

Title Maintaining cherry quality: Supply chain challenges
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Abstract

Most sweet cherries (*Prunus avium* L.) in New Zealand are from Central Otago, more than 1500 km from Auckland, a domestic market of more than 1 million people that is the destination for nearly 30% of the total 2004 production of 2117 t. More than 50% of cherries produced are exported to 25 international destinations with the most important being Taiwan (78% of the 1330 t exported). The extreme perishability of cherries creates challenges for everyone in the supply chain, from grower to retailer. Recommendations exist for optimising postharvest handling of cherries, but these are not always followed, leading to quality problems in domestic and international markets in some seasons. This can cause income loss to supply chain participants as well as harms the reputation of the industry. This paper identifies some specific problems associated with attaining consistent market quality in domestic and international markets. It outlines an initiative being taken to enhance market quality and acceptance of New Zealand cherries by addressing, with supply chain participants, issues such as preharvest factors that affect quality, postharvest processes and supply chain management concepts and implementation. Facilitated workshops comprising representatives from all parts of the chain, and complemented by successful grower presentations, have provided a useful forum for gaining acceptance and “buy in” for changing traditional practises.