

APPLICATION FOR EXEMPTION FROM COVID-19 INTER-REGIONAL MOVEMENT RESTRICTIONS

Application for specific class of business, service or goods

Description: This template should be filled out for specific classes of businesses, services or goods seeking an exemption to the inter-regional travel restrictions made under section 27 of the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Alert Level 3 and 2) Order 2020.

Information on the class of business, service or good

Key contact details	Serge Sablyak Covid Duty Manager Ministry for Primary Industries s 9(2)(a) Serge.Sablyak@mpi.govt.nz
Description of the activity	Horticulture
Number of people of entities the exemption request relates to	Horticulture New Zealand estimates 300 workers not involved in the transport and supply of goods will need an exemption to travel inter-regionally.
Submitted by	Ruth Fairhall, Deputy Director General – Policy and Trade Ministry for Primary Industries Karen Adair, Deputy Director General – Agriculture and Investment Services

Date of submission	15 / 11/ 2020
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Considerations of impacts

Why is the exemption necessary? (rationale of the exemption)	<p>Horticulture in and around the Auckland regions supplies a significant proportion of New Zealand’s fresh vegetable demand and is highly sensitive to seasonal timing and processing.</p> <p>For example, the Pukekohe Hub supplies just under a one third of New Zealand’s vegetables generating revenue in excess of \$350 million. Pukekohe (which straddles the border) is the largest vegetable growing and processing area in the North Island and most of this production is for domestic consumption, particularly in Auckland. Over 80% of produce produced by the Hub goes to supermarkets, independent fruit and vegetable retailers and farmers markets.</p> <p>Vegetable crops need to be planted, maintained, and harvested during specific narrow and critical seasonal periods and also require continual activity to maintain production. Some labour is drawn from South Auckland, and Horticulture New Zealand estimates that 300 people travel in and out of the Auckland region daily for work.</p>
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<p>Are these activities time critical?</p>	<p>Pukekohe alone feeds Auckland and much of the North Island. If production from Pukekohe was reduced due to labour shortages the supply of vegetables to Auckland and the upper North Island would decrease and prices are likely to rise.</p> <p>The economic loss to growers and everyone in the supply chain would be significant. Fresh leafy vegetable production in particular is a continuous and staggered activity where growers will be growing, maintaining, picking and packing. Any disruption to this will have consequence for ongoing production and supply of vegetables to consumers. Late winter is also when a lot of land preparation for spring planting occurs.</p> <p>The Pukekohe Hub is the most productive growing area in New Zealand and a vital producer of fresh produce in spring as further south frost and cold conditions inhibit growing.</p>
<p>Can someone in the bubble (or outside) do this task?</p>	<p>Finding alternative resourcing at short notice is likely to risk disruptions to the supply chain.</p>
<p>Does it promote the purposes of the Order and the COVID-19 Act?</p>	<p>Horticultural activities can be performed observing social distancing rules and safely without risk to employee and public health. Field work which is the main activity impacted is done in the open air.</p> <p>Enabling people employed in the horticulture sector to move inter-regionally will ensure that they are can continue carrying out the key functions required to ensure food supply to Auckland and the rest of the North Island. This reflects the purpose of the Act to allow economic factors to be taken into account.</p>
<p>What public health mitigation measures are/can be put in place to minimise the risk of transmission of COVID-19?</p>	<p>Social distancing rules will be observed, employees will wear face masks and PPE where necessary, practise sound hygiene, and will be encouraged to only transit to and from their workplace for the required horticultural activities over the current alert level period.</p> <p>MPI safety guidance will also be issued to Horticulture NZ to share with their employees for their travel.</p>
<p>What are the consequences should an exemption not be granted?</p>	<p>A significant volume of horticulture production in Auckland is to supply the domestic market and disruptions due to labour shortages are likely to lead increased prices.</p> <p>Perishable fruits and vegetable products risk being wasted. Pukekohe supplies Auckland and surrounding region with large volumes of fruit and vegetables. Decreased production will disrupt food distribution, including to food banks.</p> <p>Food safety risks if fruit and vegetables are not processed and stored appropriately. This is a time critical process. There may be long term impacts on the seasonal production cycle if pesticides and agriculture sprays cannot be applied at the right time.</p>