

There is a strong global demand for apples, but it is uncertain whether the New Zealand apple crop will be able to meet it according to the news site, [STUFF](#).

This is reportedly due to a combination of lower volumes and a lack of a reliable seasonal workforce.

NZ Apples and Pears Chief Executive Alan Pollard reportedly said that there were indications of strong demand in key markets, but continuing disruption to international shipping schedules and port congestion gave cause for concerns.

Additionally, Pollard told STUFF that the New Zealand national crop estimate was down 5 percent from 2020 at 558,672 metric tonnes (MT).

This is partially due to hail damage in Nelson and Central Otago which reduced the estimate by 45,000 MT. However, the absence of approximately 10,500 Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) workers normally expected by the industry isn't easing the situation.

Even with an additional 2000 RSEs arriving, the number is still only projected to reach between 7000 and 8000. In the same manner, New Zealand working holiday visas which, in a typical year, would have provided around 50,000 workers throughout the picking season are also falling short.

According to Pollard, though, that number has fallen to around 13,000 workers this year.

"There's strong demand coming from overseas, and we also know New Zealand apples are really popular domestically as well. There's enough demand there, it's just whether we'll be able to supply to it." he is quoted as saying.

Pollard added that it was too early to tell about financial losses and that growers were focused on "harvesting as much crop" as they could.

"In terms of our global customers and domestic customers they can be assured of some supply around the season. We're working really hard to try and fill vacancies we have in the harvest," he said.