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## THE KIWIFRUIT CLAIM

### PSA IS STILL A TICKING TIME BOMB

PSA is an ongoing threat to the viability of the kiwifruit industry, and could flare up again as the disease evolves and becomes immune to current pest management practices, said Kiwifruit Claim Chairman John Cameron.

“What many don’t realise, is that this thing could well decimated us again. We still have PSA on our vines. Once PSA arrived here, no one was ever going to be able to completely get rid of it.”

The PSA outbreak decimated the kiwifruit industry in 2010 when it came to New Zealand – causing significant losses and devastating the lives of many kiwifruit growers.

Te Puke orchard owner, Bob Burt says Psa is like a ticking time bomb, and that in addition to the significant costs of pest management, growers are experiencing much lower production levels in their crops.

“PSA has not and never will be eradicated. Resistance to primary control chemicals is growing and I believe the likelihood of further Psa outbreaks is high.”

“I constantly live with the fear that Psa will come back and devastate the orchard again, it is a frightening disease. As growers, we do everything possible to ensure that our vines are in the best possible health so that they can resist PSA, but because of the characteristics of PSA-V, it could very easily genetically mutate and what we are currently using as pest management practices won’t be effective at all.

He says “this deadly disease has the potential to destroy, once again. While over the last few years, symptoms have (at great cost) largely remained under control during mild weather conditions, PSA continues to cause significant losses for many growers.

“The country may never fully know what the real impact of PSA has been or will be in the future.”

“In 2010, when it first hit, many growers were completely wiped out – faced with no crops and plummeting values on their orchards, they lost their businesses and were forced to sell at heavily discounted prices, others survived but suffered loss of income for many years and took on huge debts to replant.

“Now, seven years later those growers that have survived still deal with Psa in their orchards each season. They not only have significant costs in protecting their orchards against the disease, but fruit harvest is often reduced due to PSA affected fruit.”

“This year alone, on our orchard we have produced 5,000 less green kiwifruit trays per hectare - around 40% less fruit, simply because PSA disease is on the vines. When you combine this with the ongoing expenses of managing the disease – it makes you wonder how much its really costing our country.

“There’s a lot of commentary around how the industry has fully recovered from the effects of PSA – but how can we ever fully recover when PSA is still here and is a constant threat to our livelihoods?”

“Kiwifruit, like other primary industries, has its challenges but overcoming PSA is proving to be a much bigger challenge than anyone ever anticipated. This was a known pest and it should never have been allowed into New Zealand.

The Kiwifruit Claim represents 212 kiwifruit growers who are holding the Government and MPI to account for the significant losses suffered by growers from the PSA incursion. The High Court trial is currently being held in Wellington. MPI denies all the claims, but the Kiwifruit Claimants say the negligence is obvious.”

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