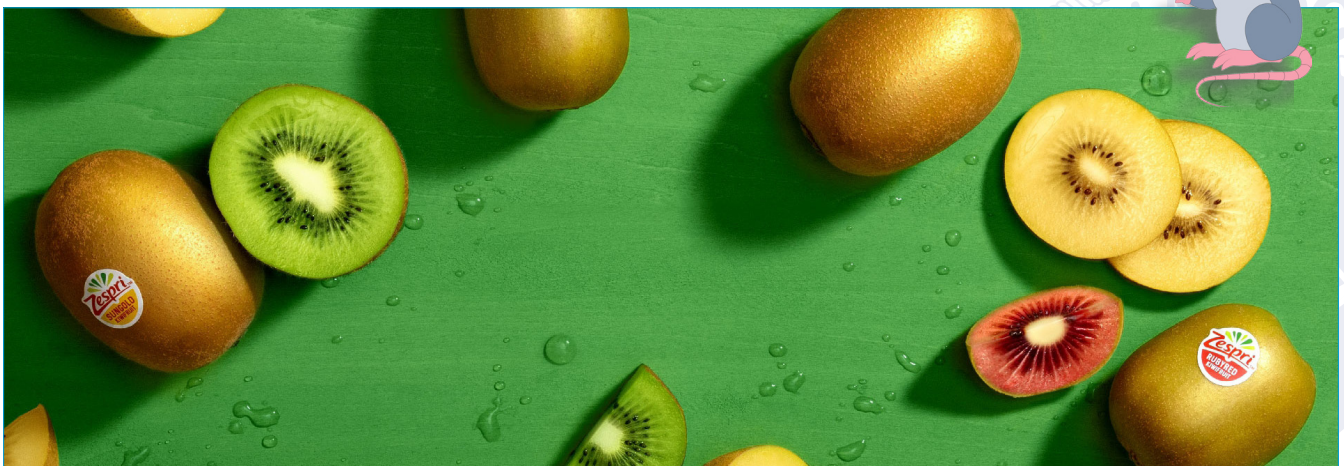
“Reworking this fruit would be a substantial and complex operational undertaking requiring considerable resources and time. Even then, we could not be sufficiently confident we could remove the risk associated with the presence of rodents.”

Mr Te Brake said the total value of the fruit plus costs associated with reprocessing and disposal was estimated at around NZ\$34 million (30 cents per tray).

“We’re continuing our extensive engagement with our insurance and shipping partners. The value of recovery will not be known until the claims process is complete – a process which will take some time.”

Zespri subsequently confirmed that DNA testing of the mice had determined they were not of New Zealand origin. However, no information had been released at the time of writing regarding how the mice got onboard the vessel.

With Zespri having thereafter continued with its export programme otherwise unabated, Mr Te Brake advised that as of 15 May, 70 million trays of kiwifruit had been shipped – 18 million ahead of the same point last year.



“This is the result of a huge amount of work across the industry which continues to position us for a strong year.

“The feedback from our markets remains positive with demand seeing our fruit moving through the supply chain quickly at good prices. SunGold sales are now close to 20% through our full year plan while RubyRed is around 85% through with just Japan, China and Singapore still selling.

“Green sales have begun in Japan, China and Taiwan at the beginning of May followed by Korea and other Asia markets last week, with Europe to follow after fruit arrival.”

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