

**BEFORE THE HEARING COMMISSIONERS  
AT CHRISTCHURCH**

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

**AND**

**IN THE MATTER** of the Resource Management Act 1991  
and the Environment Canterbury  
(Temporary Commissioners and  
Improved Water Management) Act  
2010

**AND**

**IN THE MATTER** of the hearing of submissions on the  
Variation 3 to the Proposed Land and  
Water Regional Plan

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**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF ALISTAIR BOYCE (WOODLAND FARMS  
PARTNERSHIP) FOR HORTICULTURE NEW ZEALAND**

**25 SEPTEMBER 2015**

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**ATKINS | HOLM | MAJUREY**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

1. My name is Alistair Boyce. I am a 5<sup>th</sup> Generation farmer on Woodland Farm, owned by Woodland Farms Partnership.
2. I am familiar with proposed Variation 3.

### **Historical Land Use**

3. My great-great grandparents moved into the district about 150 years ago. The farm has been through several stages over this time. Starting with dairying, it moved to sheep and potatoes, and on to being one of the largest strawberry growers in Canterbury during the 1950s. It then moved back to sheep which it stayed as until the late 1980s. We tried some bull beef but after two years found it was tearing up the farm too much.

### **Yams**

4. In 1991 my father and I grew about half an acre of yams after hearing there was an unfulfilled demand for quality product in the marketplace, and the return appeared to be better than sheep.
5. All operations were carried out by hand until the late 1990s when demand outgrew supply. One can only wash so much with a garden hose.
6. In 2000 we invested heavily in capital with the shed, wash plant and some harvesting equipment. So little was known about yams, so we developed the equipment ourselves.
7. In 2006 we successfully crossed and developed our own variety of yam called "Southern Flame" and gained a PVR on it. Today Southern Flame accounts for 75% of our crop.
8. All our markets are local with supplies going into Progressive and Foodstuffs nationwide. We estimate we have 45% of the total yam market.

## **CURRENT LAND USE**

9. In 2007 my wife, Sharon, and I bought the farm from my father at market value when he retired. Since then we have increased the crop from 20 acres to 40 hectares and our present market share.

10. We currently employ 20 – 25 local people for our harvest. This is five months of the year, over winter.
11. Sheep are still an important part of our operation with our zero waste policy, whereby all waste goes into fattening stock. In 2011 we dropped our numbers of breeding sheep by half in order to take advantage of the dairy boom by supplying cut and carry silage. The silage fits in very well with our three year rotation of yams.

### **Water Supply**

12. We have no irrigation. Without irrigation we can grow about 10 tonnes of dry matter (grass) per hectare per year. On a good year, such as 2014, we can grow 12 or 13 tonnes of yams per hectare. This year we did 6 tonnes per hectare. Last summer, however, we did not meet the expected production thanks to one of the longest dry spells the farm has experienced. Fourteen months without significant rainfall is a long time.
13. The strength of the farm is the soil type, Clairmont, which retains moisture very well.
14. The policy for our yam ground has always been to look after the soil first. There is 10 metres headland of grass surrounding planted ground and along gullies, not only for catching runoff but somewhere for heavy traffic, so as not to compact the ground. This also fits in with our promotion of worm populations.
15. Our wash plant uses water from the domestic water supply. As water is becoming more and more valuable, we have become more efficient at using it. We currently use only 10,000L a day, which is recycled four times through four different stages. Once it leaves the shed it then goes through four stages of filtration.
16. The first stage is a wedge for heavy solids, and then to three settling ponds to take out sediment. All ponds are drained and the sediment dried and taken back to the fields from which it came.
17. This year we are developing our own small irrigation system with more water storage so no water-carrying nutrient will leave our property from our wash plant. This will be sprayed back on to yam ground at a rate of 1mm/ha/day.

### **POTENTIAL IMPACT OF VARIATION 3**

18. As you can see, Woodlands Farm has had many transformations, with each generation doing something different from the last but striving through innovation to leave the farm better than they received it.
19. In our current position it is probable that our production will double over the next ten years at our current growth rate, based purely on current demand. If we were to devolve new markets this rate could be even greater.
20. This will not be possible with a flexibility cap as low as it is set in Variation 3.
21. In addition, if for any reason our dairy farmer neighbour is unable to buy our cut and carry silage we would have to procure enough animals to graze off the 80ha of grass. This would not be possible as it would put us over the 10kg limit. This is not outside the realms of possibility given the current dairy prices and with a year like we are currently in.

**Alistair Boyce**

25 September 2015