

24 July 2008

UPDATE – *Candidatus Liberibacter* species

Market Access

On 17 July MAFBNZ reinstated phytosanitary certification of New Zealand grown tomato and capsicum export produce. The restrictions are still in place for exports to countries that have prohibited imports of our products (e.g. Australia, Fiji) or MAFBNZ is still negotiating access conditions (Japan and USA) or where imports are allowed but minor technical details need to be resolved (French Polynesia).

Negotiations continue with Japan, with further information supplied in response to Japan's queries. MAFBNZ / MFAT continue to actively engage with Japanese officials to reinstate trade in these commodities.

Following the Fijian decision to temporarily ban import of New Zealand potatoes, tomatoes and capsicums, an invitation was extended to Fijian officials to visit New Zealand and gain a sound understanding of the bacterium and the likely vector, potato tomato psyllid. A Fijian delegation made a two day visit here last week to visit growers, the IDC laboratory where testing is taking place and meet with MAFBNZ officials in Wellington. Reports suggested the delegation were pleased with what they saw and heard and were taking this message back to Fiji for consideration.

MAFBNZ had constructive discussions with senior Australian officials last week. Australia now has a better understanding of the technical issues relating to this bacterium and is considering the information supplied. Discussions with Australia will continue this week.

The USA reported this week that they have found the bacterium present in potatoes. This follows their request to use a testing regime developed by MAFBNZ IDC. This will have significant bearing on market access for affected New Zealand products.

Surveillance

To date, the bacterium has been confirmed at 14 commercial glasshouse tomato and capsicum sites in the Auckland, Northland, Waikato, Taupo, Mid Canterbury and Nelson regions.

The wider surveillance programme for *Liberibacter* in tamarillos has stopped since a positive find confirmed these as a host made further testing unnecessary. MAFBNZ are now prioritising the testing of seed potatoes for the bacterium and results should be available over the next two weeks.

Tomato and capsicum testing is almost complete and growers will be notified of their results by Friday this week.

Science programme

MAFBNZ scientists continue to investigate a number of issues to help establish more base information such as is *Liberibacter* seed transmissible, is it spread by Tomato/Potato psyllid (TPP), is it graft transmissible and can the *Liberibacter* be vectored from harvested, infected fruit by TPP?

This work is expected to be complete by September and the results will determine actions growers can take to protect their crops.

Images and symptom reminders can be found on the MAFBNZ website:

<http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/pests/surv-mgmt/resp/tom-cap-bacterium>

ENDS



