

Strang and Strang Limited

IN THE MATTER of the Resource Management Act 1991

AND

IN THE MATTER of the Proposed Waikato Regional Plan
Change 1 – Waikato and Waipa River
Catchments (“Proposed Plan or PC1”)

AND

IN THE MATTER of submissions and further submissions by
Strang and Strang Limited

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF SALLY STRANG ON BEHALF OF
STRANG AND STRANG LIMITED FOR HEARINGS BLOCK 3**

22 SEPTEMBER 2019

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 My full name is Sally Barker Strang.

1.2 My experience and qualifications are set out in paragraphs 1.1 and 1.2 of my statement of evidence dated 2 July 2019, prepared on behalf of Strang and Strang, Pukerimu Farms Ltd and Waiawa Farms Ltd for the Block 2 hearings considering Proposed Plan Change 1 – Waikato and Waipā River Catchments (PC1).

1.3 This evidence covers:

- A brief summary of our farming operations
- The commercial vegetable production rules
- Farm Environment Plans

2. STRANG AND STRANG LIMITED FARMING OPERATION

2.1 As described in my evidence of 2 July, my husband Richard and I own the farming business, Strang and Strang Limited which includes two farm properties located on river flats adjacent to the Waikato River at Lake Karapiro. The farming operation includes a mix of arable cropping, dry stock and on occasions commercial vegetable production.

2.2 Both farms include significant areas of LUC classification 1s1 and 2s1 flats that have in the past been used for vegetable production, predominantly potatoes, onions and asparagus.

2.3 Currently 100% of the cropping area on both farms is dedicated to maize silage production, due to current demand for maize silage, however both farms have had significant areas of vegetable production within the proposed vegetable production reference period of 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2016. Of note our second property on Wesley Road was fully utilised for vegetable production until 2013.

2.4 In the past we have used vegetable production alongside the maize cropping in years when the maize demand and price has been projected to be low, primarily due to fluctuations in the dairy pay out. As outlined in my previous evidence, flexibility to change land to meet market demands has been critical to the financial viability of our farming operation, and has enabled us to continue to farm a financially viable dry stock/cropping operation rather than converting to dairy. For this reason we are very much affected by the proposed commercial vegetable production rules.

3. PROPOSED VEGETABLE PRODUCTION RULES

- 3.1 As outlined in our original submission, we were concerned that the proposed approach to PC1 effectively set a quota for vegetable production to be allocated to existing growers, effectively creating a monopoly right to those parties currently growing vegetables in the Waikato Region. While this may be workable in the short term, it not in our view a tenable solution over the longer term, as inevitably people retire and businesses cease operation. It is also directly contrary to increasing international pressure to move toward more vegetable based food production systems and diets.
- 3.2 Under the proposed rules it was unclear who the right to grow vegetables sat with for leased land - the landowner or the lessee. The approach of averaging the area of land that could be used to grow vegetables over 10 years would also have resulted in very fragmented allocation of rights in pockets around the Waikato.
- 3.3 The proposed changes in the Section 42a report partially resolve some of these issues. It is now at least clear that the right to grow vegetables runs with the land on which they were grown. Whilst we oppose the grand parented approach to vegetable production, if it is to be followed we support that it runs with the land. However as proposed in the Section 42A report, the vegetable production rules now contain a number of differing and contradictory requirements in different parts of the rules.
- 3.4 In relation to the time period over which the vegetable cropping area cap applies:
- Proposed Clause X to be inserted into rules 3.11.5.1A, 3.11.5.2A, 3.11.5.3 and 3.11.5.4 requires that there has been less than 4.1ha change in land use from farming to commercial vegetable production since 22 October 2016.
 - Clause f of rule 3.11.5.5 states that the area of commercial vegetable production must not exceed the maximum land area of the property or properties that was used for commercial vegetable production during the period 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2016.
- 3.5 Clause X effectively over-rides the intent of clause 3.11.5.5(f).
- 3.6 In relation to the NRP:
- Clause h(iii) of rule 3.11.5.5 requires that the losses of nitrogen, phosphorous and sediment do not exceed the maximum annual losses that were occurring during the 5 years up to 2016
 - Clause b of Schedule B states that for commercial vegetable production the NRP shall be the average annual nitrogen leaching loss during the reference period.

