

# Eggplant *(Solanum melongena)*



## 1. Offer Analysis

### 1.1 General Description: Production, end-use, and market

Eggplant (*Solanum melongena*), also known as aubergine, is a widely cultivated vegetable valued for its versatility, nutritional benefits, and adaptability to diverse cuisines. Believed to have originated in South Asia, eggplant has become a staple in global diets, particularly in Mediterranean, Asian and Middle Eastern cooking. The crop is well-suited to warm climates and is commonly grown in tropical and subtropical regions, including the Pacific.

Eggplant thrives in well-drained, fertile soils with abundant sunlight and requires consistent moisture for optimal growth. In the Pacific, countries such as Fiji, Samoa and Tonga cultivate eggplant on smallholder farms, often employing traditional and organic farming techniques. While Pacific production remains limited compared to global leaders such as China, India, and Turkey, regional growers benefit from sustainable farming practices and the ability to supply niche markets.

In New Zealand, the eggplant market is supported by both domestic cultivation and imports. Domestically, Forestburg Eggplant, located in Dairy Flat just north of Auckland, is a significant producer, supplying approximately 80% of the country's eggplants, while Fiji mainly exports the Long Purple variety. Established in 2005, Forestburg operates one of New Zealand's most technologically advanced glasshouse facilities, ensuring a consistent supply of high-quality eggplants year-round.

Imports also play a crucial role in meeting consumer demand, especially during off-peak production periods. New Zealand sources eggplants from countries such as Fiji, Turkey, and India. Harvesting is typically done manually to avoid bruising and maintain quality. The Pacific's year-round warm conditions enable continuous production, ensuring a steady supply for both domestic and export markets.

Eggplant varieties differ in size, colour, and flavour, catering to a range of culinary applications. The most common types include:

- **Globe Eggplant (American Eggplant):** Large, deep purple, and commonly used in grilling, roasting, and frying. This is the most common and popular.
- **Japanese and Chinese Eggplant:** Long, slender, and mild-flavoured, ideal for stir-fries and quick cooking.
- **Indian Eggplant (Brinjal):** Small, round, and commonly used in curries and stews.
- **White Eggplant:** Less bitter and often used in specialty dishes.
- **Striped or Graffiti Eggplant:** A visually distinctive variety with tender flesh, suitable for roasting and baking.

EGGPLANT NUTRITIONAL CONTENT	
Nutrient	Amount (per 100g)
Calories	25 kcal
Water	92g
Protein	0.98 g
Carbohydrates	5.88g
Sugars	3.53g
Fibre	3g
Fat	0.18g
Vitamin C	2.2mg
Vitamin K	3.5mcg
Vitamin B6	0.084mg
Folate (B9)	22mcg
Niacin (B3)	0.649mg
Riboflavin (B2)	0.037mg
Thiamine (B1)	0.039mg
Potassium	229mg
Magnesium	14mg
Calcium	9mg
Iron	0.23mg
Phosphorus	24mg
Manganese	0.232mg

*Table 1: Eggplant nutritional content  
(Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture. FoodData Central. Published 2019)*

Eggplant is highly regarded for its health benefits, being rich in dietary fiber, antioxidants, and essential nutrients. Its potential in plant-based diets has driven growing demand, particularly in Western markets where vegan and vegetarian lifestyles are expanding.



## 1.2 Uses & Benefits

Eggplant's versatility spans culinary, health, and industrial applications, offering significant opportunities for Pacific exporters to cater to various consumer segments. Below is an overview of high-potential and trending eggplant-based products:

