



United Fresh  
New Zealand Incorporated

# The New Zealand Fresh Produce Food Safety & Traceability Framework

**An Update on Progress since 2015**

23 November 2023

Anne-Marie Arts

# The Original Framework – 2015

## Drivers for the establishment of United Fresh TAG

***In 2015, the focus of TAG was on Food Safety Management in New Zealand.***

### **Yersinia Pseudotuberculosis Outbreak**

- Lettuce & Carrot suspected as carriers.

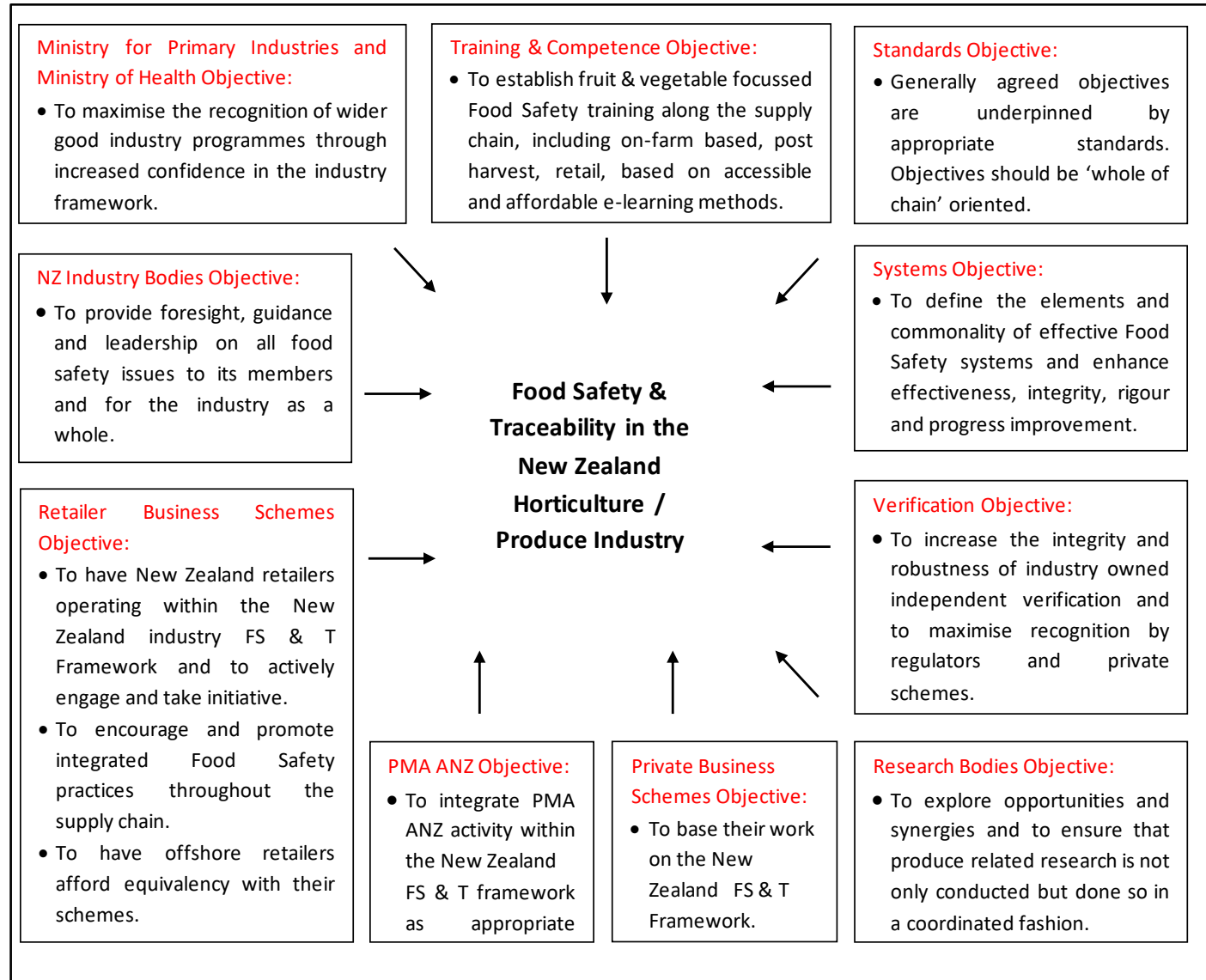
### **Fonterra Whey Protein Botulism Scare**

