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## **Zespri sees huge increase in North American SunGold kiwi sales**

By

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Since Zespri has put more commitment into the U.S. market, the kiwi category has seen phenomenal growth in the country, all driven by the company's proprietary SunGold Kiwi, the largest and top-growing kiwifruit.

"New consumers are loving its sweeter than green taste," said Sarah Deaton, shopper marketing manager at Zespri North America. "We're the No. 1 selling kiwi brand and we're excited to continue to grow year after year. Zespri only grows kiwifruit so it is a very important product for our company. We plan to bring in almost 74 million pounds of kiwifruit into the U.S. this year."



That's almost an 87 percent increase over 2020. The company's more voluminous Zespri green organic shipments were also expected to increase more than 8 percent this season. In fact, Kiwifruit jumped to the fourth-fastest growing fruit segment in the U.S., only one of 10 fruit segments that saw volume growth vs. year ago.

The kiwifruit season runs from May through November and supplemented with Zespri Italian-grown SunGold the rest of the winter.

According to Deaton, kiwifruit makes up around 1.5 percent of the world's internationally traded fruit and is New Zealand's largest single horticultural export, earning more than \$2.3 billion annually.

"Zespri employs more than 500 people in New Zealand, Asia, Europe and the Americas," she said. "We are 100 percent owned by current or past kiwifruit growers and have 2,800 growers in New Zealand and 1,500 based elsewhere. We operate in more than 53 markets across the world and have around 150 organic growers."

Having been a leader in kiwifruit for so long, the company knows what it takes to be a success in the segment.

"It starts with our growers," Deaton said. "Our growers are incentivized to grow best-tasting kiwifruit and produce kiwifruit that will have high levels of sweet flavor when it gets to supermarket shelves. Once in the market, the next step is to help showcase large displays so shoppers can find Zespri SunGold."

The company also makes sure to promote its sweet taste and superior nutrition.

"It also helps to teach people how to eat kiwi — cut in half and scoop with a spoon — as a lot of consumers still think peeling is the only way, which can be a barrier," Deaton said. "Packaged kiwi has been a great driver as it allows us to communicate important communication educating

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consumers on the benefits and ease of eating kiwi.”

While the U.S, has seen solid growth with consumer demand in the category, there have been many challenges throughout the supply chain, such as labor, port delays and other supply chain issues.

Zespri continues to run promotions for the season and are looking to finish strong. To help, it has a Taste it to Believe it campaign encouraging consumers to try Zespri SunGold and reap the benefits of its great taste and superior nutrition.

“We have shipper bins to support your in-store promotions that are proven to help increase incremental sales,” Deaton said. “Consumers are still looking for ways to boost their immunity with vitamin-C rich foods. Our Zespri SunGold Kiwi is poised to meet this need with its high vitamin-c content, three-times more than an orange. Consumers are also looking for ways to stay healthy without having to give up on taste, which Zespri SunGold’s consistent, tropical-sweet taste helps meet as well.”

She recommended stores concentrate on display space and prominent positioning to boost sales.

“Kiwi is the fourth-fastest growing fruit in the fruit bowl and with its fair share of space in the department it can really help drive incremental sales for retailers,” Deaton said. “We’ve seen retailers increase sales three-fold when leveraging our shipper bins to create eye-catching displays in front of the department.”

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