

**STATEMENT FROM MPI 29/3/2020 8.19pm**  
**RE: EXPORTER PROCESS CHANGES DURING COVID-19 RESPONSE.**

We're writing to you with an update on our work and some temporary process changes we have made at the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) to ensure we can best support your business during National Alert Level 4 in response to COVID-19.

We acknowledge and understand these are difficult times, and both verifiers and operators will want to minimise risks to their staff and businesses. MPI's priority is the health, safety and wellbeing of everyone during the COVID-19 pandemic, which includes ensuring our vital food production sectors can operate safely.

We are working on guidance for recognised agencies, Independent Verification Agencies (IVAs) & MPI Approved Organisation (MAOs) when verifiers are not able to perform an on-site verification. The guidance also aims to ensure, aspects such as food safety, biosecurity, continuity of supply, trading partner expectations, international obligations and New Zealand's reputation are maintained. We will send you this guidance once developed. We are aiming to have this to you in the coming week.

**If you have any ideas on possible process changes to further reduce risk, while maintaining the outcomes that support verification, please email the relevant teams.**

**The relevant team for the phytosanitary certification and export verification is the Plant, Wine and Organic Assurance team. Email is [plantassurance@mpi.govt.nz](mailto:plantassurance@mpi.govt.nz)**

**For any overseas market related issues, particularly technical requirements, please contact Shane Olsen and the Plant Exports team [plantexports@mpi.govt.nz](mailto:plantexports@mpi.govt.nz)**

**Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) Register for Safe Practice**

The Government's declaration of 'essential services' provides approval for food and beverage production and processing to continue. MPI requires safety assurances from essential food and beverage production and processing operators that their processes protect workers and the public by limiting interactions between staff and reducing the potential spread of COVID-19. As a result, the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) set up a register for safe practice in the sector. Registrations were due by 5pm on Friday 27 March. More information about the register is available here:

<https://www.mpi.govt.nz/covid-19-essential-primary-sector-service-registration/>

For all Covid-19 essential business enquiries, please contact Covid-19 Liaison: [Covid-19.liaison@mpi.govt.nz](mailto:Covid-19.liaison@mpi.govt.nz)

**ePhyto system**

We have been informed by our New Zealand exporters that there may be possible delays at the overseas border due to sea freight consignments arriving prior to the arrival of the original paper certificates, due to Covid-19 causing flight delays and cancellations. To help minimise any

possible delays upon arrival, we strongly recommend carefully checking the information on certificate requests to ensure it is accurate. This will reduce the number of resubmissions. Please also ensure certificate requests are submitted as soon as possible for approval and issuance of the certificate.

Our Market Access team is also investigating other options with overseas markets to assist with reducing delays at the overseas borders. ePhyto has significant business continuity plans to keep this system operating.

**Wet signature and Non-GMO letters:**

Our Plant Assurance team will continue to print phytosanitary certificates and non-GMO letters for wet signatures.

To manage the health and safety of the team member who will be carrying out this work, we will only be processing wet signatures and non-GMO letters on a Monday, Wednesday and Friday between 2 pm-3 pm.

To help us manage this, please send requests for these by 1.30 pm on those days, if you require them to be processed on the same day. Requests received after 1.30 pm will be processed and couriered on the next available day.

Alternatively, exporters can also arrange for wet signatures to be undertaken at the following MPI offices:

- MPI Centre Auckland 17 Maurice Wilson Avenue, Auckland Airport, 8.30am-4.30pm, Phone: 021 519 208
- Christchurch, 14 Sir William Pickering Drive, Phone: 03 943 1753

**Contacting the Plant Exports and Plant Assurance team:**

Please continue to use the [plantassurance@mpi.govt.nz](mailto:plantassurance@mpi.govt.nz) and [plantexports@mpi.govt.nz](mailto:plantexports@mpi.govt.nz) email addresses to contact us as required.

We are continuing to monitor emails remotely, and will aim to provide efficient responses and support.

We will endeavour to continue meeting your service expectations during this COVID-19 pandemic, however, please be patient if we are unable to get back to you as quickly as usual.

The above information is also being shared with our Plant Export MPI Approved Organisations (MAOs) and Independent Verification Agencies (IVAs). Please feel free to share this information with your networks.

Thank you for your patience. We're committed to maintaining the plant export assurance systems to maintain the confidence of New Zealanders and trading partners, and supporting New Zealand exporters and businesses.

Best regards

**Shane Olsen** | Manager, Plant Exports | PhD  
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