### **Nervous Regulators**

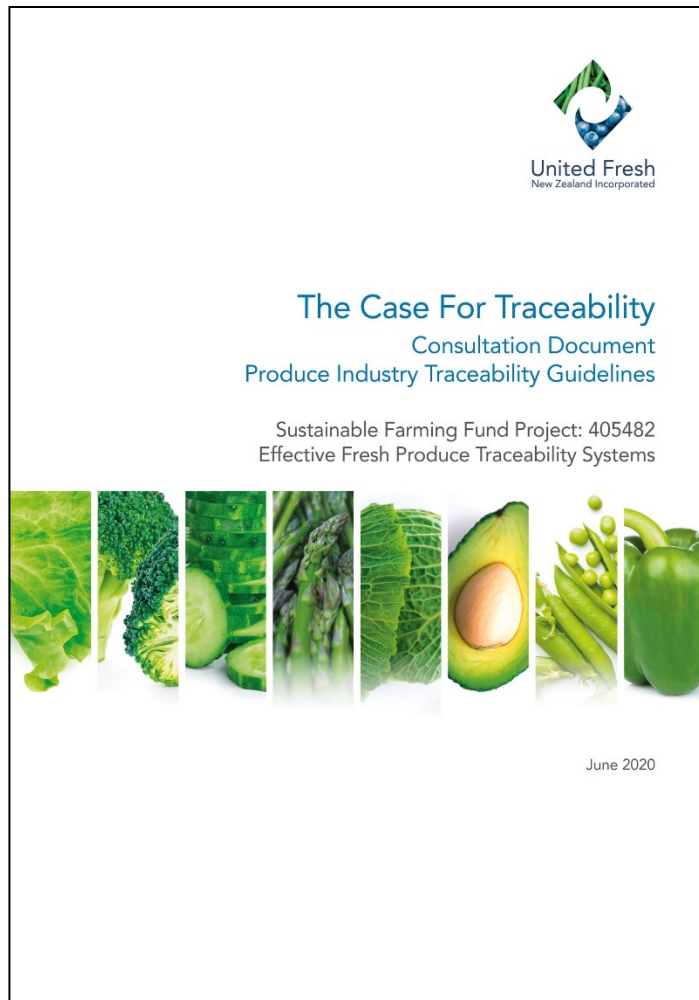
- New Zealand's image.
- Potential Best Practice Gaps.
- Export earnings impacts.
- Consumer perception.



