



# JUST FOR THE HEALTH OF IT

Enhancing the wellbeing of employees in the post-harvest kiwifruit industry

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### **Executive Summary**

This report explores ways that well-being can be enhanced in the post-harvest kiwifruit sector. The kiwifruit industry has expanded substantially over the last few years and is expected to continue with exponential growth. It is more important than ever to focus on the wellbeing of employees to ensure that the industry can fulfil its potential.

Wellbeing is linked to many positive business aspects, including engaged staff, reduced absenteeism, and higher productivity. Employees are faced with the reality of various job and life demands daily. Additionally, the kiwifruit harvest season from March to June each year see these demands escalated with increased workloads and longer work hours. Employees may experience compromised wellbeing, becoming burnout risks if these demands aren't balanced out with job resources and personal resources.

#### The main findings include:

- Leaders of the industry interviewed believed that the seasonal demands were the biggest barrier to enhancing wellbeing, resulting in significant impacts to work- life balance.
- The conceptual framework called The Job Demands Resources Model can be used to predict
  and enhance wellbeing. It considers the balance between energy in and out energy out for an
  employee to have optimised wellbeing. If it is unbalanced a health impairment process can be
  expected.
- The culture of the organisation is what drives the wellbeing of the staff.
- Using a transformational leadership style is the most conducive style for wellbeing. More training and development of leaders and managers is required amongst the industry.
- Succession planning is important for keeping job descriptions within a reasonable scope for individuals. Along with future proofing the business, it also fosters engagement and development opportunities for employees.
- Utilizing flexible work options helps to create better work-life balance and is linked to happier and healthier staff.
- Quarterly engagement surveys help to inform management about employee wellbeing. This could be of help for the kiwifruit industry where work demands vary throughout the year.
- Wellbeing programmes can be used to educate employees around wellbeing and lifestyle habits; however staff must first be engaged for this to be of use.

### Introduction

The health and wellbeing of employees is essential for achieving successful organisational outcomes. Personal health, along with direct impacts of the workplace and the surroundings are important determinants of the overall wellbeing of staff. The workplace is an ideal setting for the promotion and protection of wellbeing. Wellbeing is associated with several benefits. This includes decreased absenteeism, increased engagement, increased creativity, and increased resilience.

The kiwifruit season is renowned for long hours and increased workloads during the harvest months. This is from March through to June. The job demands are naturally higher across most positions within this period. Time pressures to ensure deadlines are met around harvest, packing and shipping become essential to post-harvest success. However, due to the long shipping window out to December, employees are increasingly required to be at optimal performance almost all year round. The industry continues to grow, with larger crop volumes every year. With this comes the requirement of more focus on employee wellbeing to ensure longevity and success of the industry and its people.

While a combination of personal and professional circumstances can contribute to stress and burnout, workplaces are critical for helping manage the demands and resources of a job. In general, workload and stress are causing detrimental health concerns across New Zealand workers, particularly to mental health. In alignment with the New Zealand findings, the kiwifruit post-harvest sector puts disproportionate pressures on employees during the kiwifruit season. A lack of work-life balance is the main detrimental impact, which then leads to other detrimental wellbeing facets.

This report outlines how the wellbeing of employees in the post-harvest sector can be enhanced. Through a literature review and interviews with post-harvest industry leaders, opportunities and barriers are investigated.

## Aims and Objectives

The aim of this research report was to enhance the understanding of how the wellbeing can be improved for employees in the Kiwifruit post- harvest sector.

As the industry expands, the demands put on employees continues to increase. It is hoped that through this research, the kiwifruit post-harvest sector will see enhanced wellbeing of employees, thus achieving more productive, innovative, and healthier staff members.

The reasons for this research to focus on the wellbeing of employees was because:

- We spend many of our waking hours in the context of the workplace. It is significant to investigate the impacts on wellbeing from a workplace perspective.
- The Kiwifruit post-harvest sector puts substantial seasonal pressures and demands on its employees. It was considered important to look for opportunities where these demands can be influenced positively to enhance wellbeing.
- The focus on wellbeing comes as society moves towards a better balance between work and life. An area that the kiwifruit post-harvest sector appears to be lagging.

It is hoped that we can work smarter with a win-win situation for both the company and employee. Resulting in enhanced wellbeing as a positive outcome.

## Methodology

A significant amount of time was spent reviewing the literature on what is known about wellbeing in the workplace. From this original scope of the literature, nine interview questions were formed.

To bring relevance to the post-harvest kiwifruit sector, eleven leaders were interviewed from six different post-harvest entities. Eight of these interviews were conducted face to face for approximately one hour per person. To reach leaders from further afield, a further three leaders were emailed the questions and responded with written answers. To capture diverse opinions, the leaders were selected from a range of age groups. Industry experience ranged from two and a half years to forty-five years' experience. Of the eleven leaders interviewed, five were female and six were male. Leadership positions ranged from middle management to senior management, including a Managing Director.

A thematic analysis approach was used to examine the interview results. These themes form the basis of the results section and construct the discussion section. The scope of the literature review was narrowed down following the results of the interviews.

## Wellbeing as a whole

Wellbeing is defined by The World Health Organisation (1946) as "A state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity". It continues to explain it as "a state in which every individual realises their own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to their community." There is a holistic approach to the definition, in contrast to the traditional biomedical model of health used dominantly in Western medicine, which has a purely physical focus on the absence of disease or illness (Farre and Rapley, 2017).

Wellbeing needs to be considered from both a personal and employee perspective. The average person spends more of their waking hours at work than on any other activity, making wellbeing as much a corporate responsibility, as it is individual responsibility. As Danna and Griffin (1999) explain, there is a growing recognition that it is virtually impossible to separate the contributions of work and non-work-related components on employee wellbeing: "Indeed, the overlap between non-work and work has become a popular research area, with the recognition that a person's work and personal lives are not separate entities but, instead, interrelated and intertwined domains having reciprocal effects on each other". In addition, a job often provides a sense of meaning, identity, and purpose for an individual. As Hardyment (2019) describes, many people define themselves by their profession. It can be motivating and inspiring.

"People bring their whole selves to work. We cannot easily divide one aspect of a person's life from another – we can't tackle wellbeing at work without also thinking about wellbeing at home, and vice versa." NZ Mental Health Foundation.