- 3.7 Again clause b of Schedule B effectively over-rides the intent of clause h and f of rule 3.11.5.5.
- 3.8 Under the vegetable production rule 3.11.5.5 alone, on our farms we could undertake a constrained but still economically viable area of vegetable production, based on vegetable production that has been undertaken in past years on both farms within the reference period. However in both instances the vegetable production that occurred was earlier than 22 October 2016 and therefore the effect of Clause X means the intent of rule 3.11.5.5 cannot actually occur.
- 3.9 The current wording of Clause b of Schedule B in the Section 42A report makes it unclear how you could calculate a Nitrogen Reference Point for farms such as ours, where there has been a mix of cropping and vegetable production with changing proportions of each over time. As proposed the NRP for the vegetable cropping part of the farming operation is to be calculated based on an average and the remaining operation being the maximum N losses over a different time period. The situation is further complicated by the fact that parts of the farm were in both farming systems during the time period.
- 3.10 As stated in our submission and previous evidence, we remain opposed to the land use change rules and the use of NRP's on the basis that it is grand-parenting, rewarding polluters and creating perverse incentives to farmers to continue to pollute. However if a grand parented approach is to be retained in the rules, at the very least the rules need to be clear and follow a consistent approach so they can be followed in practice. To give effect to the intent of rule 3.11.5.5 in relation to vegetable production:
- The dates in Clause X for change to vegetable production should match the dates in clause f of 3.11.5.5 i.e. any change to commercial vegetable production of more than 4.1ha above the maximum area of commercial vegetable production during the period 1 July 2011 and 30 June 2016.
 - In Clause b of Schedule B commercial vegetable production the NRP should equate to maximum nitrogen leaching loss during the vegetable reference period to match clause h(iii) of the vegetable production rule. The NRP could then be calculated for the balance of the farm, excluding the vegetable production area during the period of maximum production, to ensure a consistent approach.
- 3.11 Whilst this would potentially allow an increase in commercial vegetable production if everyone takes up their maximum area, this will be offset by areas of land that have been taken out of commercial vegetable production for a range of reasons, in some instances permanently due to housing developments.

4. SCHEDULE 1 FARM ENVIRONMENT PLANS

- 4.1 The Farm Environment Plan requirements proposed in the Section 42A report appear largely workable. They do seem somewhat light in some aspects, in particular effluent management which is a critical issue for water quality, however presumably more specific requirements will be incorporated into the FEP tool developed by Waikato Regional Council.
- 4.2 I support the requirement that the FEP is reviewed by a Certified Farm Environment Planner to ensure FEP's are completed to a consistent standard. The review must in our view include a farm walkover to ensure the FEP adequately covers all risk areas, and provide an independent view of what needs to be achieved – fresh eyes on the farming operation.
- 4.3 A critical issue for us is that FEPs are applied with consistent expectations. In our experience with Farm Environment Planning on our home farm, when you are well ahead of the bell curve there is a tendency to look for further improvements well beyond what would be expected of other equivalent farmers. If all expected best practice mitigations have been undertaken it should be acceptable to have an FEP that simply requires ongoing application of these.

5. SUMMARY

- 5.1 In summary:
- We remain opposed to grand parenting rights to future land use through NRPs and land use change rules tagged to past polluting for the reasons stated in our previous evidence. If this approach is to be used for commercial vegetable production we support that the allocation falls with the land, however the rules need to be amended to be workable and consistent in terms of dates and NRPs.
 - It seems short sighted to lock the best land in the Waikato into dairy and livestock farming in the face of pressures to move toward more plant based food production systems. It is essential in our view that in the longer term suitable land is available to produce vegetables, with the focus being on improving vegetable farming practices to reduce contaminant losses.
 - We support the approach to FEPs provided they are applied consistently across farming operations, and with independent on the ground review.



Sally Strang

On behalf of Strang & Strang Ltd