

June 3, 2008

Dear Tomato or Capsicum Grower,

Earlier this year three commercial greenhouse vegetable growers in the Auckland region independently contacted MAF Biosecurity New Zealand and asked them to investigate plant health issues in their tomato and capsicum crops.

MAFBNZ has now confirmed that a new bacterium (*Candidatus Liberibacter* species) has been identified in these tomato and capsicum plants and their fruit.

It is strongly suspected by MAFBNZ that the bacterium is vectored by the tomato/potato psyllid. The plants with the bacterium have symptoms like 'psyllid yellows'.

On Tuesday MAFBNZ notified New Zealand's trading partners of the discovery. Export certification has been withdrawn as a precautionary interim measure.

Horticulture New Zealand, the Fresh Tomato and Fresh Vegetables Product Groups are working with MAFBNZ to establish what steps can be taken to manage this situation, including reopening export markets as soon as possible.

MAFBNZ has confirmed it will conduct further research to answer all the outstanding questions around the bacterium, its hosts and the vector.

What growers need to do:

- Psyllid control appears to be critical to managing the disease spread. Refer to the Tomatoesnz website for more information www.tomatoesnz.co.nz
- Plants showing symptoms of psyllid yellows should immediately be cut out, bagged, removed and disposed of correctly by incineration or to landfill.

For further information please contact Ken Robertson at HortNZ on 0508 467 869.

Yours sincerely,



Ken Robertson
Senior Business Manager