# The Original Food Safety & Traceability Framework



# Major United Fresh Food Safety Activities – 2015-2023



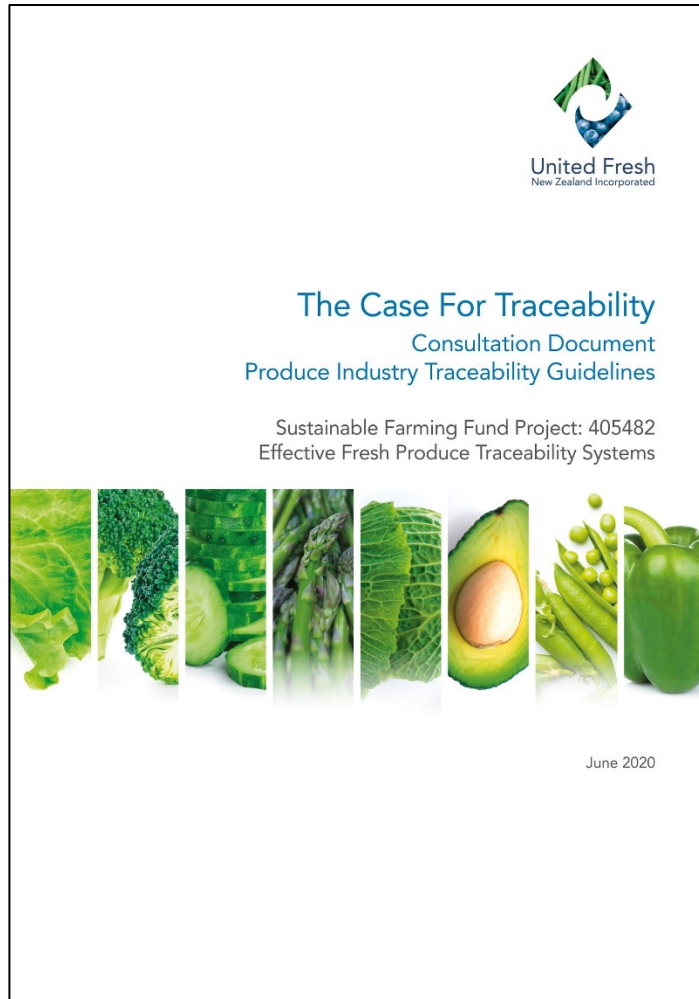
## 2018-2020 Sustainable Farming Fund Traceability Project

- **Ineffective Industry Traceability Systems.**
- **GS1 standards** based.

## 2020-2021 NZFSSRC Risk Ranking Project

- **Identified the most significant risk crops**
- Bean sprouts, Berries, Leafy greens, and netted Melons
- **Water, Workers, and Waste are the overarching themes** of how produce is contaminated.
- Also identified industry experts and opportunities for better industry coordination.

# Major United Fresh Food Safety Activities – 2015-2023



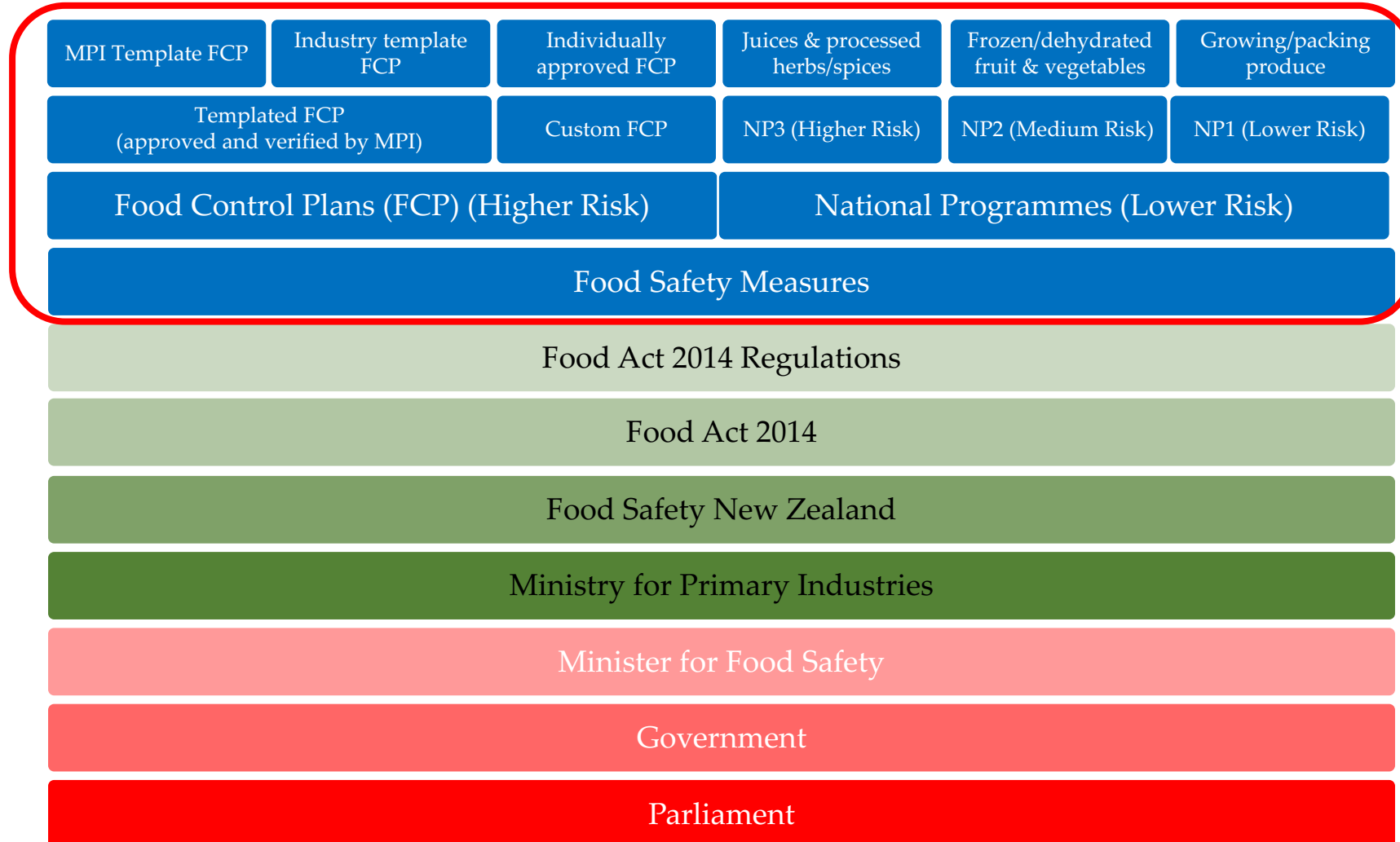
## 2022-2023 Chair, NZFSSRC Horticulture Advisory Group

