

BEFORE THE HEARINGS PANEL APPOINTED BY TIMARU DISTRICT COUNCIL

IN THE MATTER

of the Resource Management Act 1991
(the Act)

AND

IN THE MATTER

of hearing of submissions on the proposed
Timaru District Plan – Hearing F: Hazards
and Risks (Natural Hazards only) - Other
District-wide Matters

STATEMENT OF MORTEN TØNDER FOR HORTICULTURE NEW ZEALAND

9 April 2025

INTRODUCTION

1. My name is Morten Tonder.
2. I am the General Manager for MA Orchards, located in Levels Timaru. I have been employed in this role for seven years.
3. I have had over 20 years' experience in New Zealand horticulture, mainly in apples.

MA ORCHARDS

4. MA Orchards is situated in South Canterbury, New Zealand just north of Timaru at Levels. MA Orchards planted the first orchard in 2012 and now have 6 separate orchards growing Honeycrisp apples for the export market.
5. Honeycrisp apples were originally developed at the University of Minnesota and released to growers in 1991. Since then the Honeycrisp apple has become extremely popular due to its crunch and balance of sweetness and acidity. Honeycrisp need a colder climate to develop their texture and flavour, which makes Timaru an ideal location.
6. MA Orchards now has 100 hectares of land with 228,000 Honeycrisp trees planted.
7. MA Orchards employs 18 permanent staff and up to 600 fixed term staff. Important services are provided by the local community, accommodation providers, transport providers, shops, and other business partners.
8. Our total turnover is approximately \$25 million and we are growing.
9. This region will become a significant horticultural region with huge employment opportunities if we as a community let it.

FROST FANS

1. Climatic events such as frosts have the potential for significant damage to fruit and economic impacts on the operation, including its staff and service industries. These events would also have a long reaching effect to Nelson and Hawkes Bay where we pack up to 18,000 bins of fruit.
2. In the case of a heavy frost, we need to be able to start at a temperature higher than 2.0C to prepare air mixing better for efficiency reasons. We should not be restricted to a temperature threshold as they may need to be switched on at temperatures slightly higher than 2.0C (up to 4-5 degrees).
3. Frost fans are very expensive to run, therefore we will not operate them unnecessarily.

4. We have invested in these machines to protect our crop and livelihoods for staff and partners. We may need to invest in further machines as we grow.
5. Frost protection gives us the consistency of supply and quality for our customers. Frost events put our crop into a biennial bearing cycle, which is difficult to come out of and impacts our cashflow severely.
6. Our company/owners are willing to invest to protect us against these potentially catastrophic events with the latest technology available, but we have experienced it being hard to be able to get consent and secure our crop with these readily available systems. Our resource consent application to use frost fans is a clear example of that.
7. We note that our surrounding land use includes an airport as well as a race car course that produces 10 times our noise levels.

SUMMARY

We request that the 2.0C threshold for the operation of frost fans be removed.

