

RURAL GUARDIAN

South Island wide 

FEBRUARY 2023 EDITION

EVERY FARM IN THE SOUTH ISLAND



THERE'S MUCH TO DO P16-17



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BUMPY RIDE AHEAD P13-14

IS HIPKINS THE FARMING ANSWER?

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It's over to you, Chippy

He's fresh-faced, loves sausage rolls, often bikes an hour-plus to Parliament and everyone knows him as Chippy.

He's new Prime Minister Chris Hipkins, who will be watched closely by the rural sector to see what unfolds in his early days in power in the post Jacinda Ardern era.

Because one thing we do know is that Hipkins is certainly no Ardern, who may well still be New Zealand's most popular politician with international star power appeal, but who had become increasingly polarising domestically. Ardern's resignation, on the back of poll results showing her and Labour's approval rating steadily dropping, was probably not the surprise many have thought.

So now it's the turn of Hipkins, who has been highly regarded as Labour's "Mr Fix-it" for taking on some of the hardest roles and portfolios with a quiet, calm demeanour but a steeliness and the ability to get stuff done.

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Our new Prime Minister, Chris Hipkins. Farmers will be watching him with much interest.

and a-bit years. Think the education and police portfolios on top of that, the latter of which he took over from the underwhelming Poto Williams.

Importantly, Hipkins, the PM, has already indicated changes are afoot. A cabinet

reshuffle was always to be expected but a key early comment since becoming PM was his promise that he would review some policies. And what policies would they be? Who knows but the hard-hit farming sector,

and rural communities by association, will be watching with much interest. They've been rightly frustrated and alarmed by what they say have been unworkable compliance, regulatory costs and policies introduced by the Ardern Government. But will there be any changes? There has to be if Labour wants to remain in power. That's the bottom line and Hipkins is smart enough to realise that to try and win back some of the love to stop the Labour Party bleeding. It won't be easy because Ardern's move has a history-repeating-itself political feel, paralleling very much with the equally shock resignation by PM Sir John Key in 2016. Back then, Key thought a fresh leadership change would increase National's chances in the following year's election. Nice idea but the strategy bombed big time. National was steamrolled, plunging into a massive black political hole from which it is only just emerging.

Now Chippy is going to have to use all his smarts and boyish persuasive charms, starting with the agricultural industry, if he and Labour are not to follow suit.

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A rural outlook – what lies ahead for the farming community

As the productive season for South Island farms goes into overdrive with harvest, spring lamb sales and the meat processing season getting underway, stress and anxiety are understandably exacerbated at this time of year in our rural communities. There aren't many businesses in the world that can survive on a couple of pay-cheques a year. With both the weather and international markets playing havoc on prices, it's little wonder some farmers' jaws are set a little more tightly than normal. Nicola Grigg, the National Party's associate spokesperson for primary production and rural communities, shares her views on what lies ahead for the rural sector.

No matter where my life and political career take me, I will always see myself as a sheep and beef farmer's daughter. My adult life has somehow landed me as the National party's associate spokesperson for primary production and

the spokesperson for rural communities. It's through that lens, that I pen the following thoughts. I firmly believe the primary production sector is the most valuable, innovative, and exciting sector of the New Zealand economy. I have lived and breathed farming my entire

life and I want to be a part of a government that empowers and enhances that value and innovation. It is very clear that, in recent years, government policy has done nothing but depower and disenfranchise our farming sector - and that must stop.

Continued on P4

FARMERS' THOUGHTS – YOUR VIEW

Tell us what you see as the top issues, challenges or even opportunities that face farmers in 2023? Share your ideas and concerns
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Nicola Grigg



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From P3

It is time for New Zealand to start looking for opportunities to grow rural communities and farm productivity through reduced regulation, enhanced trade partnerships, increased water storage, exploration of genetic engineering technologies, and better rural infrastructure such as roading and connectivity. With a little bit of good luck and a hell of a lot of hard work, National might form a government late this year. If we can do that, I view both the aforementioned - and the following - as priority issues to be addressed now and into the future:

1. Climate Change and taxing agricultural emissions

Let's be clear. Any government policy around taxing agricultural emissions must acknowledge that New Zealand livestock farmers are the most efficient in the world at producing low carbon footprint meat, milk, crops, and fibres.

Any tax on livestock emissions must focus on incentivising cost-effective mitigation technology (when



Nicola Grigg is the National Party's associate spokesperson for primary production and rural communities.

it arrives), rather than simply driving down production and

leading to increased emissions offshore. This would match the

Paris Agreement principles of reducing global emissions

without reducing global food production.



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The current reduction target for livestock methane that has been proposed by the Labour government goes beyond what is needed and is unachievable without huge disruption to farmers – particularly sheep and beef farmers. Achieving the Government’s 10 per cent reduction by 2030 would see over a 20 per cent reduction in sheep and beef production and 5 per cent reduction in dairy production.

This is unacceptable. It will simply rip the guts out of rural communities and won’t reduce global emissions, as competing countries with higher carbon footprints will fill the production gap.

Our bottom line is that, before a tax or levy is applied to agricultural emissions, the methane target must be based on sound science. Recent scientific work concludes that a target of a 10 per cent cut by 2050 (not 2030) would mean NZ’s livestock methane emissions are no longer contributing to global warming.

2. Unworkable freshwater rules

As predicted at the time by farmers across the South Island, much of the ‘Essential Freshwater’ package the Government passed in mid-2020 has proven to be unworkable.

We are still waiting to see the new framework for farm



Land purchased for conversion to forestry has jumped from just 7,000 hectares in 2017 to over 50,000 hectares in 2021.

environment plans that were aimed at providing farmers with a simpler, tailor-made pathway as an alternative to a consent. But the extraordinary delays in this have resulted in unnecessarily stringent national winter grazing requirements, which are catching out many more farmers than was originally intended.

Officials have had two failed attempts at producing workable national stock exclusion

regulations. In the meantime, national rules have become redundant as regional councils have largely put rules in place themselves.

A big focus over the next 12 months for us will be to ensure the Government produces a workable framework for certified freshwater farm plans.

Sector-led farm environment plans have proven a great tool that can allow farmers to make sensible decisions on

how to improve environmental management on their own farm, in contrast to one-size-fits-all regulations.

