



## The Market Access Column

# Market Access explained - an overview

In this series of articles we plan to discuss what market access is all about, explain the jargon, demystify the international agreements and identify the key players and their roles.

**T**his article provides an overview of market access, which will be followed up in more detail in subsequent articles.

Market access can mean very different things to different people. For some it is about marketing, quality standards, grades, or tariffs. For the purposes of this series, we are talking about establishing and complying with the phytosanitary (plant health) and sanitary (human health - e.g., chemical residue) regulations that may be put in place by an importing country to reduce the risks associated with the importation of horticultural products.

Establishing the sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) requirements for a particular commodity involves first ascertaining what regulations or requirements may already be in place. If there are no established requirements the importing country will need to follow a process of risk analysis to put these in place. Risk analysis is carried out in accordance with internationally agreed standards. For plant health, the International Plant Protection Convention and associated International

Standards for Phytosanitary Measures provide guidelines on how pest risk analysis is carried out. They also provide for cooperation between countries in establishing phytosanitary measures.

Regulations put in place by importing countries also have to comply with the World Trade Organisation Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures - known as the SPS Agreement. The SPS Agreement helps to ensure that SPS regulations do not become trade barriers. It requires that measures are least disruptive to trade, are based on science, and do not discriminate between exporting countries or differentiate between treatment of domestic produce and imports.

The process of developing new import requirements can be complicated and is sometimes very slow. Government ministries such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFAT) and Trade and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) play a vital role in assisting New Zealand's horticulture industry to obtain access to new markets. These ministries provide official representation in communications and discussions with

trading partners. A number of other organisations contribute to the success of market access projects.

Exporting industries usually initiate market access projects, where they identify a trading opportunity or a barrier that needs to be resolved. They also provide technical advice in relation to the industry, and the funding needed to speed up these projects. Research organisations and other technical specialists can also become involved providing specialist advice on pests and diseases. Our own company provides project management, facilitation and technical services to support these projects.

Once a country has established regulations allowing the import of a commodity and trade can begin, MAF is usually required to provide the importing country with official assurances (via phytosanitary certificates) that the requirements are being met. This process involves growers, exporters, freight forwarders and independent verification agencies (IVAs).

Market Access Solutionz Ltd has been established to help exporters and their

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workers, although it does not rule this out. "We were lucky this year."

The company keeps a lookout for workers who may want to go further in the industry and those who show initiative are encouraged to do further training, for instance, as forklift drivers.

"We are trying to build up a reputation for helping staff with other opportunities." WINZ has an energetic local manager and the company has a good relationship with her.

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Health and safety issues are built into the training programme when people start. The company has a health and safety policy manual and things have gone smoothly. "If there is a problem, we certainly let people know."

Janette Ronald comments that staffing a seasonal operation like a packhouse/coolstore is not easy because these workers cannot be offered permanent employment. The aim is to look after them well and give them every reason to come back the following season.