

Title Quality variability of strawberries in the southern north island of New Zealand
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Abstract

The strawberry industry in New Zealand comprises 100 growers who contribute 4.7 thousand tonnes of product valued at \$22.4M per annum. Annual losses from fungal diseases cost up to \$4.4M. Development of visible symptoms of decay is the most common marker for the end of strawberry shelf life. Total sugar content, previously correlated to high consumer acceptability of the product, may also correlate with a high risk of fungal disease. This work reports the variability between batches in quality attributes (weight, soluble solids, firmness, titratable acidity and colour) at harvest and subsequent incidence of rots that developed during storage for 16 batches of fruit collected from 5 sites over the 2008/2009 summer season. Correlations between physical attributes and rot incidence did not occur, indicating that any rot prediction tool will require knowledge of the role of pre-harvest conditions and/or the use of accelerated fruit libraries.