3. Rebalancing forestry

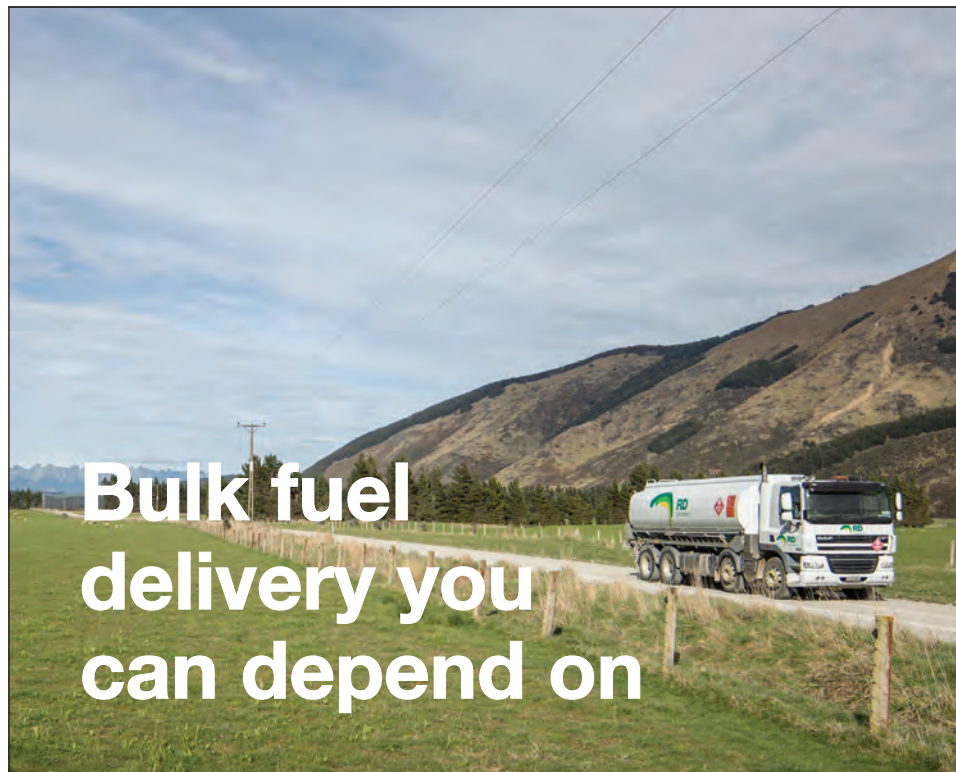
It is a fairly safe assessment that farmers, not government, are best placed to decide what their land is best used for.

Forestry has a long history within New Zealand’s productive landscapes, with forestry exports roughly similar to total horticulture exports.

Forestry will always continue to be an important land use for New Zealand.

However, government policy - in particular a high reliance on carbon credits for forestry, has shifted the landscape to the point where forestry economics often far out-compete pastoral farming. This isn’t a market driven change, but a government-driven change.

Continued on P6



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From P5

This has seen land purchased for conversion to forestry jump from just 7,000 hectares in 2017 to over 50,000 hectares in 2021.

Many New Zealanders rightly worry this will see loss of jobs and population from rural communities.

It is essential a future government works immediately to rebalance climate change rules to slow the current forestry 'gold rush'. We want to avoid a situation where abrupt policy changes are made in the future and communities are left high and dry.

4. Labour shortages

Farmers across the country are telling us that finding good employees is the biggest challenge they face right now – even though they are offering good pay and conditions.

Constantly changing employment law and low unemployment is making it extra tough to find reliable farm staff in every sector. A bundle of new employment requirements to meet, with additional sick leave, compulsory income insurance, Fair Pay Agreements, additional public holidays and increasing minimum and median wages are all either in force, or about to come.

During the pandemic and border closures, National supported calls for visa renewals and residency for



Finding good employees is one of the biggest problems across the country for farmers currently.

international staff in New Zealand, as well as border exemptions for dairy farm staff, shearers, ag machine operators and pregnancy scanners to enter the country. International workers are now available through the new Accredited Employer Work Visas (AEWV) but with high hourly rates of pay, increasing again to \$29.66 in 2023. A future government

must focus on designing an attractive and effective tertiary education system to bring talented young Kiwis into the primary industries.

5. Resource management reform

Over the last 30 years rules under the Resource Management Act (RMA) have increasingly determined how Kiwis can run their farms.

The Government has released draft legislation to replace the RMA. While it looks as though the new legislation may make it easier for urban activities the new law will, without doubt, make it harder to farm in New Zealand.

The new legislation will strip away local decision making, cutting rural communities out from inputting into

environmental rules and regulations. National believes in devolution and placing resource management power in local hands – for example, on a catchment-by-catchment basis. It is our intention to ensure regional and district plans are fit for purpose, enabling farmers and growers to both prosper and be environmentally responsible.

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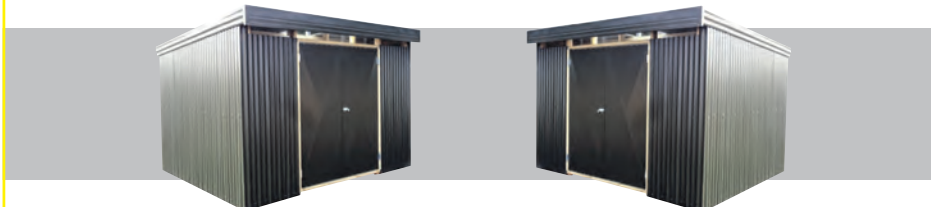
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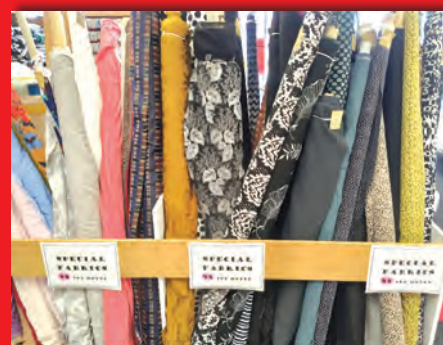
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Allan Andrews records an impressive life of rural service

If you've been a Canterbury farmer, rural politician, district councillor and bus driver, you have a lot to write about.

But the idea of recording his memoirs didn't occur to Allan Andrews until a regular passenger on one of his buses, mentioned it.

