

**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

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF JEFF BLEEKER (BLEEKER FARMS AND
MAKIKIHI FRIES) FOR HORTICULTURE NEW ZEALAND**

25 SEPTEMBER 2015



ATKINS | HOLM | MAJUREY

Helen Atkins
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INTRODUCTION

1. My name is Jeff Bleeker. I am the Director of Bleeker Farms, and a member of Horticulture New Zealand.
2. I am familiar with Variation 3, although I have not studied it.

Land Owned and Leased

3. I own two farms in the Wainono Lagoon area: approximately 230 hectares at Studholme and my late parents' farm at Makikihi, which is approximately 140 hectares.
4. I usually lease a further 100 hectares in the same catchment for potato production which is delivered to Makikihi Fries.
5. The bulk of my land has been and still is used for cut and carry grass for dairy farmers, with a percentage of this area also used for wheat and bean silage for sale as well.
6. I have farmed all my life and I wish to leave this land and environment in better health for the next generation.
7. I have three grown children who share my passion for farming. I also employ two men fulltime.

Makikihi Fries

8. Makikihi Fries was built and started in our workshop on the Makikihi farm some thirty years ago by my parents. It is now owned by my brother, and thrives on the main highway at Makikihi. It was started one Friday night at 10pm with the very first fries coming off the line. From memory, some 1500 tonnes of potatoes were processed in its very first year.
9. The sales have slowly increased year after year and now processes some 7000 tonnes. Close to half of the potatoes used are supplied by my operation.
10. Makikihi Fries employs twenty local people and distributes fries around the South Island in their own trucks.

FLEXIBILITY OF LAND USE

11. First and foremost, I am a hands-on farmer.
12. In the 2009-2013 period I grew no potatoes on our own land. Now, because of the dairy downturn I have had to cut costs

and liabilities by growing 45 hectares of potatoes on our land and leasing less.

13. At the moment I have the flexibility to change to whatever crops are not only the most profitable but also the most sustainable.

POTENTIAL IMPACT OF VARIATION 3

14. One of my main concerns with Variation 3 is that if we are held down to our 2009-2013 N-leaching levels, it is a real possibility that not only would our profitability be seriously affected but also our land process – namely the ability to rotate crops and make land use changes, which are very highly valued by banking organisations. I feel that a direct result of this would be that we would lose some equity in our land.
15. Another concern is the bureaucracy that is controlling this process, and the many hours that I will have to spend in my office on paperwork, which takes me away from my daily duties as a hands-on farmer. Not so long ago I could spend a few hours a month managing the accounts and carrying out the necessary paperwork for Environment Canterbury, but it has gradually become more and more time consuming, necessitating days rather than hours in the office. For example, producing farm plans requires going to workshops and meetings to keep up to speed. I estimate the extra paperwork amounts to an additional 3 or 4 hours a month to reach and maintain compliance.

Jeff Bleeker

25 September 2015