### **Convenience and Ready-to-Eat Options**

- **Baba Ganoush and Eggplant-Based Dips:** Traditional Mediterranean and Middle Eastern spreads made from roasted eggplant, tahini, lemon, and garlic. These dips are gaining popularity in health and gourmet food markets, often positioned as a healthy, plant-based alternative to dairy-based spreads. Brands may offer classic, smoky, or spiced variations to cater to different tastes.
- **Eggplant in Oil:** A traditional Mediterranean and Middle Eastern dish, particularly popular in Turkey, Greece, and Lebanon. This product typically consists of roasted or fried eggplant preserved in olive oil, sometimes with garlic and herbs. It is often used as a mezze, sandwich filling, or accompaniment to grilled meats.
- **Eggplant Chips:** A light, crunchy, and low-calorie snack appealing to health-conscious consumers. These chips can be air-fried, baked, or dehydrated, often seasoned with sea salt, herbs, or spices. Eggplant chips are marketed as a gluten-free and keto-friendly alternative to traditional potato chips.
- **Frozen Grilled Eggplant:** A convenient, ready-to-use option for food service, restaurants, and home cooking. These pre-grilled eggplant slices or cubes can be used in lasagnas, sandwiches, moussaka, curries, or Mediterranean-style dishes, offering a time-saving solution for consumers.
- **Marinated Eggplant:** A gourmet product found in delicatessens and specialty food stores, featuring eggplant marinated in olive oil, vinegar, garlic, and spices. This option is popular in Italian, Turkish, and Middle Eastern cuisines and is often used as a tapas, antipasto, or salad ingredient.
- **Eggplant-Based Plant Proteins:** An emerging category where eggplant is processed into plant-based meat alternatives due to its meaty texture and ability to absorb flavours. It is used in vegan sausages, meatballs, and even blended protein products combined with legumes or grains to enhance protein content.
- **Eggplant-Based Burger Patties:** Catering to the growing plant-based and flexitarian food trends, eggplant is used as a key ingredient in vegetarian and vegan burger patties. Often combined with chickpeas, black beans, quinoa, or mushrooms, these patties provide a hearty texture and rich flavour, making them a sustainable alternative to meat-based burgers.
- **Eggplant Pasta & Noodles:** A low-carb alternative to wheat-based pasta, where eggplant is sliced into thin strips or spiralized. This appeals to gluten-free, keto, and paleo consumers, offering a healthy substitute for traditional pasta.

This growing category reflects consumer demand for healthier, plant-based, and convenient meal solutions, expanding the versatility of eggplant in snacks, ready meals, and plant-based alternatives.