Morten Tonder

9 April 2025

ATTACHMENT

Presentation: Overview of MA Orchards, *MA Orchards 2025.pptx*




MA Orchards presentation

High level

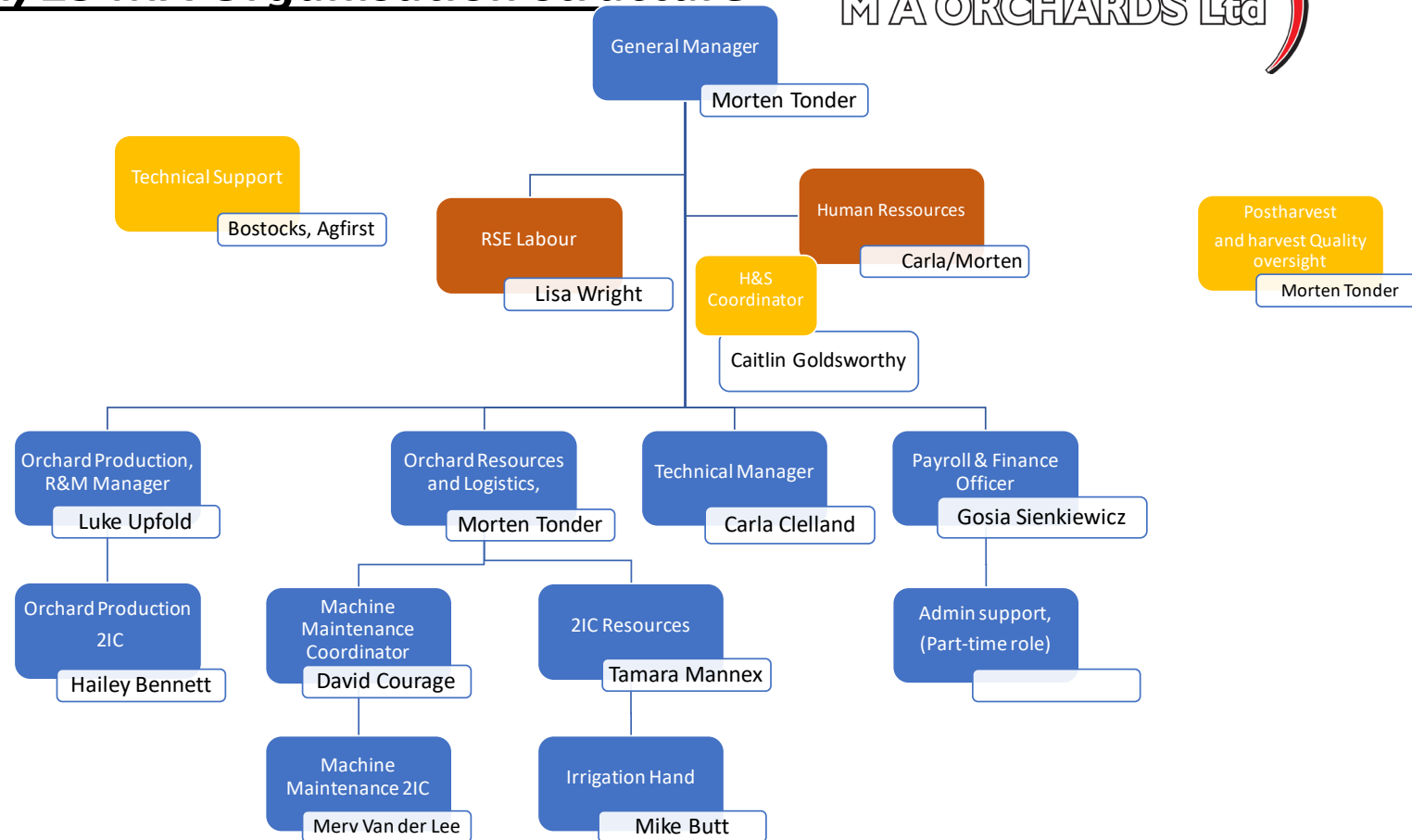
- One variety Honeycrisp
- NZ owned, Bostock NZ Ltd and Milford Assets.
- One market option being USA.
- 6 orchards and 100 ha in and around the Levels Plain area.
- Extremely seasonality of all tasks.
- Extreme deadlines and accuracy to meet on all tasks.
- Extreme labour demand in short periods of 3-4 weeks.
- No post harvest facility in South Canterbury currently....Nelson and Hawkes Bay. But within 2 years this will change.

Production

	Block 						
Values	Divan	Falvey	Kerrytown	Levels	Moffatts	Foley	Grand Total
Sum of 2015 bin	870		1179				2049
Sum of 2016 bin	1239	162	958				2359
Sum of 2017 bin	1701	1790	2531	356	651		7029
Sum of 2018 bin	1854	979	1791	684	1405		6713
Sum of 2019 bin	2343	2166	3279	1655	1758		11201
Sum of 2020 bin	1381	484	2183	465	1204		5717
Sum of 2021 bin	2055	108	2525	1535	1809		8032
Sum of 2022 bin	2127	1590	2249	1942	2299		10207
Sum of 2023 bin	2420	1164	2936	2280	2193		10992
Sum of 2024 bin	1421	1907	2138	2389	2475		10330
2025 Bin estimate	2,816	2,461	3,697	3,187	3,397		15,558
2026 Bin estimate	2,779	2,445	3,357	3,053	3,450	1,298	16,383
2027 Bin estimate	2,779	2,445	3,357	3,088	3,450	2,285	17,405
2028 Bin estimate	2,779	2,445	3,470	3,107	3,450	3,274	18,526
2029 Bin estimate	2,779	2,445	3,431	3,107	3,450	4,260	19,474

Organisation

2024/25 MA Organisation structure



Labour

- 3 seasonal peaks:
 - Winter pruning 45 staff July to September
 - Fruit thinning November 5th to early December (4 weeks)
 - Summer pruning early December to December 17 (2 weeks)
 - Harvest March (3 weeks)
- Permanent Staff
 - 3 managers
 - 15 permanent employees
 - Payroll admin
 - 2IC
 - Supervisors
 - Machine operators