

Ngā Mahi a Wai Māori

Northland Water Storage and Use Project



Growing vegetables

- The climate in Northland is very conducive to growing a wide range of vegetable crops.
- The provision of moisture through rainfall or irrigation is essential to getting the crop established and achieving high levels of productivity and crop quality.
- With its warmer climate, Northland can provide vegetables out of the normal season of supply if there is sufficient moisture.
- There has been a definite move into Northland by the large-scale growers to ensure that they meet consumer demands for the volume of produce and an all-year-round supply.

Vegetable Requirements

The climate in Northland is very conducive to growing a wide range of vegetable crops. Most of these need to grow in a relatively deep, well-drained soil with good soil moisture retention. Moisture either through rainfall or irrigation is essential to both getting the crop established and to achieving high levels of productivity and the crop quality demanded by consumers. Most vegetables are grown on flat land because of the large machinery needed to handle them.



Range of vegetables that it may be possible to grow in Northland

Brassica	Leafy Greens	Root Crops	Other Crops
Broccoli	Lettuce	Potatoes	Celeriac
Brussels sprouts	Silverbeet	Carrots	Celery
Cabbage	Spinach	Kumara	Courgette
Kale	Mesclun	Beetroot	Gherkins
Cauliflower	Salad leaves	Taro	Marrows
Broccoflower	Watercress		Melons
Asian greens	Beans		Pumpkins
	Peas		Squash
	Snow peas		Sweetcorn
			Herbs
			Fennel
			Parsley

Industry Overview

A very high proportion of the vegetables grown in New Zealand is by large-scale corporates with highly integrated production, packaging and marketing, which allows them to retain control of their product until it reaches the retailer. The vast majority of their production is sold to the large supermarket chains across New Zealand.

The remainder of the producers are smaller scale and usually supply their produce through the auction rooms or directly through their own, or other, smaller retail outlets. The producers of the smaller volume niche products are usually highly integrated right through to the point of sale.

With the ongoing incursion of housing and industrial land use in the large growers' traditional growing areas, and the increasing consumer demand for all-year-round supply, there is a definite move into Northland by the large-scale growers to ensure they can meet both volume and supply demands.

With its warmer climate, Northland can provide vegetables out of the normal season of supply if there is sufficient moisture. This is particularly so with the production of crops such as new potatoes or salad greens at a time of year when they are not able to be produced elsewhere.

Many of the vegetables are grown in rotations which are designed to provide a mix of crops from the same piece of ground and to spread the time between crops to provide a break in the potential for crop disease pressure.



Industry Support

Vegetable growing (other than potatoes, onions, tomatoes, asparagus, and buttercup squash) is managed by a compulsory levy-funded organisation called Vegetables New Zealand. Each of the major sub-groups has a Crop Advisory Group.

Vegetables New Zealand aims to ensure that growers' views are presented to Government (both local and central), promote the consumption of quality fresh vegetables to current and new markets, and provide research relevant to future industry direction.

The other major industry group Potatoes New Zealand has a strategy to increase the profit from growing potatoes by \$150 per year, to double the value of potato exports by 2025, and to enhance the value of the domestic market by 50% by 2025. Both industry organisations have a wealth of research reports available on growing their various crops.

Social and Environmental

The environmental impact of vegetable crops very much depends on the growing system and practices implemented, which can vary significantly from property to property. This impact is balanced by the fact that they are often not grown continuously in the same location.

The employment generated by both permanent and casual staff can contribute greatly to the local community. Vegetable growing is a higher employer per hectare than traditional livestock farming.

Possible means of making the investment work.

The capital investment in developing a vegetable production system is not as high as some of the alternatives, though lack of knowledge can be a barrier to entering the industry. This is particularly so with the post-production part of the chain which is so important to achieving a satisfactory return on investment.

A possible way to make the system work would be for the land owner to form a long-term relationship with existing growers who have experience, equipment and market knowledge.

Other options include:

- forming a joint venture partnership;
- leasing your land to another operator; or
- selling the land to a grower.

Sources of Information

- Vegetables New Zealand: <https://www.freshvegetables.co.nz/>
- Potatoes New Zealand <https://potatoesnz.co.nz/>

Specialist vegetable growing and marketing consultants.

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