

New Zealand-based kiwifruit marketer Zespri says it will work with the domestic and Chinese industries on an alternative approach to the unauthorized Gold3 plantings in China, after the threshold of 75 percent grower support for the proposed commercial trial was not met.

Final results show 70.5 percent of growers supported the primary resolution to carry out a one-year orchard monitoring, procurement and sales and marketing trial in China. A total of 64.1 percent supported the secondary resolution to use the Zespri brand label as part of the sales trial in order to understand consumer response.

While this is a high level of support, under the Kiwifruit Export Regulations, 75 percent support (by individual votes and fruit weight) is required for each resolution to pass in the Producer Vote.

Zespri Chief Executive Dan Mathieson acknowledged the extensive engagement by the industry in what is a challenging and ongoing issue.

“We proposed the Gold3 trial after extensive due diligence and a range of expert advice suggested it was our best option to learn more about the unauthorized plantings, including the potential impact on our brand and sales channels. It would also have helped us begin to understand whether a commercial solution was achievable.

“China is an important market for Zespri, with 20 percent of New Zealand kiwifruit sold there. It is also the world’s largest kiwifruit producer with a rapidly modernizing industry.

“We will continue to explore our options and engage on the issue and find an alternative way forward.

“As part of this Zespri has a range of initiatives underway in China. This includes our R&D partnerships, our efforts to understand the local production and supply chain environment and our engagement with the Chinese kiwifruit industry and Government. It remains important we stay close to the issue on the ground.

“We will also continue to work with our valued commercial partners and to strengthen our relationships and the Zespri brand.

“We remain absolutely committed to providing our Chinese consumers with fresh, healthy and tasty Zespri Kiwifruit and accelerating our efforts to expand beyond the 50 cities we currently sell to in China. We are also investing significantly in developing other markets around the world including in Asia, Europe and North America.”

Mathieson confirmed Zespri would keep engaging with growers and the industry as the ongoing research work in China provided more information, and as it developed next steps to address the unauthorized Chinese Gold3 plantings.