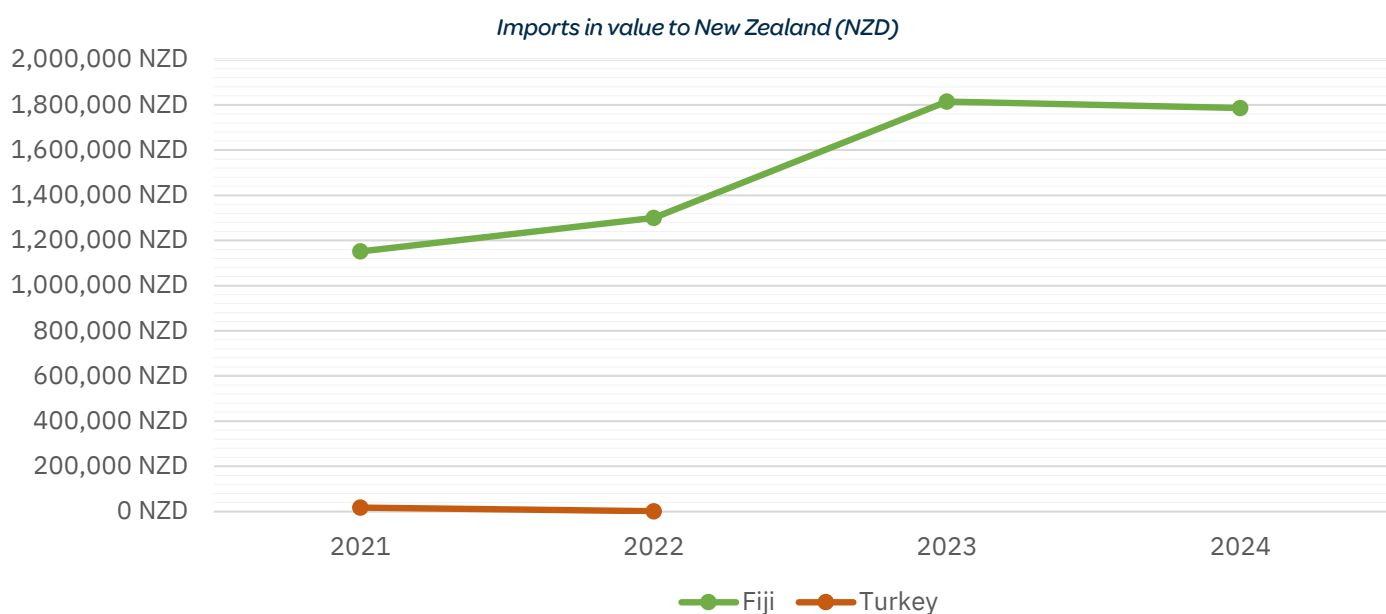
## 1.3 Overall Market Insights

**Table 2: Imports of fresh or chilled Eggplant in value to New Zealand**

(The grand total includes all countries importing to New Zealand. \*Some countries may not have an IHS, and small quantities may appear in this table. This represents sample size commodities recorded at the border.)

	2021		2022		2023		2024	
	Value (NZD)	% Total	Value (NZD)	% Total	Value (NZD)	% Total	Value (NZD)	% Total
Fiji	\$1,151,060	98.49%	\$1,300,264	99.86%	\$1,814,220	100.00%	\$1,786,257	100.00%
Turkey	\$17,705	1.51%	\$1,763	0.14%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$1,168,765</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>\$1,302,027</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>\$1,814,220</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>\$1,786,257</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

**Figure 1: Imports of fresh or chilled Eggplant in value to New Zealand**



**Table 3: Imports of fresh or chilled Eggplant in volume to New Zealand**

(The grand total includes all countries importing to New Zealand. \*Some countries may not have an IHS, and small quantities may appear in this table. This represents sample size commodities recorded at the border.)

	2021		2022		2023		2024	
	Quantity (Kg)	% Total	Quantity (Kg)	% Total	Quantity (Kg)	% Total	Quantity (Kg)	% Total
Fiji	288,686	96.4%	264,699	99.6%	312,885	100.0%	260,404	100.0%
Turkey	10,627	3.6%	946	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>299,313</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>265,645</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>312,885</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>260,404</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Figure 2: Imports of fresh or chilled Eggplant in volume to New Zealand