Allan and his wife, Janette, had moved from their 240 hectare farm at Glenavy in South Canterbury to a lifestyle property at Geraldine where Allan ran 100 sheep on rolling countryside.

Due to age and health issues, he'd reluctantly sold the family farm and moved north to where he could pursue other interests such as Federated Farmers and local government.

But he needed something else to do besides shepherding his 100 sheep. Assembling hay rakes and mowers for Chris Paddon, father of rally car driver Hayden Paddon, wasn't enough. Allan had time on his hands.

He had a chance meeting with a friend, Tony Cameron, who accused him of being "that Tory bastard who looks after



Allan Andrews has been an enthusiastic bus driver for 20 years.

farming interests for South Canterbury."

Allan admitted he was and then Tony, also known as Postie

Pat, said "you've got a heavy driver's licence. Would you be interested in driving buses?" Cameron just happened to

have one with him, manoeuvred Allan into the driver's seat and told him to trundle round the block.

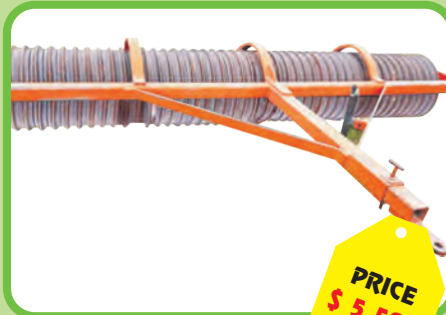
"I did as I was told, drove around Geraldine, liked the feel of the bus and agreed to drive for Ritchie's," he said.

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A new chapter in Allan's career had begun. "I enjoyed meeting people and, when I was offered the contract of picking up Geraldine High students and driving them to school, I agreed," he said.

"I loved the experience from 2003 until 2017 when we purchased a lifestyle block at Elgin, about four kilometres from Ashburton."

Bus driving gave Allan his first opportunity to deal with secondary school students. They weren't like sheep.

"I discovered how to get through to the unruly ones. I had a chat and told them what I expected of them," he said. "That included not wrecking the bus, eating food on the way to and from school or fighting each other, and they listened to me."

He'd been driving for 10 years when a regular student, Hannah Leech, became fascinated with Allan's story of farming on dry, non-irrigated land, his ordeal as a cancer survivor, his advocacy role with federated farmers and his profile as a member of Timaru District Council.

"Why don't you write a book about your life and I'll help you with it," she said. Hannah was in her final year at Geraldine High but was going to enjoy a gap year before studying at Canterbury University.

She had the time and so did Allan. "Hannah gave me the



Now he's downsized his property he can return to the keyboard which he enjoys.

confidence to write it and offered to input my copy and edit the book for me," Allan said.

He found the time and so did Hannah. "I wrote long hand and she edited it. I could write hours at a time. Once I focussed, it was quite easy," he said.

Allan soon realised he had a story to tell and, if he didn't record the history of his farming family, it would be lost. "I dedicated the book to my brother, Lyndsay, who died of leukaemia, aged 21."

Allan was born in Glenavy in 1944 and inherited the farm from his parents. It ran sheep and times were tough. There was no irrigation. But lambing 1,500 ewes was Allan's life and he was a fit and enthusiastic farmer until diagnosed with cancer.

He was fishing at Waitaki when he felt a lump under my arm. Allan realised something was seriously wrong and made an appointment to see his doctor. He was diagnosed with non-Hodgkins acute lymphoma

and given a five percent chance of recovery.

For the next eight months he went through a tough period. Every two days in 12 he travelled to Christchurch Hospital to receive chemotherapy but was determined to survive and continue farming.

At the end of chemotherapy he endured three weeks of radium treatment to prevent brain cancer.

"It did me in for the whole of

that year. I became increasingly sick with the treatment but I refused to return to hospital. I was going to live and die on the farm," he said.

"The cancer was like a bush fire in my body yet I recovered."

During that time Janette and her niece, Rachel, ran the farm and, by 1989, Allan had recovered enough to help out.

"I wasn't physically strong but I could drive a tractor and do light work," he said. "I was in remission but was kept under surveillance for five years."

Every fortnight Allan was checked at Timaru Hospital, then once a month which became once every three months. By 1993 he met with his oncologist, Dr Fitzharris, and was told to stand up, lift both arms and legs, walk around the room and run on the spot.

"I so impressed him, he told me he didn't need to see me again," Allan said.

However he never quite returned to his former self and, when Sir Peter Elworthy bought the property next door, it set off a sequence of events that saw Allan and Janette sell the family farm and move to 16 hectares at the back of Geraldine.

"My mother, then living in a rest home, told me to let go of the family property. We did and negotiated a good price," he said. "We sold it with a handshake."

Continued on P10

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Continued From P9

By then Allan had extended his influence by becoming chairman of the Waimate branch of Federated Farmers.

"I had an early interest in farming politics. I saw farmers being trampled on by political parties and had some strong views. I crusaded for the need for irrigation and the necessity to get water out of Canterbury rivers," he said.

"It made no sense to see such a quantity of water flow into the sea."

