

**BEFORE THE ENVIRONMENT COURT** ENV-2012-AKL-000146

**IN THE MATTER** of the Resource Management Act 1991

**AND**

**IN THE MATTER** of appeals pursuant to clause 14 of Schedule 1  
to the Act

**BETWEEN** **NZ FOREST RESEARCH INSTITUTE LIMITED  
(SCION)**

**Appellant**

**AND** **BAY OF PLENTY REGIONAL COUNCIL**

**Respondent**

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**EVIDENCE OF JOHN DOUGLAS VOSS ON BEHALF OF  
SOIL AND HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF NEW ZEALAND INCORPORATED  
& OTHER SECTION 274 PARTIES**

**Dated 12<sup>th</sup> September 2013**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

1. My full name is John Douglas (Doug) Voss. I am an Organic Kiwifruit Grower from Oropi Road Tauranga.
2. I commenced development of my orchard in 1977. I worked prior to that as a Registered Valuer in Northland and the Bay of Plenty. In 1996 the orchard now owned by my Family Trust was converted to organic production, as was adjoining land which was purchased at later dates. Currently the Trust owns 25 canopy hectares of fully certified organic orchards and a further 4.3 hectares in partnership with others.

## **SCOPE OF EVIDENCE**

3. My evidence will cover the following matters:
  - (a) My involvement in the New Zealand Kiwifruit Industry;
  - (b) Zespri International Ltd's policy on the use of genetically modified organisms ("**GMO**"); and
  - (c) The basis of my support for the Bay of Plenty Regional Policy Statement ("**RPS**");

## **MY INVOLVEMENT IN THE NEW ZEALAND KIWIFRUIT INDUSTRY**

4. In addition to my involvement in kiwifruit production I have also had a number of governance roles in the kiwifruit industry and organic sector, both regionally and nationally. I have also managed Kiwifruit packing and coolstorage operations in both New Zealand and Italy.
5. From 1987 to 2003 I served in number of different Kiwifruit industry roles including:
  - (a) Board member of the NZ Kiwifruit Authority;
  - (b) Board member, Deputy Chairman and Chairman of the New Zealand Kiwifruit Marketing Board;
  - (c) Chairman of Zespri International Ltd; and
  - (d) Chairman of Zespri Group Ltd.
6. From 2005 to 2007 I was the inaugural Chair of Organics Aotearoa New Zealand. I am currently the Chair of the Certified Kiwifruit Growers Association ("**COKA**") and represent COKA on the Zespri Organic Development Group.

## **ZESPRI INTERNATIONAL LTD POLICY ON GMO**

7. ZESPRI has a very clear policy on Genetic Modification which is follows:

ZESPRI will not fund research, market or have in its inventory any genetically modified kiwifruit. ZESPRI supports Research and Development as a key component of the New Zealand kiwifruit industry's future success but chooses not to pursue genetically modified kiwifruit as a new fruit product.

Kiwifruit is purchased and consumed because it is a healthy, enjoyable food. The image of New Zealand as 'clean, green' and therefore 'safe' is considered to be a benefit to kiwifruit sales particularly in Europe, and also Japan. It is ZESPRI's view that consumer opinion and perceptions will limit the acceptability of genetic modification technology in the foreseeable future.

8. I was the Chairman of ZESPRI when this policy was developed and implemented. The need for this policy surfaced after the commercial release of the original Zespri Gold into the market, as serious concerns were raised by consumers that the Gold was genetically modified.
9. ZESPRI was able to demonstrate that Zespri Gold was the result of a natural breeding program carried out over 15/20 years.

## **BASIS OF MY SUPPORT FOR THE BOP REGIONAL POLICY STATEMENT**

10. As an organic kiwifruit grower I am very concerned about the use of genetic modification in the growth of primary produce.
11. The use of GMOs is prohibited under both New Zealand and International organic standards and regulations.
12. I am not opposed to the use of genetic technology to better understand the genetic make up of produce, for example different fruit varieties.
13. However, my experiences with ZESPRI have clearly taught me the importance of the fact that customers and consumers are aware and concerned about all aspects of food safety. For many, this includes whether a product includes GMOs.
14. I am of the strong view that the ZESPRI's GMO policy reflects consumer concern within the market place that food produced in New Zealand is healthy and free from contamination.

15. The risks of contamination must be carefully managed to avoid the serious consequences that contamination would have for growers and the industry.

### **CONCLUSION**

16. In my view, for the reasons I have given, it is entirely appropriate that the Regional Council identifies GMO activities as requiring a precautionary approach under the RPS.
17. Indeed, the RPS should go much further and identify particular locations and activities (such as organic activities) which GMO activities should be kept away from to minimise the threat of serious damage to other growers and industries.

**Dated 12<sup>th</sup> September 2013**

**John Voss**