



THE KIWIFRUIT CLAIM

IT'S NOT ALL GOLD FOR SOME KIWIFRUIT GROWERS

Despite what people might believe, some kiwifruit growers are a long way from recovering from the 2010 Psa-V outbreak which devastated the kiwifruit industry in New Zealand, Te Puke kiwifruit grower Alistair Reese said today.

“It really concerns me that a lot of the commentary about the kiwifruit industry is that Sun Gold (“G3”) has been the ‘saviour’ post PSA, and that the industry is now doing very well because of the new varieties.

“There’s no doubt that the higher value kiwifruit gold variety has done well, but I think it’s misleading to say that the whole industry has recovered – like myself, there are many kiwifruit growers who are still a long way from recovery seven years after Psa-V hit.”

“PSA hit us hard. In September 2010, just prior to it ravaging our orchard, we were producing 200,000 trays of kiwifruit - this year we’ve harvested just 49,000 trays.”

“We had 16.75ha of the Gold Hort16A variety and the whole lot was decimated. We had to cut everything out - the sound of chainsaws still haunts me today.

“Seven years on, my family is only just starting to see progress. We had an option to buy and plant the new G3 variety - we were asked to take a punt on converting our orchard to a variety that, at the time, no one knew if it would be resistant to PSA or not,” he said.

“There was a period when G3 was showing severe die-back of PSA disease. I was in the middle of negotiating with a company to assist us to plant G3 on our entire orchard, but they lost confidence in the variety so pulled out at the last minute.

Mr Reese adds “We were left with nothing at that point, we had a property that was virtually worthless and had absolutely no income. Our only option was to sell half our license entitlement at considerably less than what it is now worth. After a year we were able to plant 8.5ha of G3 – we have not yet been in a position to plant the rest, it still remains bare land.

“Six years after we cut out the Psa infected vines, in 2016, we had our first crop and we harvested 20,000 trays - 10% of what we’d harvested before Psa-V destroyed our orchard in 2010.”

It has taken us seven years to produce a crop that is ready to harvest, and in the meantime, we have had no income and have taken on more debt to try and make progress. Despite what people might think, we are a long way from fully recovering. For many of us, the impact and the costs of PSA are still ongoing. The presence of the disease continues to present challenges for growers technically and emotionally.”

Alistair Reese is one of the 212 claimants who have joined the Kiwifruit Claim which seeks to hold the Government and the Ministry of Primary Industries to account for the significant losses suffered by growers.

Kiwifruit Claim Chairman, John Cameron said “The PSA outbreak devastated the kiwifruit industry, and the Kiwifruit Claimants are adamant that MPI should never have allowed kiwifruit pollen into New Zealand. MPI should not have issued the permit for the importation of the pollen and it should have not allowed the infected material into NZ when what arrived at the border and did not match the import permit. Put simply, the PSA outbreak in October 2010 would never have happened if MPI had followed its own protocols under the Biosecurity Act.”

The trial begins on August 7 in the High Court in Wellington.

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