Happiness and wellbeing are closely connected. A happy employee is described by Pryce-Jones (2010) as being nearly 50% more productive than the least happy. On top of this, they take on average 75% fewer sick days, are said to be twice as engaged in their jobs, and most significantly these people are 180% more satisfied with life. Hardyment (2019) expands on this, saying that happier people tend to be more innovative, creative, and flexible in their thinking. Additionally, more cooperative and collaborative behaviours are seen, along with increased resilience.

On the contrary, damaging effects associated with diminished wellbeing outcomes have been linked to cardiovascular events, depression, burnout, and maladaptive employee behaviours (Davies, 2019). Similarly, Hardyment (2019) describes a study that showed the negative physical wellbeing outcomes associated with poor mental wellbeing: "Around 400 students at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh were given a nasal spray that exposed them to a cold virus. Students who reported higher levels of stress and unhappiness were more than three times as likely to catch the cold. This illustrates how happier people are more resilient and less likely to be sick, depressed or otherwise absent from work."

### Engagement and Burnout

Wellbeing can be associated with both positive and negative responses in the workplace. As Davies (2019) states: "The positive form of wellbeing is conceptualised as employee engagement. The less favourable, more harmful response is conceptualised as burnout, measured as emotional exhaustion and disengagement."

Engagement can be characterised by "a positive, satisfying state of mind, encompassing vigour, dedication and absorption" (Davies, 2019). In contrary, burnout has been linked to life dissatisfaction and can lead to mental health impairments such as depression and anxiety, poor physical health including sleep disturbance, headaches, and musculoskeletal problems, as well as impacts on social wellbeing such as more strained relationships and conflicts (Bakker & Demorouti, 2014)

## Wellbeing around the world and in New Zealand workplaces

The findings from a research report by The Global Wellness Institute in 2016 suggest that the global worker is becoming increasingly unwell. It states that 52% are overweight/ obese, 38% suffer from excessive job pressures, 24% are actively disengaged at work, and a whopping 76% of workers report that they are struggling with their wellbeing (The Global Wellness Institute, 2016).

From a New Zealand perspective, The Business NZ Workplace Wellness Report 2019 indicates that since 2012, wellbeing in the workplace has generally been trending in a positive direction. They believe the wellbeing landscape is changing by bringing more balance to 'health and safety' after years of focussing predominantly on safety. This is due to shifts in New Zealand health and safety legislation. Their survey results show that on average, \$1.79 billion is lost in the economy due to absence from work. The most common cause for absenteeism is non work-related illness.

In alignment with global trends, The Business NZ Workplace Wellness Report, found a concerning outcome emerge around mental wellbeing. The results show that workplace stress has increased by 23.5% across businesses in the last two years. Workload is said to be the biggest contributor to this, followed by changes at work, relationships at work, and long hours (Workplace Wellness Report, 2019).

### The theoretical framework: The Job Demands- Resources Model

Research shows that the Job Demands- Resources Model is a dynamic theory that helps to frame wellbeing in the workplace. It enacts as an enabler, hindrance, mediator, and moderator between the job demands and the resources. The model can be used to predict employee wellbeing or employee burnout (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014).

"Enthusiastic employees excel in their work because they maintain the balance between the energy they give and the energy they receive."

(Bakker & Demorouti, 2014)

The Job Demands and Resources (JD-R) Model considers the balance between job demands and job resources. Job demands are the sustained physical, social, and psychological efforts required from the job and the work environment (such as workload, work hours and relationships), resulting in psychological and physical costs. Job resources are the motivating factors that help the employee achieve objectives, reduce, or offset the effects of the job demands and foster engagement. Job

resources can come from aspects such as managements' leadership styles, personal autonomy, and career development which stimulates personal growth and learning.

If the balance is right, the result will be flourishing wellbeing for the employee (employee engagement) and positive flow on effects for the organisation. However, if the job demands outweigh the job resources, it theorises that the outcome will ultimately lead to exhaustion and burnout for the employee. Thus, creating negative repercussions on their wellbeing through a health impairment process (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001).

Further research saw an important extension to the original JD-R Model with the inclusion of personal resources (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2007). Personal resources are "positive self-evaluations that are linked to resiliency and refer to individuals' sense of their ability to control and impact upon their environment successfully" (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014). It includes traits such as self-efficacy, resilience, self-esteem, and optimism. They are key determinants of personal perceptions and adaptations within the work environment which are related to and have positive effects on physical and mental wellbeing (Judge, Locke, & Durham, 1997).

Xanthopoulou *et al* (2007) discovered a mediating relationship: "job resources predict personal resources and work engagement; and personal resources and work engagement, in turn, predict job resources". It is reciprocal in nature and suggests that job resources may foster the development of personal resources and vice versa. Although Xanthopoulou *et al* (2007), did not confirm personal resources to offset the relationship to job *demands* and burnout, (they only found personal resources to mediate the relationship between job *resources* and engagement), additional studies have shown that personal resources may also act as moderators to job demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014). Therefore, it may be considered that personal resources can impact the job demands, the job resources and the job performance in a reciprocating nature, and not be limited to a relationship with job resources as the model implies.

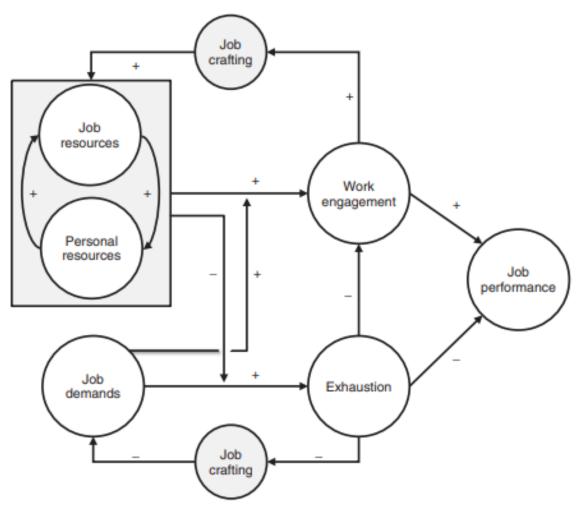


Figure 1 Job Demands - Resources Model (Bakker & Demorouti, 2014)

#### Job Demands

Job demands are largely constant. Excessive job demands can contribute to the experience of employee burnout and the corresponding ill health effects (Bakker & Demorouti, 2014). Contributors to excessive job demands include workload and hours of work.