- The objective is to work on achieving greater coordination across the produce supply chain for food safety activities.
- Championing the Risk Ranking outcomes as the road map of what we need to work on as an industry

## 2023 Flooded Land and Food Safety Implications

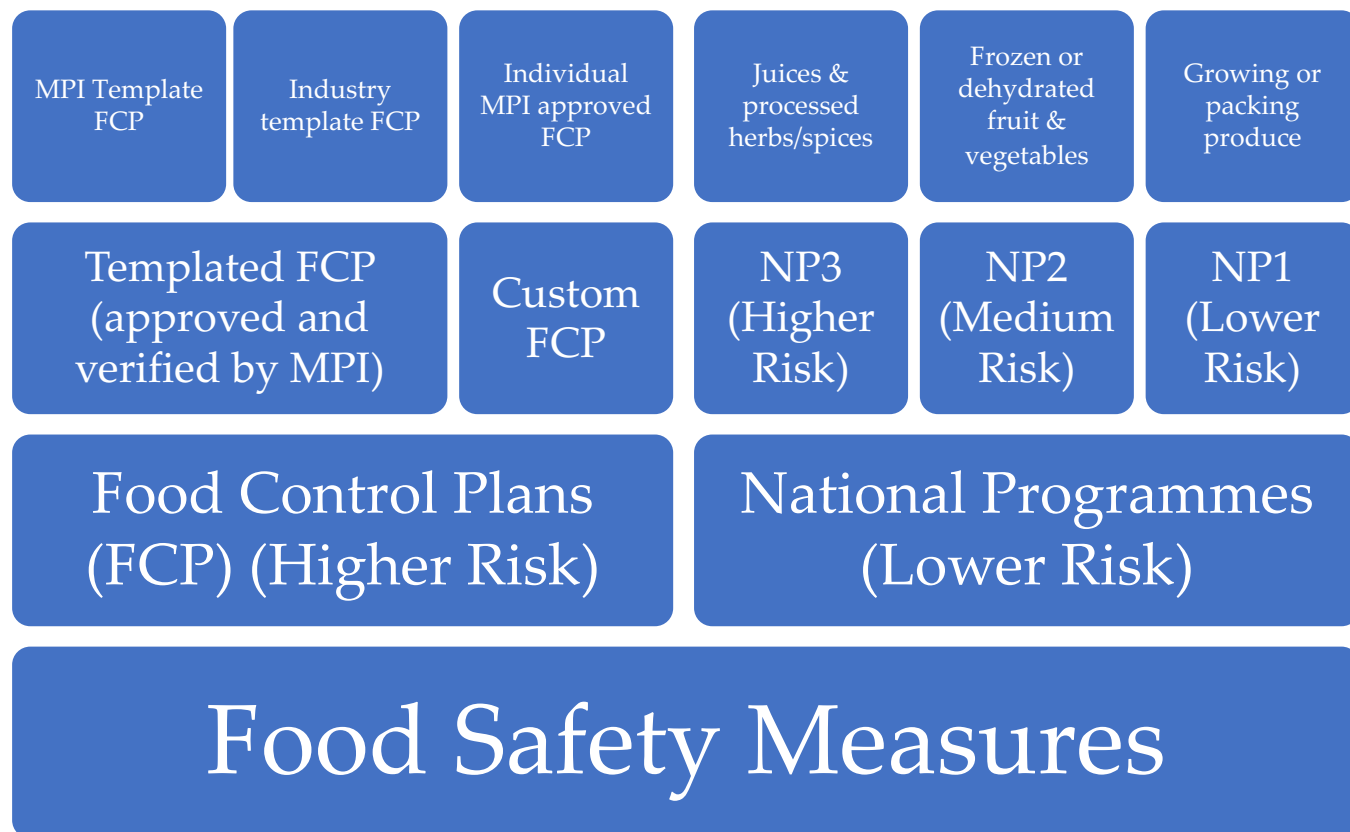
- Supported by United Fresh to get the project started.

