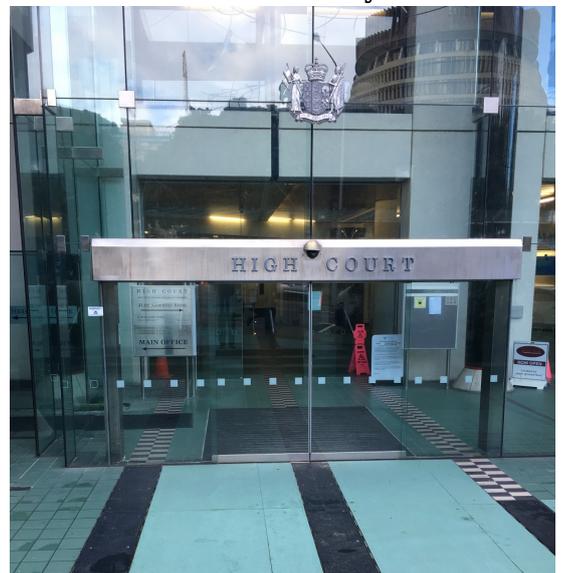


As Crown witnesses take the stand this week in the controversial [Kiwifruit Claim](#) being heard before New Zealand's High Court, a representative for the plaintiffs has reiterated arguments of alleged negligence from the government's chief biosecurity body.

In a statement given to *Fresh Fruit Portal*, Kiwifruit Claim chairman John Cameron alleged the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) failed to follow its own protocols in its handling of a 2009 import permit for pollen from China.

As a result, he has alleged, deadly vine disease Psa was able to enter the country.



"Psa was a well-known disease and had MPI followed its own protocols under the Biosecurity Act, the devastating outbreak of Psa would never had happened," Cameron said in the statement.

"MPI has the sole responsibility for protecting our borders and the primary industry sector relies heavily on it carrying out that function to the highest standard.

"In this case they failed to act with the reasonable care that is expected and the Psa outbreak devastated the Kiwifruit industry in New Zealand."

Cameron highlighted the MPI identified Psa as a biosecurity risk in 2004 and as a result it banned imports of kiwifruit plant material, except in tightly controlled situations. According to the plaintiffs, this approach did not go far enough.

"Where they failed, was to properly consider whether kiwifruit pollen could carry Psa and prohibit the importation of pollen. Instead, they decided to consider the specific risks that

kiwifruit pollen posed if a request for an import permit was received in the future," Cameron said.

"When an application was made to import pollen in 2007, instead of undertaking a Risk Assessment in accordance with its own procedures, MPI took shortcuts - it made a decision to allow imports of pollen based on a brief informal review and discussions, and without consulting industry," he said.

"By taking those shortcuts, MPI failed to identify and consider the fact that commercial pollen is always contaminated with plant material, and failed to identify the risk of Psa being introduced with infected pollen.

He said even though MPI officials received notifications about the outbreak of a virulent strain of Psa in Italy in 2008, it never reviewed its assessment and issued a permit to import pollen in 2009 from China.

"That shipment was in fact 4.5kg of pollen, anthers and other plant material from Shaanxi Province in China," Cameron said.

"MPI's internal procedures require nursery stock to be quarantined and inspected. MPI either failed to realise that the Shaanxi shipment was not pure pollen, or did not inspect it at all.

"The shipment was approved, immediately transported to Te Puke and later processed into pollen - once Psa was in the country, there was absolutely no way it could be contained.

"MPI was wrong to allow imports of pollen - the risk of transmission of Psa was too high."

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