Central to the concept of excessive job demands and the association to burnout, is the size of the gap between job demands and the person's ability to cope with these demands. A person's ability to cope may shift depending on their individual life demands and their personal resources (Dyrbye *et al*, 2006)

According to The Workplace Wellness Report (2019), workload is the most stress and anxiety causing issue for employees in New Zealand businesses. However, Kantowitz (1987) describes workload as multidimensional in nature and is personal to an individual's perceptions: "a subjective experience

caused by ... motivation, ability, expectations, training, timing, stress, fatigue, and circumstances in addition to the number, type and difficulty of tasks performed, effort expended, and success in meeting requirements".

Long work hours have been linked to detrimental wellbeing. This includes exhaustion, burnout, stress, depression, and a greater risk of heart disease (Kamerāde, Wang, Burchell, Balderson, & Coutts, 2019).

#### Job Resources

Job resources are the physical, social, and psychological aspects of the job that help the employee to attain goals and perform to optimal standard. Job resources reduce psychological and physical costs of the job demands and stimulate personal growth and development of the employee (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014).

Workplace flexibility options often include approaches such as working remotely, compressed work weeks, and autonomy over work scheduling. Studies suggest that people with more flexible work options report higher life satisfaction and improved work-life balance (Hayman, 2010 and Grzywacz, Casey and Jones, 2007). Consistent associations between perceived work flexibility and healthy lifestyle habits were found in the study by Grzywacz *et al* (2007). They found an increase in probability of individuals maintaining a constant exercise routine, a healthier diet, better sleep patterns, and more regular participation in advocated stress management practices.

#### Personal Resources

According to Yardley (2012), personal resources are a person's capacity to control and manage challenging environments in a way that results in positive outcomes. They are usually linked to a person's coping style and resilience. Similarly, Davies (2019) contends, employee engagement is influenced by the interactive effect of the work environment and individual psychological conditions.

In alignment with the mediating relationship between job resources and personal resources found by Xanthopoulou *et al* (2007), Luthans, Avey, Avolio, Norman, and Combs (2006) believe that job resources can activate an employee's personal resource of Psychological Capital. Described as: "a

person's positive appraisal of circumstances and probability for success based on motivated effort and perseverance". Psychological Capital is characterised by a combination of individual traits such as self-efficacy (confidence to take on challenges and put in the required effort), optimism (positive attribution of succeeding), hope (perseverance towards goals and redirecting when necessary to succeed) and resilience (adaptation to adversity and bouncing back from setbacks), which contribute to job satisfaction, commitment, and intention to stay (Luthans et al, 2006).

Grover, Teo, Pick, Roche, & Newton (2018) claim that Psychological Capital is more than just a mediator to job resources. It empowers a positive attitude, particularly to the work environment which can positively influence the perceptions of both job demands and resources and can have a positive impact on job performance and wellbeing: "people who embrace their work lives in a positive way perceive fewer job demands and more job resources. The resilience and optimism of Psychological Capital allows people to view their job demands in a more positive light which, in turn, leads to more psychologically healthy well-being and allows them to enjoy energy, vitality, and enthusiasm for their work." Additionally, Luthans et al (2006) found that when employees had specific Psychological Capital development training (e.g., one on one specialised training), the company's saw a 270% return on investment through improved productivity and performance. Contrary to this, those with low levels of Psychological Capital can have a detrimental effect on the organisation via undesirable employee attitudes, such as cynicism or negativity towards the company. This, in turn, may impact other employees through social connections (Yardley, 2012).

In the study by Luthens, Youssef and Avolio (2007) it has been found that Psychological Capital facilitates positive emotions. Positive emotions have been known to assist with dealing with organisational stress. Yardley (2012) explains that this happens through positive expectations of goal achievement and confidence with dealing with changes. This further enhances confidence to find multiple solutions to problems and not be negatively affected by setbacks. Supplementing this, evidence indicates that positive emotions are associated with fewer physical health related symptoms, including less illness, less pain and injury, and thus better health and wellbeing in the long term (Williams, Kern and Waters, 2017)

According to Luthans *et al* (2006), Psychological Capital is malleable, meaning that it is open for development (opposed to personality or intelligence) and thus may be a catalyst for opportunities

within the organisation to enhance wellbeing. Yardley (2012) describes opportunities for psychological capital development such as providing support and feedback from leaders and ensuring an environment with supportive social support.

## The Workplace Culture

There is a strong link between wellbeing and workplace culture (Witters, 2020). As Witters (2020) explains, the workplace culture is made up of a set of core values, understandings and norms that are shared by the members of the organisation. These factors can impact employees' attitudes and behaviours. As described by Witters, a focus on well-being creates a culture that enhances employees lives: "In a company that supports employees' well-being and engagement, workers are more likely to be thriving overall, which helps boost their individual, team and organizational performance." Consistent with this finding, Seppälä & Cameron (2015) state "Wellbeing comes from one place, and one place only — a positive culture."

A research article by Gallup named "How to create a strength-based company culture" found that the best way to create a positive culture around wellbeing is to work to individual employees' strengths, rather than focussing on their weaknesses. "Companies must develop people in a way that meets their personal desires for belonging, uniqueness and growth, and in turn helps individuals look forward to work, improves team collaboration and performance, and spikes the company's organic growth... When employees know and use their strengths, they are more engaged, nearly 6xs more, have higher performance and are much less likely to leave their company." The report continues to define how to create a culture of wellbeing, suggesting that a strength-based culture requires a shift in mindset to developing people and helping individuals to approach their work through a lens that focuses on their strengths every day. Gallup's study also showed that companies who invested in employees' strengths had fewer stressed employees, as the culture helped the company to understand who the individuals are and what they do best. With this came ways to help keep the employees healthy.

Additionally, Seppälä & Cameron (2015) believe that one of the best ways to create a positive culture is by fostering social connections. They state that many studies have been done that link healthy employees to positive social connections. Conversely, it was found that people have a 70% higher probability of early death when they have poor or toxic social relationships.

Witters (2020) believes that regular engagement surveys are essential for creating a workplace culture around Wellbeing. Engagement surveys inform the company of what drives employees to perform at their best. By adding a wellbeing focus to regular engagement surveys, Witters (2020) believes that there is an accelerating effect. This helps to establish a positive workplace culture that enhances employees lives.

#### Work-life balance

Through a UK Mental Health Foundation survey, it was found that 60% of employees reported that their productivity at work suffered due to stress of trying to balance their work and personal-related duties. Employees believe that work-life balance is the leading example of a successful culture.