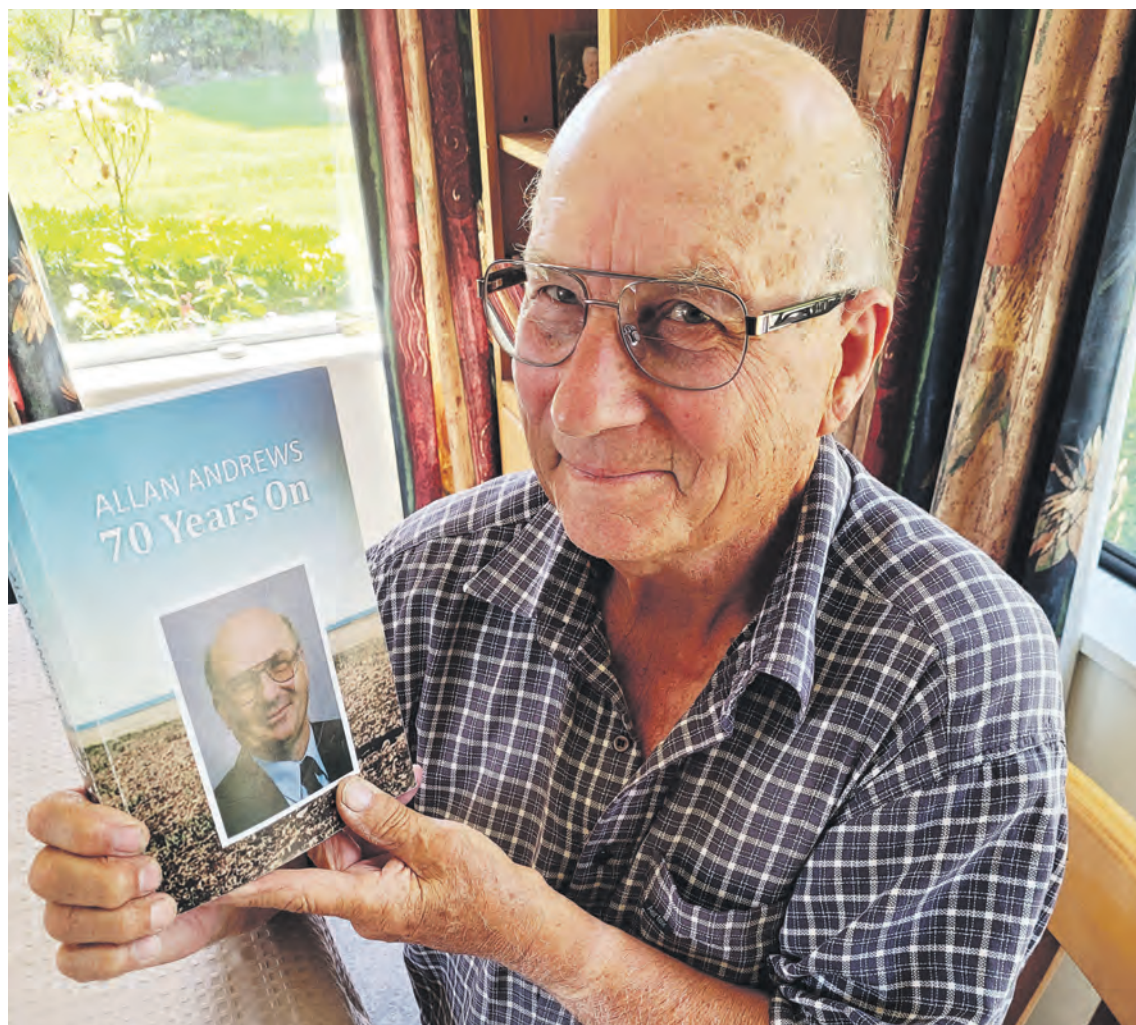
Allan had seen the years when his parents battled to keep the farm viable, going through a cycle of droughts and a lack of rainfall.

"I presented a case for harnessing water to irrigate land, making it secure to grow crops and provide winter feed for stock," he added.

In 1996 he became president of South Canterbury Federated Farmers, a position he held for six years. I saw it as an avenue to present the political side of farming and advocate for them," he said.

Allan and Janette moved to Geraldine early this century but his advocacy for the rural sector didn't end there. He was a member of the South Canterbury Power Trust for nine years and a Timaru District Councillor from 2004-2007.

Then another chapter in



Allan is grateful he was encouraged to write his memoirs, Allan Andrews: 70 Years on.

Allan and Janette's life took place in 2017. Geraldine suffered from hard frosts and, when Allan slid while opening a gate on his hill country

property, he decided it was time to buy a place on the flat.

"The hills were getting to me," he said.

One weekend they drove to

Ashburton and were attracted to their present property in Elgin about four kilometres towards the coast.

It was landscaped with trees,

had several sheds, land where they could graze 60 Romney and an area set aside for Ritchie's buses.

Allan had enjoyed bus driving so much, he didn't want to give it up so he provided a space where buses could be parked.

"I'm now a casual charter driver with a responsibility from North Canterbury to Oamaru," he said. "I've been given Bertha, a big Volvo bus, and I'm really enjoying it."

Allan has never forgotten the care he received from medical people who helped him survive his bout of cancer.

Last year he raised \$3,170 for Cancer Society Mid Canterbury by taking a party of seniors to his favourite haunts in North Otago. He's been asked to do it again in 2023 and he's seriously thinking about it.

His book – Allan Andrews: 70 Years on – isn't just a record of his life. It too has been a fundraiser. He's donated \$5 to the cancer society for every book sold and, at last purchase, he's raised \$1,200.

"When I had my treatment everything was laid on for me. I owe them a debt of gratitude," he said.

"When I see other sufferers, raising funds is always in my mind."

– **By Malcolm Hopwood**
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Farmers in danger of losing arable crops due to labour shortage

Crops could be lost if local farmers can't get casual labour to remove contaminants from the harvest.

AgStaff, a recruitment agency, based in Ashburton, Christchurch and Timaru, needs 60 agricultural labourers by the end of the month to meet demand in Mid Canterbury.

Local manager, Donna McCaskill, said she's feeling the pressure to find casual labourers to meet 15 clients who need them urgently for a range of farm jobs.

"At the moment farmers require staff to help remove contaminated seeds from the main wheat or barley crops," she said. "We run the risk of clients losing them if this roguing work isn't done because the crop won't pass inspection."

McCaskill said the same applies to fodder beet grown for winter feed for cattle. "If contaminants aren't removed, cattle can suffer bloat."

Other farm work includes harvesting potatoes and onions.

Traditionally farmers have relied on backpackers or students to meet the short term

demand but McCaskill said they "aren't around this year."

"Students have the pick of hospitality jobs in town," she said.

AgStaff, which has been operating for the last 20 years, has advertised online, through social media, newspapers and word of mouth, but with little response.

"Backpackers aren't travelling this year for a range of reasons," she said. "While we're getting repeat business from individuals and families who loyally return annually, they aren't enough."

"Our clients have been giving us as much notice as possible so we can recruit people. They just aren't about."

McCaskill said the agricultural industry is tough on farmers at the moment with unpredictable crops due to erratic weather patterns and a lack of available staff.

"It's really stressful when there's work available but we can't find the people to fill the vacancies," she said.