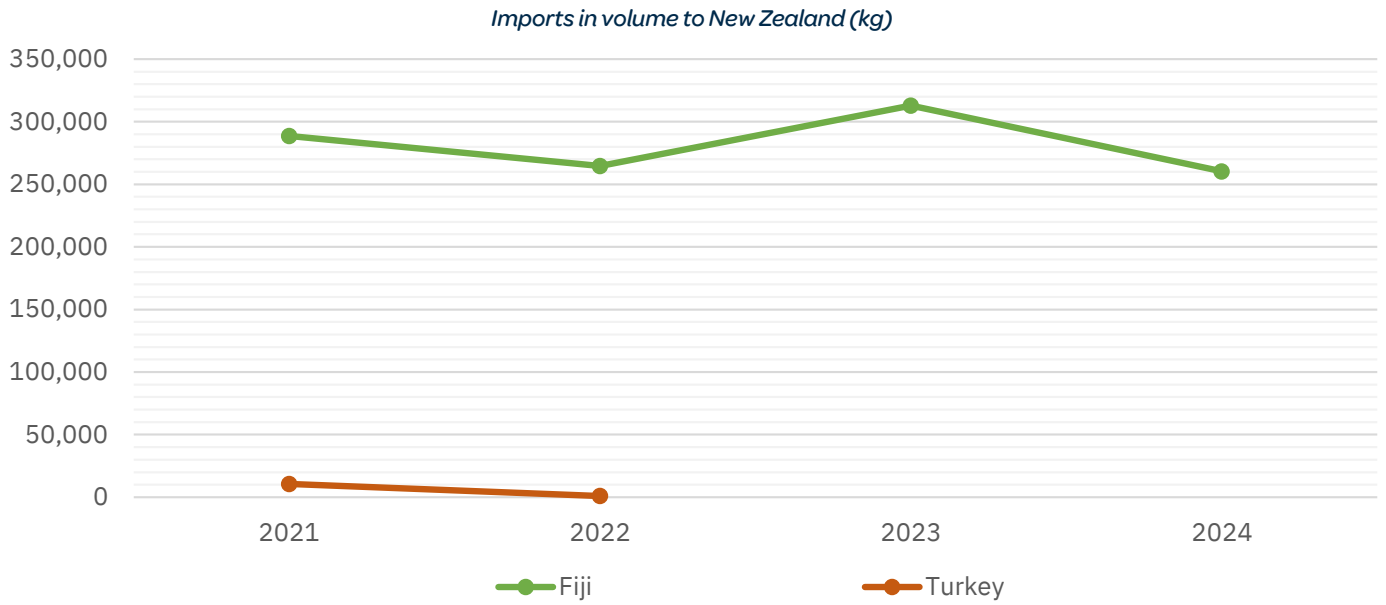
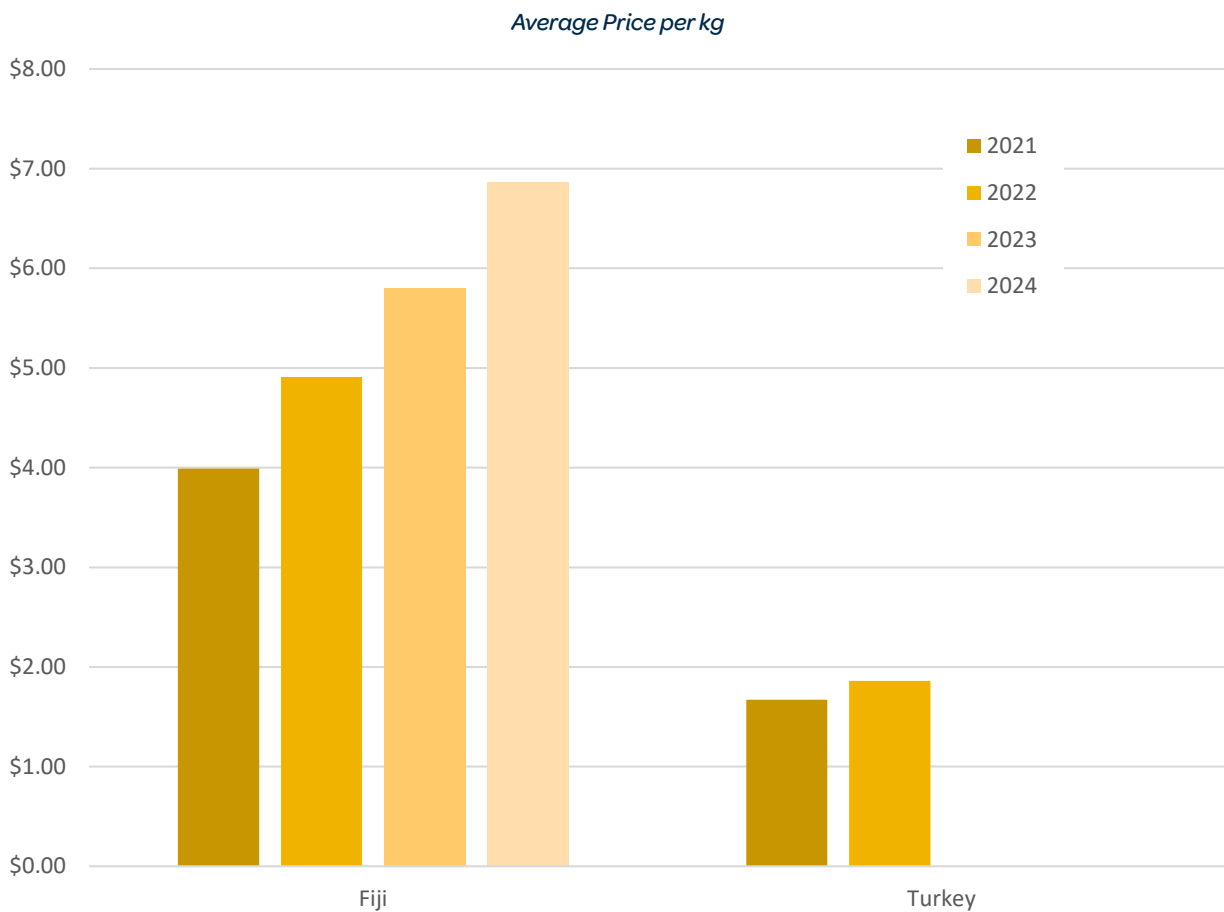


Table 4: Average price per kg of fresh or chilled Eggplant as declared at New Zealand's border  
(Only the Top 2 countries are displayed.)