Forsyth & Polzer-Debruyne (2007) describe work-life balance as: "effectively managing one's paid occupation and those personal activities and responsibilities important to one's wellbeing, to reduce conflicting experiences... Work-life balance is often associated with quality of life and has been linked to a variety of outcomes, including burnout, job satisfaction, professional commitment, health and wellness, and career intentions".

A Mental Health Foundation survey in the UK found that 40% of employees are neglecting other aspects of their life because of work, possibly leading to increased vulnerability to mental health problems. Additionally, nearly two thirds of employees have experienced a negative effect on their personal life, due to poor work-life balance. This includes a lack of personal development, physical and mental health problems, and poor relationships at home (Mental Health Foundation UK, "work-life balance", n.d.)

### Leadership styles

A dominant leadership concept is the Full Range Leadership Model. It entails three distinct leadership styles – transformational, transactional and laissez – faire or passive avoidant. Defined as a less active form of leadership, someone using the laissez- faire style tends to withdraw from the leadership role and the responsibilities. *Laissez* is French for "let them do (what they want)", meaning employees are left to make all the decisions themselves. It is often considered the least effective leadership style and

can be linked to higher levels of stress and burnout in employees (Davies, 2019). The transactional leadership style is described by Kirkbride (2006) as being task and process orientated that uses a rewards and punishment type of system. In contrast to the other leadership styles, the transformational leadership style has a persuasive, empowering and role-model approach which follows a long-term orientated philosophy focussing on values and ideals (Kirkbride, 2006). As Davies (2019) states: "Transformational leaders are described as visionary, intellectually stimulating people who inspire a climate of trust and motivate employees towards common goals". Believed to have the most positive links to motivation, emotional connection, and a sense of efficacy in employees, this style can be considered the most effective for fostering employee wellbeing and engagement (Sudka, Shahnawaz, Farhat, 2016).

Davies (2019) explains that the inspirational, visionary, and supportive behaviours associated with transformational leadership can positively influence psychological wellbeing. However, as Davies (2019) also explains, leadership needs to be considered within the context of the industry, settings, and individual and role characteristics, further explaining that no single leadership style is effective across all situations: "good leadership needs to be adaptable to meet situational, interpersonal and intrapersonal contexts".

In the Gallup report "10 Ways Leaders Can Improve Engagement and Wellbeing", Witters (2020) suggests that leaders ask employees to contribute to wellbeing ideas to stimulate the workforce and make the employee feel like they are part of the movement towards enhancing wellbeing. The leaders should also be strongly encouraging participation in wellbeing activities when setting job expectations and goals. These goals and expectations need to be followed up in work reviews and progress meetings to ensure personal accountability, recognition of the employees' achievements and to show that the leader cares. However, as Witters (2020) also points out, it is important to let employees choose the wellbeing activities which have the best alignment with their individual wellbeing goals. Similarly, Hardyment (2019) describes the link between personal autonomy (how much control and influence we have) and life satisfaction "when we feel empowered to shape our own choices, wellbeing rises". Therefore, it could be considered, that with autonomy, support and feedback, the employee is more likely to achieve their goals and enhance their wellbeing.

#### Succession Planning

Described by Gordon and Overbey (2018), succession planning is: "an intentional process aimed at identifying and cultivating employees within an organization who have the potential to lead the company and sustain its success in the long run." It is believed to be an important process for the growth of human capital and the development of future leaders with specific capabilities for sustainable individual and organisational performance. It contributes to employees' attitudes, and provides learning and development opportunities, thus fostering wellbeing and engagement: "In modern organizational culture, succession planning has been considered as a significant contextual construct that improves employees' well-being and encourages them to involve themselves in development activities" (Ali and Mehreen, 2019).

## Does a workplace wellbeing programme improve wellbeing?

The World Health Organisation believe that the workplace is an appropriate setting for the promotion of wellbeing: "People need to be given the opportunity to make healthy choices in the workplace in order to reduce their risk" (Engbers, 2008). Wellbeing programmes in the workplace can be considered as an avenue to promote wellbeing. They can educate people about wellbeing and their personal lifestyle choices, particularly because the workplace reaches a large amount of the general population.

Engbers (2008) claims a typical wellbeing programme focusses on improving personal health behaviours and encouraging positive lifestyle choices. However, this neglects the broader aspects that are arguably more influential on wellbeing, such as job demands and resources (Sparks, Faragher and Cooper, 2001). Ultimately, wellbeing programmes can be defined as a job resource (within the JD-R Model mentioned in the previous report section). Grigsby (2013) believes that it should be marketed as such, especially to supervisors to encourage programme participation and highlight the connection of engagement, job performance and wellbeing.

Despite the abundance of workplace wellbeing programmes in New Zealand and overseas, Metzger's (2018) "Workplace Wellbeing Evidence Review" claims that evidence of positive impacts on employees from workplace wellbeing programmes, with specific focus on individual health and lifestyle, is largely inconclusive. However, the World Health Organisation notes that there does appear to be some limited evidence that health promotion activities in the workplace can make a difference to wellbeing

in the short term, particularly if these activities are planned with the employees (Engbers 2008). This is backed up in the article by Burton (2008), where The Canadian Institute of Stress found that wellbeing programmes with a focus on stress control resulted in an 18% reduction in absenteeism, 52% reduction in disability time and a 7% improvement in productivity.

A survey by the Global Wellness Institute (GWI) found that the pivotal factor for employee wellbeing was that the employee perceived their company as caring about their wellbeing. Most interestingly, the aspects that constituted the perception of caring were intangible qualities, associated to culture, including emotional and intellectual factors, and social connections, rather than tangible factors, such as pay and wellbeing programmes ("Unlocking the power of company caring", 2016).

In Heifetz and Wood's (2014) Gallup report "Memo to Executives: Well-Being Boosts Employee Engagement", it is highlighted that isolated interventions will not result in a quick fix: "A benefits talk or a smoking cessation workshop, is not enough to constitute a successful well-being programme." It is believed that for a well-being programme to be successful, it must be part of a well communicated, company-wide strategy, with backing from the executive leadership team. In addition, employees need to be engaged: "Engagement is the baseline for getting people involved; if employees are engaged, they are more likely to participate in well-being programmes".

