

# National Direction for Commercial Vegetable Production

There are three core elements to developing National Direction for Commercial Vegetable Production (CVP) that must be progressed as part of the Resource Management Act (RMA) Phase Two package between December 2024 and June 2025.

## We Need to Act Now

Timing is critical for two key reasons:

**Unworkable freshwater rules:** Environment Court decisions in 2025 are expected to constrain 20% of New Zealand's vegetable supply. The consequent risk of reduced vegetable supply and increased price volatility is too significant to wait for the 2027 National Policy Statement Freshwater Management (NPSFM) plan changes. National rules through National Environmental Standard (NES) provisions for CVP, or a permitted rule for CVP in the RMA, need to be progressed before a significant proportion of existing CVP is required to operate under constraining consent conditions.

**Changing policy for highly productive land:** The supply of fruits and vegetables needs to be enabled alongside policy to enable housing. Where the NPSFM constrains CVP and the NPS Highly Productive Land (NPSHPL) constrains housing development, valuable land is not being used for either activity. This is very inefficient and frustrating to growers. If the NPSHPL becomes more enabling for housing in 2025, land that is strategically important for NZ's supply of vegetables may be re-zoned for housing because the option to use the land for CVP is constrained by unworkable freshwater rules. If amendments to the NPSHPL are progressed without also progressing enabling policy and rules for CVP, a likely result is reduced vegetable supply and increased vegetable price volatility.

## What We Can Do

**AMEND THE RMA:** "Enabling the Supply of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables" is recognised as a matter to have 'particular regard' to in the RMA.

**What:** The matter for fruits and vegetables will sit alongside other matters that are nationally important and warrant particular attention to achieve the purpose of the Act.

**Why:** Inclusion in Section 7 of the RMA is important to:

- Support amendment to the NES Freshwater to introduce new provisions for enabling CVP or support a permitted rule for CVP in the RMA.
- Support the NPSHPL amendments
- Support Environment Court decisions currently under deliberation, which threaten the supply of vegetables
- Align with the future approach of development and protection of 'bottom lines'

**How:** Add the words "Enabling the Supply of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables" to Section 7.

**When:** Introduced in RMA Amendment Bill 2 in December 2024

**AMEND THE NPSFM:** “Enabling the Supply of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables” is recognised as a compulsory freshwater value and supported with targeted policy in the NPSFM.

**What:** The policy is about achieving freshwater outcomes, while enabling nationally important water use for vegetable production.

**Why:** Requiring decision makers to consider nationally important water use values alongside the compulsory freshwater values supports balanced decision making on the appropriate level of ambition and timeframes for achieving freshwater outcomes. Providing for an Action Plan approach reduces the tension between in-stream values and use values, by enabling more tools to be used to achieve freshwater outcomes.

**How:** Two key changes are required to the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management (NPSFM).

- “Enabling the Supply of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables” is added to Appendix 1A
- The quashed Specified Vegetable Growing Area policy is revised, so national vegetable supply is enabled, while freshwater outcomes are achieved over time by providing for an Action Plan approach.

**When:** Included in the National Direction omnibus consultation in early 2025

**AMEND NES F OR RMA:** Commercial Vegetable Production is made a permitted activity, provided robust good management practice (GMP) standards are met and demonstrated through an audited Freshwater Farm Plan.

**What:** The matter is about developing achievable and enforceable rules for CVP which drive uptake of robust good practice efficiently. The scale of CVP is such that CVP operating at GMP does not have significant adverse effects and therefore can be regulated as a permitted activity in an NES, for both existing CVP and CVP expansion.

**Why:** An NES or RMA amendment is required to override unworkable regional plan rules to manage the risk of vegetable supply constraints and increased price volatility for the next 5-10 years, ahead of the RMA replacement legislation. It would be most efficient for the NES rules to apply nationally to existing CVP and expansion of CVP. If deemed necessary, to manage water quality effects in transition to the NPSFM 2027 plans, a regionally targeted approach in Waikato and Horizons that requires consent for expansion in catchments with poor water quality, but make existing CVP in all catchments permitted, and expansion of CVP permitted in catchments with water quality above the bottom lines for nitrogen attributes. would manage most of the short-term risk between now and the NPSFM 2027 plans becoming operative

**How:** New CVP provisions within an amendment to the NES Freshwater or an RMA amendment

**When:** Included in the National Direction omnibus consultation in early 2025 or introduced in RMA Amendment Bill 2 in December 2024

## Legislation - RMA

Enabling the supply of fresh fruits and vegetables is nationally important, and decision makers should give particular regard to it.

- **Amend RMA**

- Section 7 - enabling the supply of fresh fruits and vegetables
- December 2024 - March 2025

## National Policy - NPSFM

Policy that enables vegetable production, while achieving freshwater outcomes.

- **Amend NPSFM**

- Appendix 1A - enabling the supply of fresh fruits and vegetables
- Replace quashed Specified Vegetable Growing Area policy with enabling national vegetable policy and Action Plan approach
- December 2024 - June 2025

## National Rules - NES

National rules that override regional rules, making commercial vegetable production a permitted activity with good management practice demonstrated with an audited freshwater farm plan.

- **Amend NES F**

- Add new provisions to the NES F, so CVP is permitted with GMP demonstrated with an audited freshwater farm plan. The NES rules could apply nationally or regionally. The rules must override regional plan rules.
- Dec 2024 - June 2025 (could become operative later in 2025), or

- **Amend RMA**

- Regionally targetted permitted activity in law
- December 2024 - March 2025