	2021	2022	2023	2024
Fiji	3.99 NZD	4.91 NZD	5.80 NZD	6.86 NZD
Turkey	1.67 NZD	1.86 NZD		

Figure 3: Average price per kg of fresh or chilled Eggplant as declared at New Zealand's border  
(Only the Top 2 countries are displayed.)



## 2. Market Access

### 2.1 Biosecurity Requirements and Advice

Fresh eggplant imported into New Zealand from any country must comply with an [Import Health Standard \(IHS\)](#). The IHS outlines the specific conditions that must be met before a product can enter the country. The complete list of authorised fresh fruits, herbs, and vegetables for import into New Zealand is available via this link: [Importation and Clearance of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables 152 02](#).

When eggplant is authorised for import into New Zealand from Pacific Island countries, exporters must adhere to particular quarantine requirements, including:

- Eggplant must be grown according to commercial production standards specified by the New Zealand Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI).
- Control measures must target pests of economic importance regulated in New Zealand.
- Eggplant must be inspected following official procedures to ensure they are free of visually detectable quarantine pests, as specified by MPI.
- A valid phytosanitary certificate, issued by the exporting country's National Plant Protection Organisation (NPPO), must accompany the consignment.
- Eggplant must be packed in clean, pest-free packaging materials, free of soil or other contaminants.
- All plant parts other than the eggplant fruit, such as leaves, stems, and flowers, must be excluded.

Failure to comply with these regulations may result in border rejection, additional treatment costs, or financial penalties. Repeated non-compliance may also affect future import permissions.

### 2.2 Biosecurity Clearance in New Zealand for imported Eggplant

Countries approved to export fresh Eggplants to New Zealand can be found via the [PIER Search tool](#).

#### Step 1: Provision of Documents

- Importers must submit detailed information to MPI before goods arrive.
- Electronically issued phytosanitary certificates are sent to MPI.
- MPI reviews all accompanying documents for compliance with Import Health Standards (IHS).

#### Step 2: Non-compliant Documentation

- Clearance is refused for consignments without valid phytosanitary certificates and those detected with regulated pests.
- Correct documentation must be provided within 48 hours if missing.



- Consignments detected with regulated pests are treated before they are released.



- A consignment may fail clearance if:
  - the number of goods exceeds those stated on the phytosanitary certificate (within reason)
  - the consignment contains unmanifested goods

#### Step 3: Transit Requirements

- Consignments that are shipped in phases (short-shipped) must comply with the IHS.
- Transit consignments must meet requirements for importing or transit countries.

#### Step 4: Transport to the Approved Inspection Facility

- Consignments are transported to an approved transitional facility under an MPI inspector's direction, using pest-proof containers for inspection.

#### Step 5: Phytosanitary Security Before and After Inspection

- Consignments not inspected within 4-6 hours are securely stored.
- Non-compliant consignments are securely stored until biosecurity requirements have been satisfied.

#### Step 6: Inspection

- MPI conducts risk profiling activities before or upon arrival.
- Visual inspections verify the absence of pests or contaminants and compliance to the IHS.
- Sampling plans determine inspection quantity based on lot size.
- Biosecurity clearance is granted when all IHS requirements are met.

#### Step 7: Reconciliation

- Compliance checks validate phytosanitary certificates, frequency varies based on importer history.

## 2.3 Food Safety Requirements

In New Zealand, food safety regulations are primarily governed by the Food Act 2014 ([Available here](#)), the Food Regulations 2015, and the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code. These regulations apply to all foods sold in New Zealand, including imported foods like Eggplant.

### General Requirements

- **Traceability:** Businesses must be able to trace where their food products came from and where they are going to ensure that any products that are found to be unsafe can be quickly removed from sale.
- **Hygiene:** All aspects of food handling, from production to harvesting, processing, storage, and sale, must adhere to

strict hygiene standards.

- **Labelling:** Food items must be correctly labelled, including ingredients and allergens, and may need to have nutritional information displayed.

