

Record-breaker kiwifruit shipment to Asia

The Ice Glacier, the largest vessel Zespri has ever chartered for Asia, left the Port of Tauranga carrying more than 7000 pallets of kiwifruit last month.



*(Above)
Ice Glacier
loading at
the Port of
Tauranga.*



Shipping company Fresh Carriers invited guests, including Zespri, shipping agents and ISO Ltd representatives aboard the Ice Glacier to celebrate the vessel's record kiwifruit shipment.

The previous record shipment to Asia was made in June 2007 when 5144 pallets and 46 containers of kiwifruit were shipped from the port.

Bruce Nisbet, director of Oceanic Charting Specialists, which arranges Zespri charters, says the Ice Glacier should have made her first record-breaking trip to Asia in April, but had to off-load 1.7 million trays of fruit after small deposits of grease were discovered on China-supplied Plix pocket packs into which the fruit was packed.

"When we told Captain Valentin Polyularh that we had to unload his vessel, his only comment was 'quality is everything' which was remarkable," says Bruce.

That approach to quality, says Bruce, is reflected in the excellent condition of the Ice Glacier, which was built in Denmark in 1988.

The vessel was loaded by port logistics company ISO Ltd, and every pallet of fruit was electronically scanned and recorded in real time by staff from Kiwifruit Logistics before being hoisted into the holds.

The Ice Glacier discharged the kiwifruit in Japan and China at the ports of Tokyo, Osaka, Shanghai and Tianjin.

To celebrate the record-breaking shipment, shipping company Fresh Carriers invited Zespri chairman Peter McBride, CEO Lain Jager, representatives from shipping agents, the stevedoring company and other guests on-board to watch the loading.

Zespri International shipping manager Mike Knowles says the use of a ship the size of Ice Glacier to take fruit to Asia reflects the huge growth in crop volumes this season. Traditionally, vessels this size have carried fruit to European markets.

The late start to this season's harvest means being able to load more fruit onto larger vessels will ensure Zespri meets market demand, says Mike. He says other more modern vessels than Ice Glacier are able to make the trip to Asia up to two days quicker, giving Zespri an extra two days to load fruit in New Zealand, which is a significant advantage in a late season such as this one. **Elaine Fisher**