

NZ Kiwifruit Industry Reception – Tues 3 May 2011 – Parliament Buildings Speech by Lain Jager, ZESPRI CEO

Thank you Simon.

Mr Speaker, Prime Minister, Excellencies and Ladies and Gentlemen...

On behalf of the New Zealand Kiwifruit Industry I would like to say that it is a real privilege to be here at Parliament today to thank you for the historical support our industry has received and to make a renewed promise to you for the future.

The success of the New Zealand kiwifruit industry, and the ability of our company to continue to earn the status of the world's most successful horticulture marketing company, depends on two things:

1. The support and excellence of our growers; and
2. The support and commitment of the New Zealand Parliament, and the New Zealand Government and its agencies.

What today is about, is acknowledging all of you here in Wellington who are so important to underpinning our ability to succeed.

The first thing we are here to thank you for is the Kiwifruit Industry Restructuring Act, passed by this Parliament in 1999. In the 1980s pretty much everything that could go wrong in the kiwifruit industry did go wrong.

As a result, in the late 1980s, kiwifruit growers wanted change.

They agreed on a unified industry structure and an integrated approach to marketing, and they came to this place – Parliament – to make their submissions.

That industry structure continues to have the support of over 90% of growers.

The then National-led Government of Jenny Shipley, supported by the then Labour-led Opposition of Helen Clark, accepted those submissions – and they themselves achieved unity around the new industry structure.

We are in no doubt that all the success our industry has achieved since then depended upon that historic bipartisan legislation.

It was foresight by that Parliament that created the integrated marketing organisation that is the New Zealand Kiwifruit Industry today and we thank you for it.

The unwavering support we have had since then, from Helen Clark's Labour-led Government and now, Prime Minister, from your National-led Government, has allowed us to maintain our unity, plan ahead and succeed.

We do not take that support lightly.

It places extraordinary obligations on us to perform, to grow and to succeed.

We would also like to thank many others in this city who have made our success possible.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, NZTE, along with Trade Ministers Lockwood Smith, Jim Sutton, Phil Goff and Tim Groser, have all supported us, and fought for better market access on the world stage.

The leadership role of the Trade Minister and former Trade Ministers is critical, but we know they cannot do it without the support of their officials, and we thank all of you here for your support – and the support of your colleagues in our High Commissions, Embassies and Trade Posts around the world.

Innovation has also been central to our success. Successive governments and parliaments, going back to the 1990s, have strongly supported investment in research and development in the New Zealand Kiwifruit Industry.

We are moving towards commercialising a third variety, red-coloured kiwifruit, which we will carefully introduce to the market when the time is right, and there are samples here today from Plant & Food Research.

I would also like to acknowledge the presence here today of First Fresh, one of our Collaborative Marketing partners.

First Fresh successfully introduced its new early Gold cultivar branded as First Gold to international markets through the industry collaborative marketing channel this year.

They, and our other 12 collaborative marketing partners, delivering 22 different programmes this year alone, demonstrate that the 1999 Act is working, and allowing others to take their kiwifruit varieties to the world in a way which maximises the overall returns to New Zealand kiwifruit growers.

The final thing we want to thank you all for, is your support during the recent Psa crisis.

Despite the Psa incursion, we at ZESPRI believe that Biosecurity New Zealand is one of the finest biosecurity agencies in the world and we thank you all of you – from across the parliament – for our border security arrangements.

The immediate focused support from the Government, led by Agriculture Minister David Carter who visited the Bay Of Plenty to personally review the situation three times during the initial phase was tremendous.

So too was the support from the Opposition, and from our local MPs, Simon Bridges, Todd McClay, Tony Ryall and Te Ururoa Flavell.

Psa continues to present significant challenges but we're determined that, as a united industry, we will beat this.

We have outlined to many of you – including to the Prime Minister, the Minister of Agriculture and the Leader of the Opposition –our commitment – our promise – to triple our export earnings by 2025.

That promise is outlined in our ZESPRI 2025 document, which we have here for you today.

This growth will come from introducing new consumers to the category in three areas:

1. Through marketing the health benefits of kiwifruit;
2. Through bringing new products to the market; and finally
3. Through developing markets.

The tripling of the size of our business will be achieved primarily through productivity gains.

Importantly, this growth plan is sustainable and will not place any significant strain on the country's natural resources.

Consumer choices will grow, as the ZESRI Product Portfolio grows, to include Red varieties and long-storing Arguta kiwifruit berries with edible skins opening up the important convenience segment.

The company will remain 100% New Zealand owned, 100% owned by New Zealand kiwifruit growers, past and present.

We will bring the revenues from our exports and the profits from our wider activities, back to our New Zealand grower/shareholders and into the wider economy.

Achieving our promise will require relentless focus on performance; relentless focus on the consumer and our customers; the maintenance of overwhelming support from our growers; and the confidence to plan ahead and grow.

With your ongoing support, we promise you we will receive these things.

That is the ZESPRI Promise, made formally to you, here at Parliament today.

We now have a brief DVD outlining the history of the industry, and our future growth plans, before we welcome the Prime Minister to address us.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we are privileged to have the Prime Minister here today. Prime Minister, we were delighted to host you in Mt Maunganui last year. It is a pleasure to be here, at your place today.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Prime Minister.