

**Importing Perspective:
Irradiated Fresh Produce
to New Zealand**

Kevin Nalder

Chief Executive Officer

New Zealand Fresh Produce Importers Association

Irradiation History - NZ

- **1985: New Zealand becomes “Nuclear free”**
(Opposition to ‘radiation’ issues increase)
- **1987: Government policy:**
Effectively bans the sale of irradiated foods in NZ
- **1994: Ethylene dibromide (EDB) banned**
- **1996: Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ)**
(to set joint standards in the area of food composition and labelling)

History (continued)

- 2001: Irradiation approved for herbs, spices & herbal teas (essentially unused)
- 2003: 9 tropical fruits approved for phytosanitary applications (incl. mangoes, litchi)
- 2004: First “trial” consignments of irradiated mangoes imported from Australia
- 2013: Dimethoate dip treatment banned for some products (e.g. tomatoes & capsicums)

Current: Importation of Irradiated Produce Allowed if,

- They are
 - on the exempted list (FSANZ standard 1.5.3)
 - treated and labelled in accordance with the standard; and,
- They meet the requirements of the Biosecurity Act 1993 and the relevant import health standard

FSANZ Standard 1.5.3 (4)

- Presently, there are exemptions for –
 - 25+ fruits or vegetables for a phytosanitary purpose (150 to 1000Gy)



Biosecurity Act: Import Health Standards

- MPI issue Import Health Standards for “risk goods” (e.g. fresh produce) stating the required phytosanitary measures, including pre-export requirements (e.g. agreed treatment/s)
- Irradiation is now well established both technically and operationally.
- It is anticipated more IHSs will include an irradiation option where the technology exists

Snapshot: Importation of Irradiation Commodities from Australia

- **Mango** (Now 1.8+ million fruit per season)
- **Litchi** (from 50 pallets to 220+ for 2017/2018)
- **Tomatoes** (200-300 pallets per season)
- **Capsicums** (volumes dropped off)
- **Papaya** (random volumes)
- **Grapes** (TBC)
- *Others (TBC)*

How does Irradiation fit?

- A viable alternative in the treatment “toolbox”
- Loss of historic treatments (e.g. EDB and Dimethoate) impact on real trade
- Limitations of other treatments (e.g. heat and cold)
- New distributions of important pests (e.g. *Drosophilla suzukii* and Queensland Fruit Fly)
- Increasing consumer acceptance: If the price is right (e.g. mid-winter imported tomatoes) or the eating experience is right (e.g. R2E2 mangoes), consumers will buy

The Mango Story

- Irradiated mango imports started in 2004-2005
- A decade of steady growth from small trial shipments (10 tonnes)
- 2017-2018 season of 1.8 million+ fruit (around 1500 tonnes)
- Consumer choice: High quality Australian mangoes or lower quality South American mangoes
- Two distinct price points (typically in the range of \$1.50-\$3 per fruit vs \$5-6⁺)
- Both major supermarket chains have significant programmes for selling irradiated mangoes

Mango Report:

■ Media storm over.

Quote:

“The media fuss has died off. It had its day in the first two years. Its not that interesting anymore”.

Quote:

“Last year Australia mangoes were a polical hot potato. This year we {major supermarket} gave them a go, and the season has been very succssful”

Labelling options: Flexible

Fresh Produce



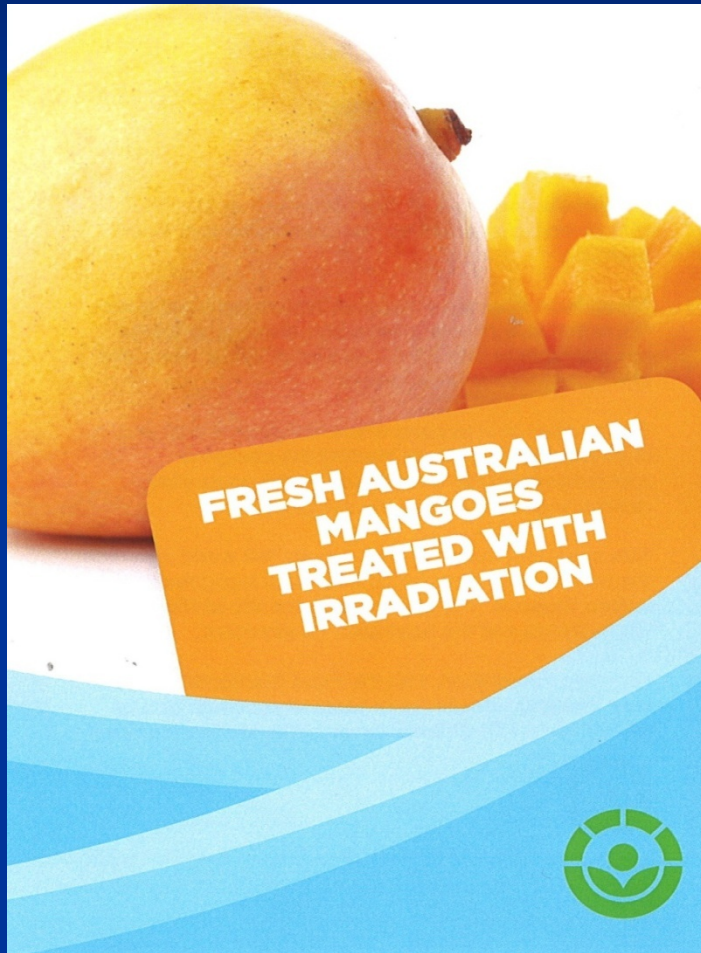
Irradiated to Protect the Environment



**IRRADIATED TO PROTECT
THE NEW ZEALAND
ENVIRONMENT**

Labelling options were changed from being prescriptive in the standard (viz. the radura “warning” sign with specific wording) to allow flexibility in both the design and the wording used. OK, if labelling factual and not mis-leading

Mango Labelling



FRESH AUSTRALIAN MANGOES TREATED WITH IRRADIATION

Australians now have an alternative to fruit treated with chemical insecticides like Dimethoate and Methyl Bromide.

These fresh Australian mangoes have been treated with irradiation to eliminate insects and satisfy quarantine requirements to prevent the spread of insect pests, like fruit fly and mango seed weevil.

The process of irradiating these mangoes is safe and chemical-free. It involves treating the mangoes with ionising energy to eliminate insect pests while maintaining the quality of the mangoes.

This treatment option is used around the world including the United States and for all Australian mangoes sold in New Zealand. It is approved by the World Health Organisation and the Australian Government.

For more information, visit the Food Standards Australia New Zealand website (www.foodstandards.gov.au) or the Better Health Channel (www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au)



Angry Tomatoes or Labelling gone wrong?



Note: Price point of imported “iritated” tomatoes cf. NZ hot house grown

The (near) future?

- More products with “Generic” FSANZ approvals
- Higher volumes for existing trade pathways
- Market Access Improvements (eg. Current approvals with irradiation as “equivalent” treatment option)
- On-arrival treatment options (still?) emerging
- Reduced mandatory labelling requirements (refer *Labelling Logic*) = NO CHANGE