

# Chairman's Report—Peter Ombler

## KVH Annual General Meeting 2013

At a high level, the last year seems to have been one of some respite from PsA-V.

A combination of kinder environmental conditions, a very large reduction in the Hort16A hectareage and a better understanding of the cultural methods to manage the pathogen all seem to have contributed to a recovery pathway that has the industry in a much better frame of mind than it was one year ago.

Having said that, there are some regions that have been only recently infected, and I am aware that a number of challenges continue to exist for growers, particularly in challenging sites.

A focus for KVH over the past 12 months has been putting significant effort into assisting growers in regions outside of Te Puke. While this has at times stretched KVH's resources, many growers in these regions are experiencing PsA for the first time and they will be facing the challenges of having to adjust their management activities and mind-set to deal with the disease. During this time they need all the help we can offer.

For many growers, particularly in and around the Te Puke region, the three year mark of PsA being discovered in New Zealand has also meant three years of learning to actively manage the disease. For some of them PsA has now become part of their on-going orchard management activities.

It has undoubtedly been a very tough time. However, many will now be starting to realise they can live with the disease, and maintain a productive orchard, through a combination of good management, more-resilient cultivars, protective spray programmes and regular monitoring.

We encourage all growers, in all regions to continue to do all they can to protect their orchards. We know the conditions that allow PsA to survive and thrive. Therefore growers need to ask themselves what they can control on their orchards to make the environment as tough as possible for PsA to thrive.

Weather conditions play a big role in PsA progression – particularly during autumn and spring. This past season has been much kinder to us than last year.

However, we would be well advised to take heed of the situation in France last spring, and be reminded of what can happen in a cold and wet winter and spring.

None-the-less, it seems fair to say that growing kiwifruit in a PsA-V environment will still undoubtedly have its challenges going forward, but now seems sustainable in the long term with reasonable location, the right variety mix and good management.

So, to reflect on the year gone by.

It has been a busy year for growers, for the industry and for the staff at KVH. While it's perhaps been less punctuated with crisis management, the on-going campaign to actively manage PsA throughout New Zealand remains essential.

Earlier in the year KVH engaged external auditors, Bennett Gibson, to complete a process audit. As a result of this audit, there were some minor administrative recommendations which we are in the process of completing.

A full KVH Activity Report is included in the AGM papers and available on the KVH website. This report summarises all of KVH's key activities and achievements over the past year.

Some of these key KVH activities are outlined below.

## **National Psa-V Pest Management Plan**

In May of this year, the Right Honourable Minister for Primary Industries, Nathan Guy, approved the National Psa-V Pest Management Plan (NPMP) which came into immediate effect.

The approval of the NPMP was a key milestone for the kiwifruit industry that followed almost a year of consultation with the industry and the development of a proposed plan.

It is, in some ways, regretful that we needed the NPMP. However, growers, stakeholders, and MPI took the pragmatic view to support the plan with the knowledge that the framework it provides is necessary to give the industry the best possible chance of a strong recovery.

There have been many examples this year that have already indicated this is indeed the case.

One of these was when we responded to two separate incidents where prohibited plant movement had occurred. KVH was able to respond before these plants were moved into local orchards.

There are several key components to the NPMP which are now in place. Since our last AGM, a lot of progress has been made.

### **Psa-V Orchard Management Plans are now mandatory for all growers**

Thousands of individual orchard management plans are now in place for all kiwifruit growers. These plans allow growers to have a clear strategy for managing Psa risk on their orchards and they can be confident they are also meeting the requirements of the NPMP. To overcome any major challenge, we need to have a plan in place.

### **Psa-V Risk Management Plans for postharvest and processors**

Plans are now also in place for every postharvest operator and processor in New Zealand to help manage the risk of Psa within their operations.

### **Abandoned and unmanaged orchards**

Abandoned and unmanaged orchards are a good example of why growers supported the NPMP. Due to the lack of management and protective spray programmes these orchards receive, they pose a significant risk of establishing and transferring Psa to neighbouring orchards and other regions.

Since the NPMP was approved KVH has put in a significant amount of work to eliminate this risk to growers. We've built good working relationships with landowners, local regional councils, postharvest and contractors to work through these orchards.

To date, KVH has reduced the number of abandoned and unmanaged orchards from 63 to 28. We've successfully returned two orchards back to productivity and 16 have been removed.

### **Movement controls**

Movement controls are essential to reduce the risk of spreading Psa. Based on the nature and level of risk each risk item (including nursery stock, plant material, orchard equipment and machinery) movement controls have been formally established.

### **Kiwifruit Plant Certification Scheme**

Together with Zespri and Plant and Food Research, we are working to develop a pan-industry 'high health' programme. This programme will provide the kiwifruit industry access to kiwifruit plant material of known disease status.

To date, we have established a Technical Advisory Group to provide technical input and a bronze standard has been drafted for review.

### **Wider biosecurity**

Psa remains at the forefront of the industry's mind. However the wake of Psa is a reminder that we must learn from it and continue to recognise other risks to our industry. We need to ensure we are much better prepared should another biosecurity risk organism impact our industry by entering New Zealand.

At the last KVH AGM, members supported the resolution that KVH take the lead role for wider biosecurity in the kiwifruit industry.

Members will be aware the government is now taking a different approach to managing biosecurity readiness and response through Government Industry Agreements (GIA).

The aim of GIA is to deliver better biosecurity outcomes through closer alignment between primary industries and government. It is formalised under a legal Deed of Agreement that will be available for industries to sign shortly.

Signatories of the Deed will have a greater certainty that a response will occur for pests of concern to their industry. KVH will be representing the kiwifruit industry in the finalisation of the GIA deed and has already drafted an Operational Agreement for the risks around fruit fly.

This year we are asking you to support the resolution for authority to enter into the Biosecurity Government Industry Agreement (GIA) and Fruit Fly Operational Agreement.

We are also very engaged in assessing potential entry pathway risks and how effectively biosecurity risks to our industry are being managed.

KVH recently became involved in the control of illegally-imported plant material. After establishing the level of risk to the industry the plants in question were destroyed.

A current focus is on international ports, with particular attention to the Port of Tauranga and Rotorua Airport.

A number of resources have been developed for growers, including a review outlining the potential pathways that pests may enter through these particular ports.

We've identified other biosecurity organisms that pose a risk to our industry should they be introduced to New Zealand. Fact sheets about these organisms have been made available to industry to increase awareness.

In the future we anticipate a time when managing Psa will be a minor and routine activity and KVH's main activity will be focussed on protecting New Zealand's kiwifruit industry from all biosecurity risks that could potentially establish in New Zealand. This also means having robust readiness and responses in place should the occasion arise.

### **Import Health Standards**

KVH engages with MPI to ensure the Import Health Standards (IHS) offer sufficient protection to New Zealand's primary industries. If we consider risk levels to be unacceptable, we advocate for recommendations and amendments.

We have called for an urgent review of produce imports from Australia, as a reduction in protection measures in Australia have created greater risk of fruit fly being introduced to New Zealand.

We have also recommended the suspension of all produce imported from California pending negotiations between MPI and its equivalent USDA. Again, we consider current measures provide an unacceptable fruit fly risk.

Suffice to say, we will make every effort in doing our level best to minimise border risk, and maximise readiness and response in the event of it occurring, and I don't think you would expect any less of us.

I would like to thank all KVH staff for their efforts over the last year along with the retired Board Directors, Peter McBride, Rob Craig and David Hayes.

I'd also like to thank the growers and the support they have shown and look forward to the next year with cautious optimism - more so than I did one year ago.