"Engagement is the baseline for getting people involved; if employees are engaged, they are more likely to participate in well-being programmes"

- Heifetz and Wood (2014)

## Lifestyle habits

Lifestyle habits can be considered modifiable factors that contribute both positively and negatively to physical, mental, and social wellbeing. Lifestyle habits, such as adequate exercise, sleep, and a healthy diet, can be said to have a direct link to wellbeing and employee engagement. This is shown through lower levels of fatigue, tension, depression, and anxiety. Lifestyle may be related to employee wellbeing through several psychological pathways. Physical activity has been found to be a characteristic of healthy and resilient people in the working population. Evidence indicates that exercise may

increase self-esteem, positive affect, and self-efficacy (Biddle & Mutrie, 2008). Contrary to this, Stults-Kolehmainen and Sinha (2014), and Burton (2008) argue that the presence of stress at work may act as a deterrent to exercise and healthy lifestyle choices, instigating a downward spiral of reduced physical activity and poor diet choices and reducing the benefits associated with it. Burton (2008) also states that employees who are sedentary, overweight, smoke and consume high amounts of alcohol are absent over 50% more often than their low-risk colleagues.

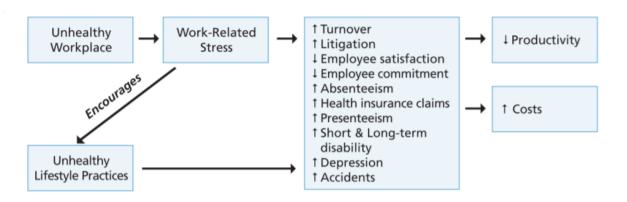


Figure 2 Diagram showing the link between workplace stress and unhealthy lifestyle practices (Burton, 2008)

Individual lifestyle factors combined with work related factors can have a direct link to an employee's work ability and wellbeing. As Burton (2008) explains, that while employers must not impose lifestyle choices on employees, the company can provide personal health resources, opportunities, and flexibility to support employees' efforts to improve or maintain their personal health practices or lifestyle: "There are often ways that creative and motivated employers can remove barriers and support the personal health goals of employees." Some of these initiatives include flexible work hours to encourage exercise, fitness class subsidies, smoking cessation programmes and talks on various health or disease prevention topics.

#### Results

Thematic analysis identified five main themes and four sub themes from the eleven interviews with leaders in the post-harvest sector. This section outlines these themes, using supporting quotes from participants. For confidentiality purposes, no names or entities are identified with any quotes or viewpoints. This allowed for the most honest data and opinions to be collected from participants.

To set the scene and to establish the context of what a healthy employee in the kiwifruit industry looks like, participants were asked to describe the characteristics of what they believed portrayed a healthy worker.

Figure 3 Word Cloud of Wellbeing Characteristics of Employees in the Kiwifruit Post-Harvest Sector



Figure 3 shows all characteristics that were mentioned by the leaders interviewed, with the size of the word representing how many leaders mentioned the characteristic. The most common occurring characteristic was 'engaged', followed by 'productive'. In addition, most of the participants also characterised a healthy employee as someone 'happy' and 'positive'.

"A healthy mind and healthy body equal a good discussion. Staff are engaged, solution orientated, motivated, productive and have purpose"

#### The workload and work hours of the kiwifruit harvest season

Increased work demands, including workloads and extended work hours are observed during the harvest period. Throughout the interviews, it became clear that the demands of the kiwifruit season are one of the biggest obstacles to enhancing wellbeing: "There are times where the industry is under immense pressure to get crops harvested and packed. At these times, the focus is on getting the job done, rather than getting the job done right and having our staff coming out the other end happy and healthy". In alignment, another leader quoted: "You can't focus on wellbeing during the season. The hours are long, and you have to keep up with the seasonal demands."

#### Long hours and big workload impact work-life balance

The demanding kiwifruit season decreases work-life balance amongst employees. There were mixed results from the participants around work-life balance. Some companies are catering for work-life balance across the year. This is by providing hours in lieu of time worked over specified hours per week: "Hours over 45 hours worked per week are given back in lieu. It means I don't mind doing the long hours in the harvest season, because it's made up later". Another participant stated: "We get time in lieu for extra hours worked. This means we feel rewarded with flexibility outside of the season". In contrast to balancing out the hours from the season, one company believes they pay higher salaries to compensate for the extra hours. However, this doesn't create work-life balance, as the leader stated: "Money is only attractive for so long. You need balance".

The kiwifruit season is becoming increasingly longer. This is putting more demands on the employees. Some post-harvest companies have put policies and procedures in place, such as hours in lieu, to cater for this. One leader says their company is "softening on the constant work-work demands and more balance is being seen between headcount and pushing individuals to their limits". This same leader would like to see the changes continue to evolve. They believe that: "More upskilling is needed. We need a more flexible workforce who can shift into different areas throughout the year. It's important to keep developing business models."

Others are suggesting that there is more focus needed on spreading the hours and workload across the whole year: "There are no quiet times anymore. We need to create balance over the whole year because it's not just a 3-month season anymore". Similarly, another leader stated: "More depth of knowledge is needed – there should be three layers of depth, so that there is less dependency on one

person working extreme hours. There is always backup, and this means a better balance for everyone."

Additionally, another leader commented that "Smaller job descriptions are needed to ensure more achievable goals."

#### Leadership Styles

The leadership style of managers is influential on an employee's wellbeing. As one participant stated: "Management styles empower personal wellbeing and self-management. Managers are the role models, but we tend to do too much of the 'doing'." It was a common theme amongst the leaders that the leadership style is important. However, the styles of the leaders interviewed differed substantially. The younger leaders who were interviewed tended to imply that the mindset and leadership styles of older managers has not necessarily kept up with society: "There is still an old-school attitude from some managers. Particularly older managers and those that don't want to talk about feelings." A statement from a manager over the age of 65 years proved this comment correct. This leader stated: "People need to harden up and get on with it. If you can't handle the peak season, you shouldn't be in the game."

There appears to be a gap in the kiwifruit industry for great managers: "There is a lack of coaching from above, a lack of mentoring, a lack of planning, and a lack of empowering others." A common statement made from interviewees was "having the right people in the right job." This suggests more training and development is needed across the industry, particularly for managers, so that the right people can be selected and trained in the right jobs.

#### Succession Planning

Succession planning was commonly addressed as being a factor lacking throughout the post-harvest sector: "Many managers are too involved in the 'doing' and not enabling others around them. The manager needs to be able to step back more. They need to plan and train backup."

