

Chairman's Report – Peter Ombler

This year as I stand down as Chairman of the KVH Board, I reflect back on my last three years in the role and how far KVH and the industry has come on its recovery pathway from Psa.

I strongly feel that KVH is in a very good position to meet future Psa and other biosecurity challenges. While we are limited in our ability to influence wider biosecurity risks that are out of our control, I am certain we are doing all we can to achieve the best possible outcomes for the kiwifruit industry.

A key contributor to achieving this success is working closely with the Ministry for Primary Industries, (MPI) and this is supported through our Government Industry Agreements (GIA) partnership. While MPI is New Zealand's lead agency for the country's biosecurity system, it's essential for the kiwifruit industry to have significant input into biosecurity matters that could impact us.

Biosecurity has become a huge focus for all New Zealand primary industries. As global trade and incoming passenger numbers increase, so too does New Zealand's biosecurity challenges. We recognise MPI has responded to this rise in risk through many proactive initiatives. However, we must also be proactive ourselves and continually work to understand and be prepared for the pests and diseases that threaten our industry.

Brown Marmorated Stink Bug (BMSB) is a pest among many horticultural sectors and one we don't want establishing in New Zealand. As part of an industry biosecurity research group, KVH has commissioned trials in the USA to determine just how serious a risk BMSB is to kiwifruit. What we do know is that early detection of this pest is essential, so we continue to raise the profile of it amongst our industry.

On 9 May KVH signed the Operational Agreement (OA) for fruit flies on behalf of the kiwifruit industry. The signing was a significant milestone to further improve biosecurity readiness and response activities for fruit flies and the first such agreement under the GIA partnership. On this note, I'm pleased to add the Minister recently agreed for KVH to represent New Zealand Kiwiberry Growers (NZKBG) under GIA and we look forward to growing this relationship.

The OA sets out the requirements for readiness and response activities for fruit flies; enables joint decision-making; and clarifies cost-sharing arrangements between government and affected industries. Under the OA, KVH and other parties will agree a work plan to improve readiness and response, including how we can detect fruit flies earlier and also reducing costs without reducing effectiveness.

Keeping proactive can also mean challenging MPI and at times, engaging in healthy debate to achieve an acceptable solution for all. A good example of this was the discovery of White Peach Scale (WPS) on imported Italian kiwifruit earlier this year in local supermarkets. As one of our most unwanted pests, concerns raised by KVH resulted in additional treatments to all consignments of imported Italian kiwifruit.

The Kiwifruit Plant Certification Scheme (KPCS) is another KVH-led initiative to reduce the spread of Psa and other diseases through the movement of nursery plants. On 1 October 2016 this Scheme becomes fully implemented – meaning all suppliers of kiwifruit rootstock right across the industry are taking steps to manage this risk. Among other benefits of the KPCS, growers can be confident they are purchasing healthy plants of known pest and disease status.

This year also marked three years in May since the National Psa-V Pest Management Plan (NPMP) was first implemented and KVH has recently undertaken a non-statutory internal review of the Plan. The review was to firstly challenge the need for the NPMP, and then focusing on ensuring the plan remains effective and identifying improvements to align with ongoing Psa control challenges.

The review confirmed for the KVH Board the need to continue with a comprehensive plan to combat the ongoing impacts of Psa, particularly since the bacteria is rapidly evolving and starting to show signs of resistance to control products Streptomycin and copper. Essentially, resistant Psa is like a new form of bacteria, so effective controls measures must be kept in place to reduce its spread and impacts. To remove the NPMP at this stage would be too risky.

On a final note, I'd like to thank those who have contributed to the success of KVH including Chief Executive Barry O'Neil, staff and my colleagues on the KVH Boards. There have been some recent changes to the Board, including the departure of Directors Craig Thompson, Peter Silcock, Jarrad Mair and Board Secretary Mike Chapman. We have also welcomed Alister Hawkey as a Director and Richard Proctor as the new Board Secretary. The 2016 KVH AGM will also determine a new independent director, three new grower directors and subsequently, a new Chairman.

I wish them the very best and will watch KVH's next few years with great interest.