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First-ever Italian charter vessel delivers Zespri Kiwifruit to China in time for Chinese New Year celebrations

Zespri's first-ever Italian reefer charter vessel has safely completed its maiden voyage, transporting more than 4,000 pallets (3,300 tonnes or 942,000 trays) of Italian-grown SunGold Kiwifruit directly to customers in China in time for Chinese New Year sales.

The Baltic Performer reefer vessel left the Port of Vado Ligure at the end of November from the dock of the Reefer Terminal – one of the largest fruit logistics hubs in the Mediterranean - safely arriving in the Port of Shanghai on 22 December. The three-week transit window effectively halves the transit time of container shipments between Italy and China.

Zespri Executive Officer – Northern Hemisphere Supply, Nick Kirton, says the successful voyage represents a significant milestone for the European kiwifruit industry, helping deliver fruit from our Italian grower partners more efficiently to customers.

“We first started this process in 2018, with an ambition of establishing a more efficient manner of transporting fruit from our Northern Hemisphere growing regions to our growing customer base in China.

“We could see the benefits shorter transit times and better temperature management across a single ship rather than multiple containers could bring in terms of improving fruit quality, with a charter vessel service also offering greater certainty at a time when we continue to see congestion and delays within the global shipping container market.

Mr Kirton says a key aspect of the direct service was the support of the Italian industry through CSO Italy and Fruitimprese and the effort of the Italian Phytosanitary Service to establish a new Protocol to enable charter vessels to export kiwifruit from Italy, extending the existing pre-shipment cold treatment protocol.

“There's been a huge amount of work put into creating this new service over the last four years and we'd like to particularly thank our shipping and logistics partners in Italy - Cool Carriers, the Reefer Terminal in Vado, Tramaco and FRESCO, as well as in China – Shanghai South Port and Sinotrans PFS, and officials from both countries who helped establish a new Protocol to support and implement this new direct service.

“While the Protocol itself was approved in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has delayed its implementation, with the Baltic Performer the first international fruit charter to enter under the new protocol.



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“There’s a lot of excitement at seeing the vessel arrive safely, delivering fruit to our customers and consumers in China in time for their New Year celebrations when we know there’s strong demand for our kiwifruit.

Mr Kirton says that the relationships and partnerships Zespri has formed in Italy reflect the industry’s ability to continue to work together technically and commercially, and privately and publicly.

“The level of commitment to this project highlights the confidence we all share in the growth potential of the kiwifruit industry, and we acknowledge the support and team effort from all parties involved. In particular, we acknowledge the long term support of our Italian supply partners without whom this project would not have been possible.

“Safely and quickly transporting our fruit to market is critical and a significant element of our industry’s success, and we look forward to more successful charter vessels delivering our Northern Hemisphere fruit directly to our customers throughout Asia in the years ahead,” Mr Kirton says.

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MEDIA CONTACT:

Yannis Naumann

yannis.naumann@zespri.com

+6421491499

ABOUT ZESPRI

Zespri is 100 percent owned by current and former kiwifruit growers and has a global team of 850 based in Mount Maunganui and throughout Asia, Europe and the Americas. Our purpose is to help people, communities and the environment thrive through the goodness of kiwifruit, and we work with 2,800 growers in New Zealand and 1,500 growers offshore to provide consumers with fresh, healthy and great-tasting Zespri Green, RubyRed™ and SunGold Kiwifruit. In 2021/22, we supplied over 200 million trays of kiwifruit to consumers in more than 50 markets, and recorded global operating revenue of NZ\$4.47 billion. Zespri is committed to sustainability, with areas of improvement identified right through the supply chain including our pledge that by 2025 we will use 100 percent reusable, recyclable or compostable packaging, do more to help the environment, and work with our partners to be carbon positive by 2035.

IMAGERY

Imagery of the charter vessel Baltic Performer at the Port of Vado can be found in the following dropbox:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/iej84z0sg0i95i2mfy1sm/h?dl=0&rlkey=6h9vinfp7eji0t8w60gl44x5r>