From the interviews, succession planning can be viewed as helpful to wellbeing in two ways. Firstly, for the leader it creates reliable backup, reducing job demands: "The depth of knowledge is increasingly important so that there is always backup." Secondly, it creates learning and development opportunities for employees "by having more trust in your staff members, it allows them to develop

and enhances their wellbeing. They can strive for goals and improvements, while progressing in their career." This gives the employees a sense of purpose.

#### Workplace Culture

The culture in the post-harvest sector sets the scene for many of the factors that contributes to wellbeing.

A culture that supports wellbeing is not consistently found across the post-harvest sector. As one leader states: "It [culture] could be improved. We could have more support, particularly around mental wellbeing. More empowerment is needed, and less control. The wrong leadership style can create self-doubt and that person may feel unvalued. The right person should be recognised for their work — I don't think we do that very well. More diversity is needed, we only have one female board member amongst about ten males. More succession planning is needed. It all contributes to the culture and your wellbeing overall." In contrast, others feel that the culture of their workplace is encouraging for wellbeing: "We are pretty lucky here. We have flexibility and freedom. There are lots of soft factors. We have seen a gradual relaxation on set hours, and we have very limited boundaries because we are value based, instead of using measurables like hours worked." Additionally, another leader stated the following about their company culture regarding wellbeing: "We are living it…there are constant reminders about wellbeing."

Additionally, one leader sat on the fence regarding their organisation's culture. They believed that they had seen some positive changes, but still had further to go: "I think we have come a long way. Gone are the days where things like working extreme hours is a badge of honour. We talk about health & safety far more holistically – it's about wellbeing and I see a positive shift in that direction here, but we still have a long way to go."

"The more you embed a culture around wellbeing, the more support you create... it's like a community. You're more likely to give something a crack if all your peers are doing it". There was general support across all the interviewees for having a culture focused on wellbeing.

#### Flexible Work Options

"We do quarterly engagement surveys. The scores went up when more flexibility was allowed." The most obvious theme that emerged for those that were happy with their workplace culture was flexible work options: "We have flexible work hours, and I can work from home. We have plenty of healthy options available." Another interviewee had a similar comment. However, they emphasised that this allowed them to keep up their exercise regime: "We have flexible work hours and a good work- life balance. I can go to the gym during the day." In contrast, others gave up on any additional activities during the season: "I'm an all or nothing type person. The reality is that its all work during the season. I don't do any additional activities during the season."

There are some opportunities to improve work flexibility in certain jobs during the harvest season. As one leader states: "Depending on the position, some roles could 'check out' during the day... A machine operator can't do this." This highlights the diversity in roles across the post-harvest sector. Some roles cannot allow for flexibility; however, this shouldn't mean roles that can have flexibility should miss out on the opportunity.

"Learnings from Covid19 changed mindsets as to where work could be done and when. As a result, our work flexibility increased, and people are happier." This comment suggests that a lack of work flexibility in certain roles is in fact due to a mindset based around what has always been done.

#### Workplace Wellbeing Programmes and Education

There were conflicting views around the place of a wellbeing programme that impacts personal wellbeing, such as diet choices and exercise regimes. One leader stated "It's a personal choice at the end of the day. You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make them drink". Whereas another leader stated: "The workplace provides an opportunity to educate and create a mindset towards a healthy lifestyle. The education can help to change the poor lifestyle behaviour." Despite conflicting views, all eleven leaders said that their organisation had a wellbeing programme of some sort.

It is important to get the balance right, or it may result in the opposite effect: "There is a risk of over zealousness, which can turn people off. There is too much judgement at times, and it has the

It was highlighted that for a programme to be successful, it needs to be personalised. Additionally, individuals need to be followed up and kept on track: "The programmes need to be personalised and confidential. The company should be seeing a return on the investment, so its important that the individuals have accountability." Equally, another leader commented about the focus: "Whatever it takes to feel good. Not everyone is an athlete"

#### Personal Resilience

Personal resilience refers to the ability to adapt to different situations. One leader stated: "You have to try and build up good resistance and resilience leading into the season, and then get back into the good habits after". Resilience is seen as something personal, rather than something to be developed continuously through the workplace. Resilience is impacted by factors outside of work. "There is so much cross over of what's happening at home that comes to work, there's only so much the workplace can do regarding the homelife".

#### Lifestyle Habits

Workplace initiatives can influence lifestyle habits, but it needs to stay as a personal option. The theme that emerged about lifestyle habits in the interviews was to educate on lifestyle choices and have healthy options available: "A speeding ticket is what will change behaviour. We want to educate staff to change their lifestyles before they get the speeding ticket." The 'speeding ticket' refers to the reality that many individuals only make changes based on negative personal experiences — when it is sometimes too late.

Convenience is the key to healthy lifestyle habits: "Long hours in the season mean not much time for exercise and healthy cooking for some people. It's too easy to stop at KFC after a long day at work." In contrary to having healthy options, one leader believed healthy food should be the only option

available: "There should only be healthy food available to buy on site. Access to 'bad' choices becomes harder that way". One leader suggested that healthy recipe ideas should be given to staff regularly. Additionally, exercise needs to be convenient: "You need to get blood through the brain. Build exercise into the workday. We offer our staff lunchtime Spin classes, Pilates classes and a walking track around the site."

### Discussion

This section brings together findings from the literature review and the results from the leaders interviewed within the post-harvest kiwifruit sector. The following sections discuss the themes and opportunities for enhancing the wellbeing of employees in the post-harvest kiwifruit sector.

A healthy employee in the kiwifruit post-harvest sector can be defined as: engaged and productive. They are happy and they have a positive attitude. These were the most common attributes described by the interviewees. The literature reviewed supports the characteristics mentioned, however encompasses a slightly more holistic approach "[wellbeing is] a state in which every individual realises their own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to contribute..." (World Health Organisation, 1946)

#### The Balancing Act

It is important to get the balance right for the individual. A scenario for one individual may be stressful and result in poor health and wellbeing outcomes. However, for another individual, who perhaps has more personal resilience and self-efficacy, may find the same scenario to be stimulating. This may enhance their wellbeing as a result. This signifies that demands, such as workload and hours is not necessarily something that should be viewed negatively, however they should be reasonable.