# New Zealand's Regulatory Food Safety Landscape – 2023



# New Zealand's Regulatory Food Safety Landscape – 2023

## Produce Industry Relevant Details



### The Problem

- Fresh produce is diverse and has very different risk profiles that do not fit into neatly drawn boxes!
- The regulator's can't cope with the variability
- Much of Industry sees Food safety as a tick the box compliance exercise


# Influences in the Regulatory Food Safety Landscape





# The 2023 Fresh Produce Food Safety Landscape

Version  
as at 24 August 2023



**Food Act 2014**

Public Act 2014 No 32  
Date of assent 6 June 2014



**FSMA**  
Food Safety  
Modernization  
Act

## Food Act 2014

- Introduction of National Programmes and Food Control Plans – Differentiating Risk Levels.

## Global Industry Standards (Private Schemes)

- Additional requirements offshore customers are placing on New Zealand produce sector, e.g., GFSI.

## Global Bilateral Regulatory Standards

- New rules exporters are expected to comply with, which will affect NZ industry behaviours.

## Increased Environmental Risks

- Weather events, competition for water resources and evolving microbiological hazards



**In other words, it is complicated!**

# The Food Safety Focus Within the Fresh Produce Industry

| Organisation  | Core Focus                             | Observation   |
|---|--|---|
| MPI / Food Safety New Zealand                       | Regulatory                             | Food Act 2014, especially NP1 at production level.  |
| Horticulture New Zealand                            | Advocacy                               | Aim to influence policy making  |
| NZGAP / Global GAP                                  | Systems Oversight & Accreditation      | Originally production focused, with broader sustainability elements being added.  |
| Product Groups                                      | Crop specific grower support           | 20 product groups affiliated with Horticulture New Zealand. Several others acting independently, e.g., Mushrooms, Blueberries etc.                |
| NZ Food Safety Science Research Centre (NZFSSRC)    | Research, all food, including produce  | Virtual structure, involving several universities and food research institutes. Produce needs to engage to be heard. Currently under MBIE review. |
| Fresh Produce Safety Centre (FPSC)                  | Research, singular fresh produce focus | Australian university based. Collaborates primarily with IFPA A-NZ. NZ can benefit on a case-by-case basis.                                       |
| Food Safety Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) | Regulatory                             | Some FSANZ regulatory outputs apply in NZ, others do not. There are positives and negatives to this.  |
| <b>United Fresh</b>                                 | <b>Industry Coordination</b>           | <b>The necessary evil no one appears to have time for!</b>  |

