

**BEFORE THE HEARINGS PANEL APPOINTED BY WAIMAKARIRI DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

IN THE MATTER of the Resource Management Act 1991
(the Act)

AND

IN THE MATTER of hearing of submissions on the proposed
Waimakariri District Plan – Rural

STATEMENT OF ROBERT LINDSAY FOR HORTICULTURE NEW ZEALAND

25 September 2023

INTRODUCTION

1. My name is Robert Lindsay.
2. My wife Rachael and I, along with Jo and Allen Lim own Island Horticulture. Rachael and I live on-site at 38 Madeleys Road, Clarkville and manage the operation.

ISLAND HORTICULTURE

3. The growing operation sits on a 4-hectare block, and comprises 16,000m² of producing greenhouses.
4. We grow approximately 1.6M cucumbers per year.
5. Island Horticulture is a nationally significant vegetable growing operation supplying approximately 50% of the cucumbers consumed within the South Island. We distribute to end consumers through supermarket chains, independent grocers and restaurants.
6. We are 100% hydroponic (i.e. plants are grown without soil) with two main growing systems; Nutrient Film Technology (i.e. a film of water across the roots) in our plastic tunnel houses, and plants grown in coco coir in the glasshouses.
7. We source our water from a bore located on site.
8. As we are 100% hydroponic, we are careful with our water, using only what we need, and collecting, treating, and reusing any that the plants do not use.
9. Our proximity (30 minutes drive) to the distribution centres of the two major supermarket chains is one of our competitive advantages. Supermarkets mitigate risk by sourcing from multiple growers. In the event of a serious disruption to freight through Wellington (major earthquake) or Cook Strait, we provide them with some continuity of supply.

GROWTH

10. When we first investigated the purchase of this business, I reviewed the then operative district plan, and concluded;
11. The district council seems committed to supporting horticultural enterprise as evidenced by the policy statement below:

Policy 14.1.1.2

Maintain the continued domination of the Rural Zones by intensive and extensive agricultural, pastoral and horticultural land use activities.

12. Policy 14.1.1.2
13. Recognises that it is important for agriculture, pastoral farming and horticulture to continue to be the predominant land use in the Rural Zones because this will

contribute most to the maintenance and enhancement of rural character. It also recognises the potential for lawfully established farming activities to be constrained by dwellinghouse development.

14. Where existing intensive farming operations are expanding, advances in technology can lead to adverse effects being of a similar scale. Within the Mapleham Rural 4B Zone, intensive farms are prohibited because they will not contribute to the maintenance or enhancement of the rural character of that zone.
15. I understand that the proposed rules would potentially continue to curtail growth that we might otherwise consider:
16. Site coverage rules: (max 20%) and maximum GFA of any single building or structure of 550m². While designed to prevent wholesale site coverage by sheds and general buildings, this limits growth of intensive horticulture.
17. Greenhouses cover the site, there is no way around this. However greenhouses enable production figures per hectare that far exceed the same crop being grown in open ground. They also enable crops to be protected from weather events, thus ensuring continuity of food supply. Food security in the face of climate change, and the associated increase in adverse weather events has become an important consideration for national and local government. Where do you want your food to come from in the future
18. Ancillary building rules; We currently employ NZ citizens and residents, most of whom live within 10-15km radius from the business. 50% of our team reside within the Waimakariri district. However with the recent labour shortage, we have considered applying to become a Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE).
19. To do so, we would require accommodation for the people we would bring in. This accommodation would best be placed on site, to minimise unnecessary travel on and off site.

KEY CONCERNS WITH THE PROPOSED RURAL LIFESTYLE ZONE CHANGE

20. Our concern here is that council is rezoning a productive rural zone that supports primary production to a rural lifestyle zone (which is an area used predominantly for a residential lifestyle within a rural environment on lots smaller than those of the general rural and rural production zones).
21. The key issue is that council is not completely enabling primary production to occur as the proposed rules do not support some horticulture activities – crop - seasonal accommodation etc and allows the inclusion in the rural lifestyle zone of things like tourism activities.

22. There are also reverse sensitivity issues to consider. This has been occurring since the 1990's. As a nation, we currently produce more food than our population can consume. This has provided the foundation of our economy for the better part of our history. I understand that people need somewhere to live, and they need to eat. I suggest that reclassifying productive rural land will severely curtail our ability to feed our people in the future.
23. In summary, covered cropping is one tool that will allow us to harness the energy from the sun, use water efficiently, use nutrients efficiently, and use our space efficiently. Extreme weather events are becoming more common in NZ, this will continue to disrupt our outdoor agriculture and horticulture production. Covered cropping will allow us to mitigate both the risk from these events, and from events in neighbouring regions that disrupt transport networks.
24. In order to feed our people, we need to prioritise food production, by recognising it in our town planning.

Robert Lindsay

25 September 2023