

**BEFORE THE HEARING COMMISSIONERS  
DUNEDIN**

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

**AND**

**IN THE MATTER** of Proposed Otago Regional Policy  
Statement 2021 (Freshwater Planning  
Instrument)

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**SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE OF EARNSCY WEAVER**

**04 SEPTEMBER 2023**

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**ATKINS | HOLM | MAJUREY**

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## **SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE OF EARNSCY WEAVER**

1. Leaning Rock Cherries are in the business of producing sustainable and healthy fruit both for export and the New Zealand market for consumption.
2. We are farming a total of 64 hectares, most of which is irrigated. We are efficient growers. We produce approximately 15 to 20 tonnes of cherries per hectare, 57 tonnes each of peaches and nectarines per ha, 30 tonnes of apricots and 70 tonnes of apples per hectare.
3. We have an ideal climate and soils to grow these crops to meet the quality demanded by our customers.
4. We have developed by tripling the size of the operation in the last 9 years to achieve economy of scale and because we thought we had a secure water supply. But knowing what we know now, I'm not sure we made the right decision. This development has resulted in us needing to employ three to four times as many people as we did 9 years ago, but the development is still coming together as plantings continue to mature.
5. We have a further 5 ha to develop but because of the uncertainty generated by irrigation supply constraints we are not prepared to risk developing this land which otherwise would be equally productive as the rest of the orchard.
6. We are efficient water users. We monitor our soils and monitor evapotranspiration rates from our onsite weather station to manage our applications by block and by variety. We irrigate with either micro sprinklers or drip line. We use RDI (regulated deficit irrigation) where and when possible. We know that either over or under irrigating gives poor fruit quality. Water management is a key ingredient in producing top quality fruit.
7. We store water through two reservoirs of 20,000 cubic metres each which are fed from the Manuherekia irrigation scheme. One reservoir was built in 1980 and the other in 2008 when we expanded our operations. The total storage of 40,000 cubic metre provides us with approximately 14 days irrigation at the peak of the season (at 5mm/day).
8. Any reduction in water availability is a disaster for fruit production. A reduction will result in lower yields, and inferior fruit quality in size, eating quality, fruit firmness and storability. A substantial reduction in water availability will also negatively impact the following seasons crop.

9. Unlike other farming operations we are unable to “destock”. We cannot shift our trees or import feed supplements. In drought conditions we will watch our crop die on the tree.
10. I am concerned that pORPS will impact our ability to take the amount of water that we need when we need it to sustainably operate our fruit production business. This would be hugely detrimental to the crop, trees, environment and people that make up the fruit growing business producing quality healthy food for the world.

**Earnscy Weaver**

4 September 2023