

March 15 2017

Waikato Times

# Business

## Wet weather hits produce yield, prices

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Carrot prices are at an all-time high of \$3.53 a kilogram, up more than 50 per cent in February from a year earlier, according to Statistics New Zealand.

Ohakune carrot grower Sue Deadman said she has not seen a year with this small of a yield in a long time.

Deadman said it was chaos trying to work around the weather this year. Crop yield was lower, and the amount of carrots not fit to be sold on supermarket shelves was higher.

"We sometimes get patches where it's quite damp ... but this year it was consistently wet and you might have got the odd fine day in between."

Deadman said carrot growers plant in cycles of seven to 10 days, and there were times some growers couldn't plant crops because the ground was too wet.

The carrot harvest started in late January and goes until about October in Ohakune, but one or two growers in the region have yet to start harvesting, Deadman said.

She said it was a bit early to be predicting what the yield and prices for the rest of the season would look like.

Lower Hutt fresh produce wholesaler Ajay Jina said: "Once Ohakune is at full production, prices will ease back again."

In the meantime, most carrots on the market have been coming from Pukekohe, which has experienced a period of drought followed by flooding.

Jina said the high price was a product of sporadic weather.

"It's always tough when the weather is what it is, but we'll get through it."



Carrots have followed apples to hit an all-time record price.

PHOTO: MARION VAN DIJK/FAIRFAX NZ

He said he expects prices to drop in two to three weeks as the harvest hits peak season, which was late this year, as it was for apples earlier in the year.

The carrot price jump follows January's record apple prices, which have fallen 13 per cent from January to February as the fruit hit peak harvest. But apple prices are still up 32 per cent compared with February last year.

Food prices overall increased 2.2 per cent in the year to February. Statistics NZ consumer price manager Matthew Haigh said this was the largest annual increase since December 2011.

This jump was led by higher prices for fruit, vegetables and dairy products.

Fruit and vegetables were up 7.7 per cent and grocery food was up 2.3 per cent. The high prices of carrots, kumara, and tomatoes drove the increase in vegetable prices, which were up 12 per cent.

Meanwhile meat, poultry, and fish prices were down 2 per cent from a year ago. Butter prices were up 33 per cent compared with February 2016 and up 13 per cent since January.