#### The balance between Job demands and Resources

The fundamental aspects of the Job Demands – Resource model considers the balance between energy in and energy out. The results of the interviews back up the JD-R Model. Those with balance associate it with wellbeing. Therefore, the JD-R model is a relevant model to use for predicting and enhancing wellbeing in the post-harvest kiwifruit sector.

What the research has highlighted is that there are disparities found with the balance between demands and resources amongst each post-harvest company. This is due to differing policies and procedures at each company and ultimately the company culture.

The results showed that the long hours during the post-harvest season have decreased compared to many years ago, but there is still a need for improvement on reasonable work hours. This is a move in a positive direction. As Kamerāde *et al* (2019) showed, workload and long hours correlate to detrimental health such as increased stress levels. The kiwifruit industry appears to realise that as it keeps expanding, more resources are required to keep employees healthy. However, the reality is that the industry is slow to move in the positive direction for wellbeing compared to the rest of society.

For workload to be reasonable, it is important to ensure job descriptions are within a reasonable scope. Thus, creating reasonable hours for the individual while making goals attainable. There is a lack of succession planning in the industry, which also contributes to these larger job descriptions. This impacts wellbeing in a negative way.

Psychological capital (self-efficacy, optimism, hope and resilience) is not viewed consistently as a trainable asset amongst those leaders interviewed. The literature review revealed that a focus on training employees to improve their psychological capital can have positive impacts on coping strategies and stress management. There is currently a gap in the industry regarding psychological capital.

Having the balance right with the job demands and job resources can create healthier lifestyle habits. As Burton (2008) found, the higher the stress of the job, the higher the link to unhealthy lifestyle habits. The harvest season creates high workloads and high work hours which will contribute to higher stress levels if the job resources are not good enough to balance the energy out and energy in for the employee.

Work-life balance is inconsistent across the sector. The demands of the kiwifruit season result in an imbalance through increased workloads and increased hours. Some companies are offering hours in lieu to balance out the seasonal hours. This is encouraging to see as the total hours of work can be balanced over the whole year. Other companies do not offer this policy, perhaps lacking in the concept of 'give and take'. This attitude could result in decreased wellbeing. As the Mental Health Foundation explained, a lack of work-life balance increases vulnerability to mental health problems. More focus on balancing the hours of the season across the whole year is needed across the sector. Compensation through money does not create work-life balance, and those organisations using this approach miss the wellbeing benefits associated with it. However, work-life balance is an individual facet. As the work-life balance article by the Mental Health Foundation explains it is important that the individual takes some responsibility in ensuring the balance is achieved.

Work flexibility is a key aspect for creating work-life balance and enhancing wellbeing. Consistent with the findings from the studies by Hayman (2010) and Grzywacs *et al* (2007), the results showed that those who had flexibility had enhanced wellbeing. They tended to have a better work-life balance as a result and were able to maintain better lifestyle habits around their work commitments. Various jobs in the sector mean flexibility is not always available. However, when it is a possibility the sector should be encouraging flexible work options. Consequently, flexible work options can result in better personal wellbeing, which naturally translates to organisational benefits; as Grywacz *et al* (2007) stated: "When employees are given the flexibility they need, they will in turn participate in healthier behaviours and presumably reduce negative health-related outcomes such as sickness-absences, stress, and other work-related impairments".

### Create a culture of wellbeing

The traditional culture of big workloads and long hours, additional to seasonal pressures has remained consistent as the industry has expanded over time. It poses the question of whether the industry's culture has not kept up with the expanding size, making the season harder and longer each year.

Again, there are inconsistencies found amongst the post-harvest companies. Some of the companies appear to be moving in a positive direction towards a culture of wellbeing. However, this is not

consistent with all facilities moving in this direction. As the literature suggests, wellbeing comes from the culture. The interview results back this up. Though there needs to be a change to the culture throughout the industry.

The workplace culture in the kiwifruit post-harvest sector lacks focus on working to individuals' strengths. Contrasting to the literature review, a strength-based culture was not suggested through the interviews with leaders. As the Gallup report defines, a strength-based culture creates self-efficacy and a sense of belonging. The more employees get to use their own strengths, the higher the self-efficacy and personal resilience. A shift in focus towards employees' strengths may help to reduce stress levels of individuals and improve health of employees within the post-harvest sector.

Engagement surveys are a way for leaders to know how their staff are feeling and what their staff are needing. As per Witters (2020), regular engagement surveys play an essential role in developing a culture towards wellbeing. The kiwifruit post-harvest sector needs to be more consistent across the sector. Those who are doing regular (quarterly) engagement surveys are reaping the rewards, as they know where to focus wellbeing strategies. Engagement surveys with a wellbeing focus every three months will allow the company to track trends throughout the year and know how individuals are feeling regarding their wellbeing. This is particularly important as the kiwifruit industry has varying demands throughout the year.

Leadership skills are lacking in the kiwifruit industry. More training and resources need to be put into developing our leaders towards a transformational leadership style. As Sudka *et al* (2016) explained, the transformational leadership style will create the best opportunity to enhance wellbeing of employees. It is empowering, motivating and inspires employees towards achieving goals. It also provides a sense of autonomy, which is associated with wellbeing.

There needs to be more focus on succession planning in the sector. The leaders recognise this to enhance wellbeing, however the industry is not there currently: "Many managers are too involved in the 'doing' and not enabling others around them." As Ali and Mehreen (2019) explained, succession planning plays a significant role in modern organisational culture for improving wellbeing through development opportunities. Contrasting to the literature reviewed, the leaders interviewed saw

succession planning to reduce the job demands for individuals and not just for its developmental opportunities. Succession planning needs to keep up with the demands of the kiwifruit season: "There are no quiet times anymore... it's not just a 3-month season anymore". Plans and policies need to be put in place to start moving towards a sector with better processes around succession planning. This will reduce demands on the leaders of the industry, while also encouraging career and personal development of the employees on the succession plan.

Providing such opportunities associated with succession planning fosters employee engagement and creates autonomy and feelings of competence. Employees can be inspired through contributing to a bigger mission, strengthened through the learning and development opportunities, and feel more connected with the organisation through loyalty, high work morale, and collaboration.

#### Knowledge is power

A theme that has emerged from this research is the importance of education and training. The industry needs to focus more on education within the industry. There is a cross-over of this theme with the above section of 'creating a culture of wellbeing'. Leadership and succession planning can also be considered from an educational aspect. Thus, this section covers the education that is not covered in previous sections.