- By Malcom Hopwood
malcom.h@theguardian.co.nz



AgStaff manager, Donna McCaskill said farmers are facing the risk of losing crops if staff can't be found to undertake a range of jobs leading up to harvest. PHOTO: DONNA MCCASKILL

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Adam Whitelock

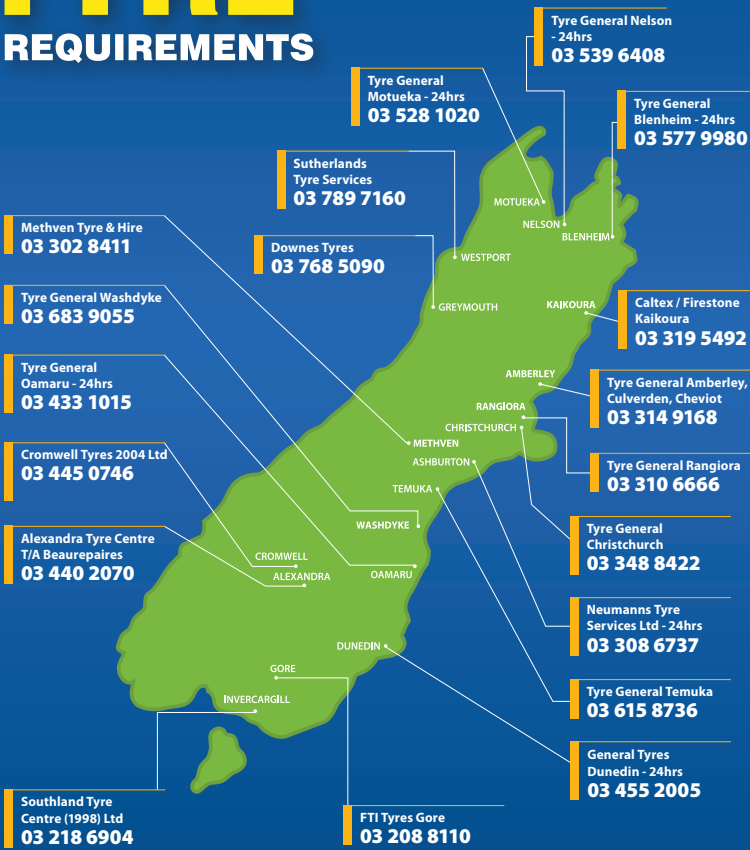
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There's a bumpy ride ahead



David Clark says that defending the position the rural community finds themselves in will be an unenviable task.

Now that we are over the whole "Happy New Year" thing, the realities of the year ahead are starting to sink in, my prediction is for a very bumpy ride for both rural and urban folk alike.

At the time of writing, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern has announced her resignation. I was not the slightest bit surprised, but it has been an earthquake to the

political year ahead as we go into an election year.

As we go forward, it is with considerable headwinds, interest rates are rising rapidly, it is arguable whether they are rising unprecedentedly, or simply returning to their long-run average. I guess your own level of debt, or perception of risk will dictate your view either way.

When we all take part in the 2023 Census, we all count.

Tuesday 7 March is our chance to represent ourselves, our families, whānau, communities and cultures. Census gives us the power to create change that benefits all of us; in our lives, towns, schools, hospitals and streets. Learn more at www.census.govt.nz

**All of us count
Tatau tātou**

Census | StatsNZ

Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government

The rise in interest rates is going to impact home, business and farm owners alike. Whether that be \$300 per week on a family mortgage, or an extra \$30,000 or \$50,000 per month interest costs for a farmer compared to a year ago, it will directly impact the discretionary money they have to spend on personal or business items.

Internationally we are starting to see commodity prices fall, lamb is tanking and beef falling, the wool industry is a pitiful disgrace, so nothing new there, international seed prices are softening and dairy has weakened, but is now holding. The golden run of commodities that has paid New Zealand's bills for the last few years is losing its shine. Input costs show no sign of falling back so profitability is going to take a brutal hit.

We are incredibly lucky, both as a country and here in the Ashburton County that the dairy price has remained so high. This makes its way eventually into virtually every pay packet in the country.

But as we shake off the impacts of Covid, how ready are we to rebound? How fit for purpose is our legislative framework? What is the quality of the Government spend?

We have borrowed tens of billions of dollars over the last three years. What do



Unachievable freshwater standards will cost millions to regulate with no benefit to the environment.

PHOTOS: FRESHWATER STANDARDS

we actually have to show for it? We have funded a lot of pet projects, we have dished out money in a manner that wouldn't pass the normal rigours of the Treasury or Select Committee processes.

We are going down a divisive regulatory path that I don't believe will see our nation on a path to future prosperity.

Taxing our primary producers for the emission of cyclical gas; setting

unachievable Freshwater Standards that will cost hundreds of millions to regulate with no benefit to the environment; centralising the health system in a radical and rushed re-structure; taking infrastructure assets from local councils to place them in a centralised structure with un-elected governance while leaving local communities financially liable for any debt default; all the while throwing

money at all manner of social and cultural projects are all issues that are eroding our global competitiveness.

Where we really get ourselves in strife is if the NZ economy turns sour first in the world, currently the NZ Dollar is being supported by our comparatively higher interest rates and favourable export earnings. But if our economy goes into recession, and the Reserve Bank finds itself in

the unfortunate position of being the first in the world to cut interest rates, the NZD will crash in value which will make everything more expensive, thus quickening the slowdown.

It will be very interesting to see who takes the reigns as our new Prime Minister, we will know by the time you read this. Defending the position we find ourselves in during an election campaign will be an unenviable task.

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Neighbours at war as stockwater race row divides

It's not quite neighbours at war but a contentious stockwater race has divided a small corner of Canterbury.

The Ashburton District Council declined an application to close the section of stockwater in the Anama area, near Mayfield, for now.

It resolved to form a focus group to seek alternative options for supplying stockwater to properties, and that a closure will be reviewed in 18 months.

The proposed closure affects 20 properties and had an even nine-nine split over the closure, and two that abstained.

The application took the rare step of going to a hearing where the councillors faced a difficult decision as either way, half the property owners were going to be frustrated.

The council opted not to leave properties without access to a stock water supply but at the same time issued notice that those property owners need to consider alternative options as the council's long-term direction is closing stockwater races.

Councillor Russell Ellis said

he is not always a big fan of compromises but "in this case, this was the best solution".

"Moving forward once there is an alternative we will then close another section of our stockwater race network."

At the hearing deliberations, Councillor Richard Wilson described it as an impossible decision.

"The right decision is to close the water race in the long term...but in the short term we have several submitters that have no water."

