

## Country of Origin of Food Act April 2019



On the 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2018 the Consumers' Right to Know (Country of Origin of Food) Act was passed. This Act will require fresh or frozen fruit, vegetables, meat, fish and seafood to have Country of Origin Labelling (CoOL). This reflects where produce was grown / picked / caught rather than packed. Producers of these food products will need to comply by 3 June 2019 for fresh produce and by 3 June 2020 for frozen produce.

The purpose of the Act is to enable regulations to be made that would require food retailers to provide consumers with information at the point of sale about the country or place of origin of single component foods. This Act comes under Section 27 of the Fair-Trading Act 1986.

This Act will address the growing number of consumers that want to know where their food comes from, so they can make informed decisions about what to purchase. This is supported by research in 2017 undertaken by Horticulture New Zealand and Consumer New Zealand which shows that 71% of New Zealanders think that fruit and vegetable retailers should display country of origin information.

The existing voluntary approach to labelling was not effective in providing consumers with the ability to make informed choices about the food they purchased and was evident in the 787 submissions received on the Bill. New Zealand will follow in the footsteps of 50 countries worldwide that already have mandatory labelling requirements. The Minister of Commerce and Consumer Affairs will issue a standard in due course to help comply with the new Act.

The Act provides for the consumer information standard to apply to:

- regulated foods (that is either only 1 type of fruit, vegetable, meat, fish, or seafood that is fresh and is no more than minimally processed (for example, by being cut, minced, filleted, or surface treated);
- regulated foods sold at retail, including on an Internet site, but not those sold for immediate consumption (such as at a restaurant, cafeteria, takeaway shop, canteen, or similar place) or at a fundraising event
- regulated foods that are packaged or unpackaged.

Failure to comply with this change in legislation could result in a fine of up to \$30,000.