Wellbeing programmes should be used as an opportunity to educate employees around health promotion and lifestyle choices. It should not be enforced on people. The leaders revealed their differing views about how wellbeing initiatives in the workplace should be addressed. The overall finding is that a wellbeing programme should be used as an educational source. However, it needs to be personalised, targeting specific, identified needs, and align with the business strategy to create a culture focused on wellness. This could include lifestyle, family, and social choices as well as personal health. Ultimately, education to guide behavioural change should be the goal of the programme.

The results of the interviews showed that a lack of personal resilience was considered a barrier to enhancing wellbeing in the sector. Therefore, focusing on developing personal resources may help individuals cope with the extra demands of the kiwifruit season. This can be achieved through a positive culture, transformational leadership styles and through wellbeing programmes.

### A change in the way that we think

With the 2020 world pandemic from Covid 19, many systems and processes were forced to change. Along with this came a new way of thinking, opening many opportunities for increased wellbeing of employees. One of the biggest changes was through a forced flexibility to way we work. The previous mindset did not justify working from home, like it does today.

There are mindsets not conducive towards wellbeing, with one leader stating "People need to harden up and get on with it. If you can't handle the peak season, you shouldn't be in the game." This comment does not reflect a supportive, empowering, or well-being focussed leadership style, nor environment. The industry needs to see a change in mindset from this type of leader, or risk impairing the wellbeing and career drive from others.

Personal resilience can be trained. The results from the interviews were contrasting to the literature, where those interviewees who mentioned resilience implied it was fully up to the individual. Resilience can be trained and programmes and structures within the organisation should be set up to attempt this. It requires a shift in mindset from leaders; from a 'take it as it is' mindset, to a nurturing mindset that develops the people, helping set them up for the future.

#### Conclusion and Recommendations

The expansion of the kiwifruit industry has seen more pressures put on the employees. It is becoming increasingly important to ensure optimal wellbeing of the staff involved in the industry. Enhanced wellbeing results in more productive and engaged employees. Contrasting to this, if employee wellbeing is not prioritised, it will result in higher levels of burnout and health impairments.

The Job- Demands Resources Model is a conceptual framework that can be used to predict employee wellbeing in the kiwifruit post-harvest sector. The model theorises that to have healthy employees there must be the right balance between job demands and resources. Job demands are made up of factors such as workload and work hours. Job resources are factors such as flexible work options, leadership styles and work-life balance. Personal resources are made up of traits such as hope, self-efficacy, optimism, and resilience. The kiwifruit season puts excessive demands on the employees through extended work hours, large workloads and time pressures. The industry needs to focus on increasing the job resources to help balance out the job demands. The industry also needs to focus on developing employees' personal resources through training and development initiatives.

Workload and work hours need to be considered. Where excessive hours are worked out of necessity, due to the seasonal demands, hours in lieu should be given to create an overall work-life balance for the individual. Succession planning may help to reduce the demands on one individual, creating more reasonable job descriptions. More succession planning is needed within the industry.

Work flexibility needs to be increased. Flexibility around hours of work and place of work has been linked to enhanced wellbeing. Flexible work options increase participation in positive lifestyle habits. Flexibility also helps to create better work-life balance, along with higher life satisfaction. Some organisations are already focussing on flexible work options, but this is not consistent across the industry. Where there are opportunities within the role, flexibility should be encouraged, tailoring it to the individual.

Psychological Capital is a personal resource that contributes to job satisfaction and commitment. It positively influences the perceptions of job demands and resources. It includes traits such as self-efficacy, optimism, hope and resilience. More training and development opportunities need to be available within the kiwifruit post-harvest sector to enhance individual's psychological capital. Additionally, the environment and social connections need to be conducive towards developing psychological capital. Managers need to be providing feedback and using a transformational leadership style.

The culture of the company impacts wellbeing. A strength- based culture, created though working to individual employees' strengths should be the aim.

More development and training opportunities are needed for the managers and leaders of the industry. A transformational leadership style has been linked to enhanced employee wellbeing by providing motivation, emotional connection, and a sense of efficacy in employees. The managers in the industry are too involved in the 'doing' and need to create more empowerment of others.

More companies need to use quarterly engagement surveys. Engagement surveys help to highlight how the employees are feeling throughout the year. This is particularly important due to the seasonal nature of the post-harvest sector.

Focus on engagement, and then wellbeing programmes can be of benefit. Wellbeing programmes need to be used to educate about wellbeing and lifestyle choices. Leaders need to encourage participation in wellbeing initiatives. Personal autonomy is linked to wellbeing. When employees are instigating their own goals and activities themselves, or are involved in the process, the wellbeing results are more successful. Personalised programmes are also more successful. Individual facilities should tailor their programmes to the individual and be following up the results with personal accountability.

Finally, a mindset towards wellbeing is needed within the industry. The industry should be encouraging people to make a career from it. However, to do this, it needs to be an industry that people want to work in. An industry that encourages optimal wellbeing of its employees.

#### Limitations

This report is limited by scope and time. There are many different dimensions wellbeing can be considered through. This report only scrapes the surface of some of the opportunities out there.

If time had permitted, it would have been valuable to have interviewed staff in non-leadership positions and in more production-based roles within the sector. This would have broadened the scope for the employees within the post-harvest kiwifruit industry.

The sample size for the leaders was limited. This was due to time and scope. A bigger sample size from more post-harvest facilities would provide more depth and diverse opinions to this research. If time had permitted, it would have been valuable to interview employees and leaders from other

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## **Appendices**

#### **Interview Questions:**

- 1. In your opinion, what are the characteristics of a healthy employee?
- 2. What do you consider the business benefits are of having healthy employees?
- 3. How do you think personal lifestyle choices (e.g. diet, exercise, smoking etc.) can be positively influenced through the workplace?
- 4a. Does your workplace have a dedicated wellbeing programme to help benefit the personal wellbeing of the employees?
  - 4b. If so, what does this programme entail?
- 5. How does the culture at your workplace influence personal wellbeing? (promote or inhibit)
- 6a. With the demands of the kiwifruit season, what are some of the habits you have created for your own personal wellbeing?
  - 6b. Does your workplace support these habits?
- 7. How do you think the kiwifruit post- harvest sector could further help to enhance personal wellbeing for employees?
- 8. What do you think some of the barriers are for enhancing employee personal wellbeing?
- 9. Do you have any further comments or observations about personal wellbeing within the kiwifruit industry?

How long have you been working in the kiwifruit industry?