Wilson was in favour of the closure but he said it can't close right now as the alternative options hadn't been fully investigated.

Mayor Neil Brown suggested a focus group be formed to work on possible alternative supplies and to review the closure in 18 months, around May 2024.

Representatives for 10 affected properties presented at a hearing where several factors were raised by the opposing sides causing some contradictions, such as if the race was a prevention of or cause for flooding.



An application to close a section of stockwater race has caused division.

PHOTOS: STOCKWATER-RACE

The water quality of the race was called into question multiple times, as was if it is an inefficient way of delivering water.

But the cost was the big factor, in keeping the race and closing it.

Alistair Morrison was the applicant requesting the closure and summed up the division as a case of the haves and have-nots.

"The people that don't want the water race have got reliable

wells and good water supply. The people objecting to the water race closing don't seem to have a good water supply," Morrison said.

He has fenced the race off on his property and doesn't use it but still has to pay a stock water rate.

He wants to take the fences down, fill it in, and farm the land.

"Every bit of land is valuable and we can't afford to have land

taken up by poor quality water.

"People need to spend a little bit more money and get their own water supply rather than relying on other people."

Two alternative options were identified but as the initial recommendation was not to close the race there was no substantial analysis undertaken, but that will now be for the focus group to undertake.

The RDR is considered as an alternative supply option but will require investigation to determine the exact costs for installing the necessary control gates, valves, and flow metres for such supply which the council has roughly estimated at least \$50,000, plus the additional cost to pipe it to properties.

Barrhill Chertsey Irrigation (BCI) does not have any network located within the closure area but does have the nearby Cavendish pond and a piped supply would be the only option at a significant cost.

– **By Jonathan Leask**
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Dairy Focus

FEBRUARY 2023 EDITION



THERE'S A LOT TO BE DONE

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POWER FARMING

Power Farming Ashburton

A to-do list of jobs to tackle in 2023 from DairyNZ boss

The year's off to a busy (and wet) start for Dr Tim Mackle, but the chief executive of DairyNZ is not complaining.

Heavy rain in the Waikato region meant Mackle headed back to work four days early.

"At the end of the day when you're in the dairy – or any farming game – rain at this time of year is pretty jolly good," he told The Country's Rowena Duncum.

However, the weather means different things to different farmers.

"Bizarre" conditions had been affecting both the North and South Islands recently, and Mackle said DairyNZ staff was on the ground offering support where they could.

On a personal note, the wet weather came in handy on the home front.

"My wife normally has this massive list of jobs [for me to complete] so conveniently I couldn't get them all done."

This is because Mackle also has a large DairyNZ to-do list for 2023 and helping farmers deal with adverse weather is only one big issue

of many to tackle.

He said the general election coming up this year brought uncertainty for the dairy industry.

"Some of it will be more of the same but I think with the election year there are quite a few unknowns around how different groups are going to act, and particularly towards dairy.

"Whether they're NGOs or political parties – we haven't seen their major policies on ag, let alone dairy, come through yet."

Regulation was another concern.

"Some things are still bubbling away; we've got emissions pricing ... select committee process at some stage, I don't know how much we'll get nailed down before the election, frankly."

Mackle said that the Essential Freshwater programme was also top of mind for many farmers, as all regional councils were required to have plans notified by the end of 2024.

"So there's going to be a lot



DairyNZ chief executive, Dr Tim Mackle says there are many issues to be tackled during 2023.

of activity this year and next year in that space."

DairyNZ, along with other groups such as Federated Farmers and Beef + Lamb NZ, was working with councils to support farmers, Mackle said.

"Those plans are going to be quite important and it's not all about emissions pricing, a lot of this is going to be about water as well."

Aside from the weather, regulations and politics, the



This year's general election brings uncertainty for the dairy industry.

next item on DairyNZ's list was finding a solution to the industry's staffing shortage. Mackle spoke to a few

farmers who had struggled over the festive period, trying to balance their team's break with their own.

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“There wasn’t really the time off for some of them this Christmas because they were doing it tough and sending staff off for holidays.”

A focus on immigration and programmes such as Go Dairy was a step in the right direction to tackle this issue, Mackle said.

If that wasn’t enough; inflation was still pushing up on-farm costs, interest rates were rising and the milk price remained uncertain, he said.

“We at DairyNZ are going to be quite focused on that challenge of how do you etch out every dollar you can – and do all those other things as well.”

On the bright side, there was one item Mackle was looking forward to on this year’s to-do list – reconnecting with farmers at in-person events.

“Whether it be through our field team, through bringing our scientists out on the road through our farmers’ forums ... that’s going to be more future-focussed and it’s going to be more positive too.”

“That is our number one priority at DairyNZ – reconnecting well with farmers in a way that suits them and adds value to them and their farming businesses.”



The Essential Freshwater programme will require a lot of attention and activity during the year.

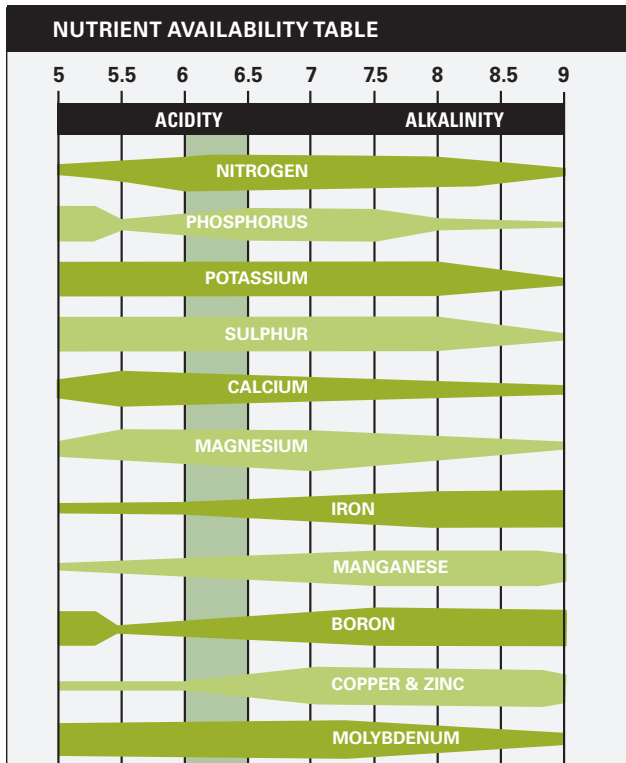
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Your soil’s pH is one of the key drivers in making nutrients available to the plant. With a pH that is too low (< 5.5) trace minerals such as Aluminum become available which can heavily diminish growth or even kill crops. While the general consensus is that a pH of 5.5-5.8 is ‘good enough’, the science just doesn’t back this up.