Please note this information may be subject to change; it is crucial to consult New Zealand's [Ministry for Primary Industries, NZ Government \(mpi.govt.nz\)](http://www.mpi.govt.nz) or similar authorities for the most current guidelines. They are country-specific and product-specific. *\* failure to adhere to these regulations can result in rejection at the New Zealand border, additional treatment costs, fines, or other penalties.*

## 2.4 Overview of the export process from the Pacific Islands to New Zealand



## 3. Market Specification

### 3.1 Quality

Quality needs may vary between importers, so exporters and growers of eggplants (fresh and processed) should be aware of any importer specifications regarding size, colour, and general quality of the commodity. It is important to contact the relevant biosecurity and food safety authorities for further information on market-specific requirements.

Fresh eggplants must have an even dark purple, shiny skin, a green stem and calyx and white flesh and seeds. The shape should be round to oval, tapering at the stem end, and the texture must be firm to the touch with a spongy interior. Any off odours or tastes are unacceptable, and the presence of dark brown seeds inside the flesh indicates overmaturity and is therefore not permitted. Cleanliness is also a key factor, meaning the eggplants must be free from dirt, insect stains, residues, or any other foreign matter.

Strict defect tolerances are in place to maintain product quality. ([See Foodstuff North Island full requirements](#))

- Unsaleable defects, which have a 0% tolerance, include the presence of live insects, foreign matter such as glass, metal, or hard plastics, as well as undercounted product quantity or underweight packaging.
- In addition, major defects, which must remain below a 5% tolerance, include fungal or bacterial rots like Phomopsis and Anthracnose, as well as discolouration or deformations caused by viral infections. Physical damage is also closely monitored, with unhealed cuts, holes, splits breaking the skin, and indentations covering more than 10% of the surface being classified as major defects. Temperature-related damage, such as dark water-soaked areas, pitted skin, or discoloured flesh due to chilling injury, is also considered a serious defect.
- Minor defects are permitted within a 10% tolerance and include minor bruising greater than 3 square centimetres, physiological defects such as distorted shapes, and surface inconsistencies like hail marks or healed limb rubs affecting more than 3 square centimetres. To ensure size consistency, eggplants must fall within the specified weight ranges. The 12CT and 28CT categories require weights between 0.33-0.36 kg, while the 32CT category requires 0.3-0.34 kg. A deviation of no more than 5% outside these ranges is permitted.

To mitigate potential risks, exporters should implement quality control measures at the source. This includes selecting high-grade eggplants, testing for pesticide residues, and ensuring produce meets New Zealand's Maximum Residue Limit (MRL) standards. Regular microbial testing can also help prevent contamination during processing and transport.

Having a contingency plan for transport disruptions, such as alternative shipping routes or refrigerated storage, can prevent losses in case of unforeseen delays. Additionally, insuring perishable shipments provides financial protection against spoilage and rejection at the border.

## 3.2 Certifications

Growers and suppliers must ensure compliance with certifications such as NZGAP or GLOBALG.A.P, while organic eggplant require a valid BioGro or equivalent certification to meet importer and consumer expectations.

- a) **HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points)** is a systematic approach to food safety that identifies, evaluates, and controls potential hazards in food production. It's a preventive system that identifies critical points in food production process where hazards can be controlled or eliminated. It aims to ensure the safety of food products by identifying and managing potential risks at critical stages of production.
- b) **New Zealand GAP (Good Agricultural Practices)** is a set of voluntary standards that focus on agricultural and aquaculture practices to ensure the safety and sustainability of food production. These requirements cover various aspects, such as environmental conservation, worker welfare, and food safety. Essentially, Global GAP aims to establish and maintain standardised farming and food production practices to meet quality and safety standards for global markets.

## 3.3 Volume

New Zealand buyers prefer consistency in supply. Orders can range from a few kilograms for smaller businesses to several metric tons for larger retailers or manufacturers. It's essential to maintain the volume of Eggplant you supply.

## 3.4 Packaging and Labelling

Eggplants should be packaged appropriately, adhering to biosecurity and food safety requirements. All products must feature clear labels that include the product name, country of origin, net weight, packaging date, expiration date, and any relevant certifications to ensure full traceability.

Pack in strong, high-quality, moisture-resistant ventilated cartons or crates with protective liners to withstand stacking and transport, ensuring produce arrives store-ready without repacking. Maintain ventilation to preserve quality and shelf life. To maintain freshness, fresh eggplants must be stored at 7-10°C and provide a minimum shelf life of 12 days from receipt. Proper transportation is essential, with eggplants stacked according to Ti Hi specifications on a stabilised pallet and transported in a refrigerated van with airbag suspension, unless otherwise approved. All deliveries must comply with Health and Safety guidelines and Standard Operating Procedures, covering pallet size, stacking standards, and crate card labelling.

