



THE KIWIFRUIT CLAIM

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KIWIFRUIT CLAIM URGES CAUTION OVER MUD IMPORT

Kiwifruit claim chairman, John Cameron said today that it's just not worth the risk to any of our primary industries for MPI to approve an import of \$95,000 of mud from South Korea, which may-be contaminated with Foot and Mouth disease, for the Rotorua Mud Festival.

"Our primary industries are worth billions to our economy every year.

"Any outbreak of any diseases could cost people their livelihoods, their farms and jobs and would be devastating to the entire New Zealand economy. Has MPI learnt nothing from the PSA outbreak in New Zealand seven years ago?" he said.

"Like PSA, foot and mouth is a known disease. Given that South Korea has recently had an outbreak of foot and mouth, MPI needs to be 100% sure that this mud is disease free – if there is any risk at all of that mud being contaminated with foot and mouth, then the import needs to be stopped.

He adds "MPI has sole responsibility for protecting our borders, and the primary industry sector relies heavily on it carrying out that function to the highest standard."

"What happened to the Kiwifruit Industry in October 2010 was entirely preventable - MPI should never have allowed kiwifruit pollen into New Zealand. The PSA outbreak would not have happened if MPI had followed its protocols under the Biosecurity Act," said Mr Cameron.

"MPI never properly assessed the risks around PSA entering New Zealand from pollen and failed to carry out its duties to check that the import matched the issued import permit. Growers' lives and livelihoods were ripped apart by PSA, and for many the impact is ongoing.

"We don't want to ever see this happen to any of our primary industries again."

Mr Cameron added "With PSA, there were growers who were wiped out, and faced with no crops and plummeting values of their orchards, lost their businesses, and were forced to sell at heavily discounted prices. Those that survived often suffered a complete loss of income, taking on huge additional debts to replant. Many growers are now only just beginning to get back to pre-PSA production levels after seven years."

"Given that MPI knows about the foot and mouth outbreak in South Korea, our primary industries need to be re-assured that at the very least, MPI has conducted a full risk assessment, and followed its protocols under the Biosecurity Act over the proposed importation of mud, and be totally accountable for the import. If there is any doubt – don't take the risk," he said.

The High Court trial to hold the Government and MPI to account for the significant losses suffered by growers from the PSA incursion, begins in Wellington on Monday. MPI denies all the claims, but the Kiwifruit Claimants say the negligence is obvious.

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