“One aspect that has baffled us for years, is the apparent disconnect between fertiliser application and the availability or efficiency of the very nutrient being applied due to soil acidity.”

Almost every element of a fertiliser is represented in the nutrient availability table. When you are spending good money on fertiliser, you should be concerned if your advisors aren’t ensuring that the nutrient you are applying is at, or near, maximum availability. If they are not, you need to ask yourself why not? Maybe they have a vested interest in selling more fertiliser? One of the fastest ways to

The absolute building blocks for growth such as Nitrogen, Phosphorus, Potassium, Calcium, Sulphur and Magnesium, are not even close to their peak availability at a pH of 5.5 as shown in the table below. As you can see a pH at 5.5 seems inefficient and illogical. However, a pH between 6 and 6.5 increases availability exponentially and even starts peaking across many nutrients.

neutralise soil acidity and increase pH is to apply lime. Liming is relatively cheap, especially when you consider that a shift in pH could potentially double the efficiency of a fertiliser in both the short and long term. The fertiliser efficiency table indicates this point and goes some way to show how a capital investment in lime may affect your overall and ongoing annual fertiliser spend.

FERTILISER EFFICIENCY AT VARIOUS SOIL PH VALUES

Soil pH	N Efficiency	P Efficiency	K Efficiency	Overall Fertilizer Efficiency
pH = 6.5	95%	63%	100%	86%
pH = 6.0	89%	52%	100%	80%
pH = 5.5	77%	48%	77%	67%
pH = 5.0	53%	34%	52%	56%

vanRoestel, J. (2014, March). The Value of Maintaining a Good soil pH.

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As a rule of thumb 1 tonne/ha of high quality Aglime will raise the pH by 0.1 pH unit. Therefore a 6 tonne/ha application is required to increase the pH from 5.7 to 6.3. To maintain the optimum pH of 6.2-6.5, maintenance applications of at least 500kg per annum will be required. The above rates are based on high quality Aglime – that means a lime equivalency or ‘as delivered’ Calcium Carbonate content of 90% or greater. The particle size should meet New Zealand Aglime standards of 50% passing 0.5mm and no more than 10% passing 2mm to

allow good even spreading and consistent long term release into the soil. Consider solubility and ensure you are dealing with a limestone resource that has been proven to lift pH as expected. Talk to a few neighbours, they will know the history. Keep in mind that many lime companies can create specific lime and fertiliser/mineral blends prior to dispatch to make your annual applications even more cost effective.

SOIL PH TESTING

It is vital that you have a comprehensive soil test done prior to any fertiliser application to show what other trace minerals are present. Talk to your specialist lime company today.

Confirmed M.Bovis properties continue to decrease

BY THE NUMBERS

- Five current infected properties (278 since M.bovis was found).
- 3 million tests have been completed.
- \$233.4 million has been paid out to farmers in compensation.
- More than 179,000 cows have been culled.
- In the past year, fewer than 2 per cent of farms with bulk milk tank detects have gone positive.
- The cost of the Programme, as at 30 June 2022, is \$588m.

The Mycoplasma bovis Programme, led in partnership with MPI, DairyNZ and Beef + Lamb New Zealand, continues to make good progress towards the eradication of the disease from New Zealand.

All properties in the high-risk area in Wakanui, which is under a Controlled Area Notice (CAN), have now been cleared of cattle. Testing will be underway shortly on the properties in the surrounding area. The CAN is on track to be lifted in mid-March.

The number of active

confirmed properties has decreased this week with two properties now cleared of M. bovis and preparing to return to farming without restrictions. There is one new farm infected with M. bovis which has well-established links to another already infected property.

“This brings the current number of Confirmed Properties to five (compared to 40 at the height of the outbreak), and we expect all of these farms to be cleared within the first half of 2023,” said M. bovis programme director



M. Bovis programme director, Simon Andrew.

Simon Andrew.

“While this progress is great news for farmers, there is still work to be done before New Zealand can transition to the next stage of the eradication

effort which will primarily focus on Bulk Tank Milk, and Beef and Drystock Cattle surveillance.

“Over time, this will provide us with the necessary

information for us to be confident the country is absent of the disease. It is expected that more infected properties may be identified before this shift.”

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The new confirmed infected farm is a dairy grazing operation in Banks Peninsula, and it is linked through ownership and animal movements to a Confirmed Property in the Wakanui area.

“We are working closely with the farmer to depopulate the new confirmed property as quickly as possible before the milking season to minimise the disruption to the farmer’s business.”

Andrew said as well as the progress made towards clearing the Wakanui area of infection, the investigation into the second strain identified from a Confirmed Property in Canterbury in October 2022 is ongoing.

“This includes testing semen and tracing all forward and back traces on and off the infected farm. To date none has been found on any farm that supplied the infected property with cattle, nor on properties that received cattle from this farm.”

“It is possible we will continue to find animals with infection as we continue to move to long term surveillance, so it is just as important as ever that farmers record their animal movements in the NAIT system.”

Andrew said the Programme continues to find instances of poor NAIT practices, which is disappointing.

“When a person in charge of animals fails their NAIT obligations, they potentially put the whole sector at risk and slow our efforts to successfully eradicate this disease.”

“Good NAIT records mean we can trace animal movements a lot faster, which in turn reduces the residual risk of infection and protects what we’ve all achieved to date.

“We thank farmers and our sector partners for their continued support as we work toward eradication,” Andrew said.



The number of properties with active confirmed cases of M.Bovis continue to decline.



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Japanese students to get taste of farming in Canterbury

In February a group of Japanese students will make their way to Canterbury for a farm stay experience.

The students, five male and 13 female from Tokyo University of Agriculture and Technology will spend a few days at Lincoln University, then onto a 10 day farm experience in the greater Rakaia area.

NZ Study Careers, New Zealand team manager Jo Taylor said it will be a great chance for the students to learn about farming in New Zealand.

