# Southern Paprika Limited.

<https://www.ruraldelivery.net.nz/stories/Southern-Paprika>

Southern Paprika (SPL) is NZ’s largest single site glasshouse grower of capsicums. The business is a joint venture between Alexander Cropping Limited and the Dutch company Levarht. The joint venture was formed when Levarht approached Alexander Cropping Ltd. looking for a southern hemisphere company to supply the Japanese market during the northern hemisphere winter.

Southern Paprika is so named because it is located in the Southern Hemisphere and produces “paprika” – the European name for capsicums.

The company has grown into a large-scale specialist in the capsicum market and with the joint venture’s partner’s expertise, have starting supplying Japan, Australia and Canada. SPL continues to drive the domestic consumption in New Zealand.

Since 1998 the initial 2.5ha glasshouse has grown into 23ha of glasshouses, growing around 1 million individual capsicum plants and producing in excess of 6,500 tonnes of capsicums per annum.

George Moore says the company’s focus is on being the most reliable supplier of quality capsicums locally and into overseas markets. They’re focused on using the best of local and international technology to stick to that goal.

Glasshouses have evolved to allow control over temperature, humidity and growing mediums to extract the best possible yields. The houses are heated using natural gas, helped by the fact that the Warkworth property is adjacent to the gas lines. They also have a computer that constantly adjusts angles of vents which have been carefully engineered to maximise the amount of light and airflow. They can monitor everything from the amount of fruit being picked to light levels in the greenhouses.

As a result of this technology, cultivar variety and growing expertise, they can get yields of around 30kg of capsicums per square metre from plants that grow up to 4 metres in height.

Glass house grown capsicum are a different product than that grown in the field. This gives SPL benefits over field grown capsicums, including:

* Superior appearance and shelf stability
* Biological production methods
* Environmental sustainability
* Food safety with traceability
* The colour ratio is around 55% red, 35% yellow, and 10% orange. Green capsicums are taken from coloured varieties harvested before the colour change occurs.

Capsicum seedlings are planted from May and the plants start bearing fruit from July. With 3 large glasshouse complexes, they stagger the planting so they can supply capsicums year-round. The plants are hydroponically grown being fed a mixture of water and nutrients through a small feeder tube placed next to the base of the plant.

Gas heats water which runs through pipes in and around the glasshouse which controls the humidity. The daytime temperature inside the glasshouse ranges between 21-28 degrees Celsius. A by-product of using gas to heat the water is CO2. This is captured and used in the glasshouses to help the plants to grow.

The glasshouse staff loosely fall into crop maintenance and production/harvesting. The crop maintenance involves ongoing pruning and twisting of the plants to help maintain general health and set the fruit for production.

During peak production SPL has around 140 staff at work in the glasshouses and packhouse area. They have recruited some of their staff from Tuvalu and Kiribati via the RSE scheme.

The fruit is taken into the pack house where it is graded by colour, by quality and then size. The company can harvest, grade and pack up to 60 tonnes of capsicums per day during the peak season.

Once the grading and packaging is completed it is transported to Auckland where it is delivered to a retailer or the airport. It usually takes 1 day from the time the fruit is picked until it is on a supermarket shelf. If the produce is going overseas it takes approximately 2-3 days before appearing on a retailer’s shelf in Japan or Australia.

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| What are Southern Paprika’s inputs? Outputs? |

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| What are some of the management practices carried out at Southern Paprika to add value? |