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New Zealand's Zespri prepares to return to strong growth in kiwifruit supply in 2024 Â

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The upcoming kiwifruit season has the potential to be a year of strong growth across all kiwifruit offerings this year, with Zespri expecting to ship around 193 million trays of kiwifruit to markets around the world.

While still early in the season, Zespriâ??s latest supply estimate reflects the positive growing conditions seen across New Zealand in recent months. This seasonâ??s crop will be a significant increase on the 133 million New Zealand trays shipped last season and also up on the 175 million trays shipped in 2021.

Zespri CEO Dan Mathieson says the key focus this year is delivering consistently good quality fruit to customers and consumers throughout the season to help maximise the value returned to growers and communities.

Mathieson said Zespri was closely monitoring the disruption to international shipping though Zespri was not affected by the disruption in the Red Sea, instead shipping via the Panama Canal.

â??As well as the focus on per tray returns, weâ??re also looking forward to seeing improved per hectare returns for growers in the coming season, with our February crop estimate showing a strong improvement in expected yields. Weâ??ve also seen strong demand for SunGold Kiwifruit and RubyRed Kiwifruit has continued to perform strongly, which we expect to see continue as RubyRed becomes the first of this yearâ??s crop to hit stores soon" says Mathieson.

At a per hectare level, forecast OGRs for all categories have increased against the previous forecast. Green and SunGold forecast OGRs are now above final 2022 season returns, despite the seasonâ??s lower yields.

Zespri has released its final forecast for the 2023/24 season with record per tray returns forecast for Green, Organic Green, SunGold and RubyRed Kiwifruit. The February forecast has Green at a record $9.44 per tray, significantly up from last seasonâ??s final Orchard Gate Return (OGR) of $5.78 per tray. Forecast SunGold Kiwifruit returns are also at a record level of $12.62 per tray, well above last seasonâ??s final OGR of $9.97, while Organic SunGold Kiwifruit is at $14.21. For Zespri RubyRed Kiwifruit, the forecast average per tray return is at a record $26.54, up from last seasonâ??s final OGR of $22.27.

Zespri RubyRed Kiwifruit is in its second year as a commercial pool. Forecast per hectare returns have been influenced by a high proportion of productive hectares returning low yields impacted by vine age. 149 hectares producing for 2 years or less have returned an average yield of 1,385 trays per hectare and a forecast per hectare return of $36,753 per hectare. 4 hectares producing for greater than 2 years have returned an average yield of 5,263 trays per hectare and a forecast per hectare return of $139,709 per hectare. 6 hectares with mixed aged vines (with vine age of both 2 years or less and more than 2 years) have returned an average yield of 3,155 trays per hectare and a forecast per hectare return of $83,737 per hectare.

Zespri international, co-hosted the XI International Symposium on Kiwifruit in Mount Maunganui last week along withÂ "The New Zealand Institute for Plant and Food Research Limited".

The theme was 'Diversifying for Future Uncertainty' with more than 250 delegates from New Zealand, Italy, France, Spain, Chile, Turkey, Mexico, Greece, China and Japan focusing on how we manage in an environmentally, socially and economically sustainable way.

An important part of the symposium was getting the delegates out of the conference room with a field trip connecting them with New Zealandâ??s kiwifruit industry with a visit to theÂ "Kiwifruit Breeding Centre"Â as well as orchards and packhousesÂ