Effective packaging plays a crucial role in preventing physical damage, bruising, and moisture loss. The use of ventilated plastic crates, reinforced cardboard cartons, or wooden boxes with protective liners is recommended. Overpacking should be avoided to prevent crushing, while underpacking can lead to excessive movement and bruising. Pre-cooling before packing helps stabilise temperature, and careful handling is necessary

to minimise impact damage, as even minor bruising accelerates deterioration. Airbag suspension in transport vehicles further protects the produce by absorbing shocks and vibrations.

By following traceability and packaging standards, eggplants can be safely transported while maintaining quality, ensuring they reach the New Zealand market in optimal condition with minimal defects and maximum food safety.

## 3.5 Transport recommended and precautions

Importing fresh eggplants from the Pacific to New Zealand requires careful planning to maintain quality, comply with biosecurity regulations, and minimise spoilage. As eggplants are highly perishable and sensitive to temperature fluctuations, effective transport logistics are essential. This section outlines the best transport methods, handling requirements, and biosecurity measures necessary for successful importation.

The choice of transport method significantly impacts the freshness and marketability of eggplants. Air freight is the preferred method due to its speed, ensuring that eggplants arrive within 1-2 days while retaining optimal quality. Alternatively, sea freight can be used for bulk shipments, but it requires refrigerated reefer containers to maintain temperature control. Transit by sea typically takes 7-10 days, making temperature and humidity management critical to preventing spoilage.

During transport, eggplants should be stored at 7-10°C with a relative humidity of 90-95% to maintain freshness. Temperatures below this range can cause chilling injury, leading to skin darkening and texture deterioration, while higher temperatures accelerate ripening and microbial growth. Proper ventilation within containers helps prevent condensation, reducing the risk of fungal contamination.

By tailoring transport conditions to the specific requirements of each eggplant product type, exporters can ensure that products reach their destination in optimal condition, supporting their marketability and reducing the risk of rejections or spoilage.

New Zealand has strict biosecurity regulations for fresh produce imports to prevent the introduction of pests and diseases. A phytosanitary certificate from the exporting country's relevant biosecurity authority is mandatory to certify that the eggplants are free from contaminants. Additionally, pre-export treatments such as Vapour Heat Treatment (VHT) or Cold Treatment are required to eliminate pests like fruit flies.

Before shipping, eggplants must undergo a pre-shipment inspection to check for signs of disease, insect infestations, and physical damage. On arrival in New Zealand, the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) conducts further inspections, and any non-compliant shipments may be quarantined, fumigated, re-exported, or destroyed.

## 3.6 Mixed Loaded Consignments

Mixed-loaded consignments must be issued with the correct documentation and loaded and transported appropriately to minimise any risk of contamination and/or damage risk.

## 4. Types Buyers/Distributors

**Fresh wholesaler:** Turners & Growers, MG Marketing, Moshim Ltd and Valley Fruit and Vege LTD are key wholesalers of fresh eggplants in New Zealand. These companies supply supermarkets, foodservice providers and independent retailers nationwide.

**Processed Food Industry:** Eggplants are utilised by processed food manufacturers in products like relishes and dips. For instance, Tumjal offers an eggplant relish made with fresh eggplants, garlic, and ginger, catering to consumers seeking flavorful condiments. Additionally, Goodfood Group provides a chargrilled eggplant product, highlighting the vegetable's versatility in processed forms.

### Specialty Shops and Independent Retailers:

Stores such as Mediterranean Foods stock products like Ajvar Mild Eggplant & Peppers Relish, a tasty and aromatic vegetable relish made with a blend of ripe peppers, tomatoes, aubergine, and spices. This caters to health-conscious and gourmet consumers seeking unique eggplant-based products.



## 5. Key Success Factors



## Acknowledgments

We would like to extend our sincere appreciation to the representatives of MG Marketing Ltd and Moshim Ltd for generously sharing their valuable insights on the New Zealand market. Their contributions were instrumental in the preparation of this report.