



VEGETABLE INDUSTRY ISSUES AND SOLUTIONS

December 2024



Issues



Need for a National Environmental Standard for Commercial Vegetable Production

The vegetable industry needs a national approach to vegetable growing if the industry is going to be able to provide New Zealanders with fresh, healthy vegetables at reasonable prices; and provide the country with food security.

Unworkable regional regulation affects 60% of New Zealand's vegetable supply, particularly in Pukekohe and Levin.

The recently released NZIER report estimates that a 20% reduction in vegetable supply would push vegetable prices up by at least 20% and potentially, 100%, meaning that broccoli could soon be \$9.00 a head.



If New Zealand is to grow its own vegetables, what the country needs is nationally consistent, practice-based regulation that promotes sustainable and workable vegetable growing systems, using existing assurance schemes such as NZGAP (New Zealand Good Agricultural Practice).

The National Party campaigned on providing fruit and vegetable growing with permitted activity status. This can be achieved through a National Environmental Standard for Commercial Vegetable Production based on minimum standards (Freshwater Farm Plans) and best practice.

The Vegetables NZ Board does not support leaching tables, as they are too simplistic and do not cover the complexity of vegetable rotations.

Industrial allocation

We are disappointed that the Government did not listen to the greenhouse vegetable industry, and went ahead and reduced industrial allocation for greenhouse tomato, capsicum and cucumber growers.

The Government's decision will:

1. Immediately increase New Zealand greenhouse growers' cost of production by up to \$30,000 per hectare a year
2. Reduce supply and Increase prices for New Zealand consumers.
3. Increase the competitive advantage of imported produce, where producers face no ETS burden. This will in turn increase emissions due to production moving to areas with no ETS framework.
4. Increase the likelihood of produce being airfreighted to New Zealand, further increasing emissions.



Agriculture has been removed from the ETS to give that industry time for transition. The same needs to happen for horticulture. All food systems need to be protected and made resilient.

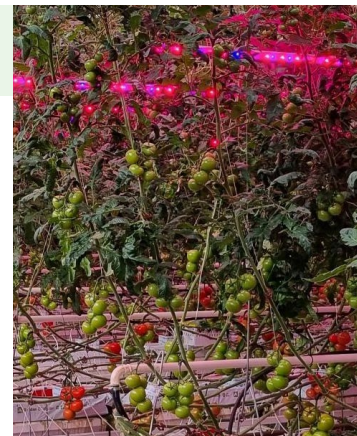
Solutions



Decarbonisation and energy efficiency

Vegetables NZ has **partnered with EECA** over the past two years to help greenhouse vegetable growers become as energy efficient as possible as well as decarbonise. We know our numbers.

As a result of our emissions reduction efforts as well as the closure of some operations, the covered cropping industry has seen its **carbon emissions reduce from 212,000 tonnes of CO₂ in 2019 to 104,000 tonnes of CO₂ in 2024** (see Greenhouse Energy Challenges infographic).



To continue this work, we need the Government to establish a Sustainable Food Systems Fund to reinvest ETS proceeds in greenhouse decarbonisation to support the transition to renewable energy sources.



Te Ahikawariki – the Vegetable Industry Centre of Excellence

The centre has received funding from the Government through the **Pukekohe Integrated Catchment Management Plan**. Much of the work that will be undertaken at the centre will be to support growers to attain good management practice. This will be vital for meeting the minimum standards needed to gain permitted activity.



A Lighter Touch, and integrated pest management systems

Vegetables NZ is part of **A Lighter Touch** – a practical horticulture industry wide initiative, to reduce reliance on agrichemicals and increase the use of agroecological crop protection methods, such as integrated pest management.

While the industry is undertaking work to increase the use of biologicals, current Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) settings make it prohibitive for New Zealand to develop these new chemistries, or register them from offshore.

Vegetables NZ applauds the Government's moves to improve the performance of the EPA as access to improved chemistry is vital if horticulture is to play a role in New Zealand doubling exports by 2035.



A LIGHTER TOUCH



Solutions



Add One More Vegetable

Less than 20% of New Zealanders eat the recommended amount of vegetables a day, which costs the country's health system dearly. An Otago University study shows that if a cohort of New Zealanders ate the recommended amount of vegetables a day, the health system would be better off by more than \$800m over the life span of that cohort.



To increase consumption, Vegetables NZ launched the **Add One More Vegetable initiative** on 1 March this year. The initiative involves consumer advertising and tips on how to Add One More Vegetable. However, research shows that if we are to increase the intake of vegetables by as little as one serving a day, it is going to take more than one campaign from a small group like Vegetables NZ.

Government needs to take a leadership position on food literacy to make a difference to the health and wellbeing of New Zealanders. The win here is a healthier community with fewer health issues, and less avoidable drain on limited health sector resources.

Vegetables NZ is looking at undertaking baseline research to track dietary intake. A partnership with the Government, researchers and the vegetable industry to create this benchmark would be a good place to start on increasing intake.

ADD **ONE** MORE



vegetable



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