# Food Safety Coordination Within The Industry is Ineffective



## Observation as Chair, NZFSSRC Horticulture Advisory Group

- Lack of coordination between supply chain participants is slowing industry attempts to reduce food safety risks.
- The weather events of 2022/2023 highlighted the attitude that food safety is considered another compliance activity imposed upon the domestic industry and growers.
- Export crop producers were more proactive in addressing weather related food safety challenges compared to producers solely focused on the domestic market.

**There is a need for more effective coordination  
between produce industry / supply chain  
groupings**

# United Fresh – Continued Food Safety related Actions



- **Educate industry** through social media and workshops.
- **Guide industry groups** as to the food safety risks certain crops can present.
- **Strengthen the coordination role** on food safety related strategies & actions along the fresh produce supply chain.



# United Fresh – Continued Food Safety related Actions



- **Continue high level information provision** and newsletters.
- **Support a 2024 listeria workshop** with NZFSSRC, with a specific fresh produce component, as we have identified a significant knowledge gap in this area.
- **Propose development of Microbial Testing management guidelines** for the fresh produce industry (with NZFRSSC and science partners).
- **Act as an industry food safety advocate** through NZFSSRC in a coordinated/linking role with industry.

# United Fresh – Food Safety Strategy



Draft Food Safety Industry Framework Workshop proposed for May 2024.

- **Encourage the development of guidelines for crops** identified as higher risk that are not effectively covered by NP1 (Bean sprouts, Berries, Leafy greens, and Melons).
- **Release a draft industry Food Safety Framework** for consultation in February 2024.
- **Workshop the draft framework with** participants from along the entire produce supply chain in May 2024, possibly facilitated by NZFSSRC.
- **Release the industry “Food Safety Framework for 2024 and beyond”** in September 2024.

# Conclusion

The NZFSSRC Risk Ranking Project in 2020 identified the way forward, as well as the needs across the fresh produce supply chain.

No one organisation can undertake all the work.

One organisation needs to be the Food Safety champion for the industry.

**United Fresh can take that role.**

**Thank You.**

[tag@unitedfresh.co.nz](mailto:tag@unitedfresh.co.nz)

## RISK RANKING TO PRIORITISE FRESH PRODUCE SAFETY RESEARCH (5ZESRRISK)

### Report 2: Risk ranking and research plan

**Report Number:** CSC21019  
**Authors:** Nicola King, Peter Cressey (Institute of Environmental Science and Research)  
**Contributors:** Members of the Technical Advisory Group assembled to participate in this risk ranking effort  
**Prepared For:** United Fresh  
**Reviewed By:** Beverley Horn (ESR), Catherine McLeod (NZFSSRC), Anne-Marie Arts (United Fresh) and Anne-Marie Perchec Merien (New Zealand Food Safety)  
**Date:** August 2021

New Zealand Food Safety Science & Research Centre  
Hopkirk Institute, Massey University, Tennant Drive, Palmerston North 4442  
Phone: +64 (0) 6 356 9099

© COPYRIGHT: This publication must not be reproduced or distributed, electronically or otherwise, in whole or in part without the written permission of the Copyright Holder, which is the party that commissioned the report.

DISCLAIMER: This report or document ("the Report") is given by the Institute of Environmental Science and Research Limited ("ESR") solely for the benefit of the New Zealand Food Safety Science & Research Centre and United Fresh New Zealand Incorporated as defined in the Contract between ESR and Massey University, and is strictly subject to the conditions laid out in that Contract. Neither ESR nor any of its employees makes any warranty, express or implied, or assumes any legal liability or responsibility for use of the Report or its contents by any other person or organisation.

