



## How lean is the New Zealand pipfruit industry?

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### **Biography**

Hans Doevendans is a PhD student at Massey University. He completed his Masters in Quality Systems in 2010.

#### Publications:

Doevendans, J.T., and Grigg, N.P. (2011). Quality management issues in the New Zealand pipfruit industry: Findings from a quality management study, 25th ANZAM Conference 2011 (forthcoming).

Grigg, N.P., and Doevendans, J.T. (2011). Human resource issues in the New Zealand pipfruit industry: some findings from a quality management study, in Proceedings of the 18th International Annual EurOMA Conference. 1-2 July 2011, Cambridge, UK, ISBN 978-1-902546-94-0, pub. University of Cambridge.

Doevendans, J.T., and Wilson, R (2011). The NZ pipfruit supply and value chain 2010. Study completed for Pipfruit NZ Inc.; unpublished and embargoed 150 page research report.

Hans Doevendans will be speaking at the congress.

### **Presentation experience**

Hans Doevendans has presented at EUROMA in July 2011 and at ANZAM in December 2011.

### **Content of paper**

Refer to abstract.

## **Abstract**

This paper explores concepts and developments in ‘Lean Thinking’ as they may apply to the New Zealand (NZ) pipfruit industry. Fundamental principles are discussed and application in the NZ pipfruit industry is explored.

There is minimal literature about lean thinking in the NZ pipfruit industry specifically and in the wider horticultural industry generally. The type of industry is seasonal, generates product with limited life span and is ‘push’, rather than ‘pull’. Not all lean principles automatically and equally apply to the NZ pipfruit or similar industries.

The New Zealand pipfruit industry has been exposed to a number of volatile socio-economic changes in the last 15 years, including de-regulation in 2001. Direction has suffered. The industry has since been seeking ways to improve its competitive standing and has recently embarked on introducing lean production and thinking processes.

In this paper, a mixed method approach is used to combine qualitative and quantitative data in the assessment of a base-line – Where is the industry at in terms of lean thinking? A number of stakeholders are interviewed and their organisations observed to understand what lean aspects are applied in the running of their organisations.

Results indicate that there is some understanding of lean principles and tools and methodologies, but that organisations typically have short-term results focus rather than strategic positioning. Earlier studies have demonstrated that short term periods of expert guidance may not deliver sustainable results and a different approach may be required.

This exploratory study forms the precursor to a further three year study into the introduction and implementation of lean thinking into the NZ pipfruit industry that will adopt action research as methodology. The aim of this further research is to assist the industry in finding ways to improve its position by adopting a different fundamental thinking.

This initial study shows that more work must be done to understand how lean principles can be further developed to assist the NZ pipfruit industry specifically and other seasonal horticultural industries in general.