"In Japan the farms are much smaller so there are fewer opportunities for these students, but there is still the same amount of interest in agriculture studies," Taylor said.

In Japan a big farm would be considered 200 cows, much smaller than the average New Zealand farm size.

While the students are studying at the university, they are in a range of disciplines, not all directly related to being on farm, with some vets, and

technology students.

"These students will not be on the farm as workers more as observers. They are able to assist and join in, but their main focus should be more on learning and observing the farm life and culture."

This will be the first time NZ Study Careers will be running a farm stay experience having previously bought in students to Rolleston High School as part of a school exchange.

NZ Study Careers is part of the Black Origin Group, which exports high quality Wagyu from farms across New Zealand to the international market which started with Japan in 2019.

"Our director (Arato Tsujino) is Japanese and he has a strong interest in education and bringing Japanese students and workers to New Zealand for training," Taylor said.

"We'd like to think that once the students have completed the farm stays they may consider coming back to New Zealand to work one day"

Taylor said once they get this first program done they will have a much better idea of anything that needs improving or changing in the future. With the plan to bring more students and some workers into New Zealand potentially for much longer time periods.

Farms can be of any size and type – dairy, sheep, cropping, market gardening etc. and hosts can accommodate 1-3 students (in separate bedrooms) as suitable. Location can be anywhere in the Selwyn area, if hosts can pick up and drop off students in the Rakaia township

Want more information, or to register interest, please contact us at info@nzstudycareers.com or call Jo on 0272714066 (please leave a message if no answer and we will reply asap). Please note that all farm-stay hosts will be interviewed prior to make sure we match the students with suitable and compatible hosts.

– By Daniel Alvey



NZ Study Careers, New Zealand team manager Jo Taylor and director Natsuko Saito are looking forward to the arrival of farm stay students from Japan.

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Robot technology may be the answer to disease control

New robot technology may be the answer to catching exotic diseases in animals.

Biosecurity New Zealand Animal Health Laboratory has a new machine that will improve the testing and accuracy for diseases such as M bovis or foot and mouth disease.

The \$580,000 new high throughput diagnostic robot is the first of its kind in New Zealand and will increase testing accuracy and consistency during future biosecurity responses.

“The Mycoplasma bovis outbreak gave us useful insights into how our laboratory could increase its capacity during a response. In particular, it highlighted the need for automation,” Animal Health Laboratory manager Joseph O’Keefe said.

“If an exotic disease such as foot- and-mouth disease (FMD) arrived here, our people could need to test some 3000 up to 7000 samples a day.

“Automating this process will speed our delivery of results, making the whole process



The Animal Health Laboratory said the M Bovis outbreak highlighted the need for laboratory automation.

faster for farmers, better for the wellbeing of our people and for the animals involved too.”

The Explorer G3 workstation was manufactured in Germany and is designed to test up to 7000 samples per day for antibodies to FMD and other

exotic diseases.

O’Keefe said the robot doesn’t need frequent attention or intervention, freeing Animal Health Laboratory staff for other testing and providing stability throughout intense response periods.

The robot can even run tests overnight without staff present.

“Testing delays can affect our economy as antibody testing is essential for maintaining the access and security of product exports to New Zealand’s international markets.

“If there is an exotic disease outbreak in New Zealand’s animals, automation will allow us to recover faster.”

The 750kg robot took a week to set up, with each part being brought safely into the biosecure containment area.

Once it was assembled, the team ran it through stringent testing and calibration to ensure the tests were as accurate as the current manual process.

Now that this has been confirmed, the robot has begun day-to-day diagnostic testing.

The machine achieves its efficiency through moving test plates around.

Each plate can contain approximately 90 samples and the robot manages up to 40 plates at once.

Simultaneously it adds samples and different reagents, washes and incubates the test plates.

Outside of responses, the robot is used to perform antibody tests for surveillance programmes, and for testing groups of animals for import or export purposes.

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Taxing Kiwi producers is a bad idea for both farmers and food prices

There are sound reasons why emissions taxing NZ food producers is not just a bad idea for farmers and food prices but also bad for the environment, the climate, and our country.

Per unit of food produced, New Zealand is among the world's most emissions efficient. If our food producers can remain at the top for emissions efficiency - the more food they produce, the better for reining in global warming while still feeding a growing human population. Instead of penalising the world's most efficient food producers surely for the good of global climate change NZ producers should be encouraged to maintain or increase their production. This would let those countries less emissions efficient improve their practices or change land use giving greater benefits to mitigate climate change.

NZ is a remarkable story. Our food producers are some of the least subsidized in the world operating from a pin prick island nation thousands of kilometres from our markets. Yet, we can still put our food on supermarket shelves across the globe as the most emissions efficient produced food in the world. We should all be incredibly proud of this achievement - Jacinda and James take note.

The governments analysis shows that emissions taxing our food producers could lead to a 20% reduction in sheep and beef and 6% drop in dairy. Why would a government reduce the production of the world's most emissions efficient produced food? We are told we must do this (tax our food producers) to achieve NZ's climate change reduction targets. Not only is this selfish - solely focusing on our targets while reducing emissions efficient food production and increasing global warming - it is also contrary to the Paris Accord food security

aspirations as well as being economic suicide. It is this same short term, flawed silo thinking that is leading to carbon forestry offsets taking over our farms.

Now, think of your nearest small town anywhere in NZ. Mine is Cheviot, heartland sheep and beef hill country farming in North Canterbury. Typical small town - supermarket, school, pub, couple of cafes, retail shops, medical centre, and many small rural businesses servicing over 150 farms. Based on the average cost per farm the emissions tax proposed by the government could take \$1 million out of our community in the first year alone, increasing each year after that.

Add to that increasing compliance and costs, multiple unworkable regulations (national policies that are impractical, cost prohibitive or won't work) and the outcome will be devastating for thousands of rural communities. Less farmer spend will mean businesses like our environmental work will vanish overnight. The tax farmers must pay is the equivalent of 1 - 2 years environmental spend. The environment will be worse off.

Already, traditional farming families with generations of environmental ethos are exiting the industry as carbon forests move in. This trend will accelerate if the emissions tax comes in.

The main reason we are told we must do this (emissions tax our food producers) is because overseas markets are demanding it. Are they really demanding all the outcomes detailed above - I think not. Are they really wanting us to reduce the production of the world's most emissions efficient produced food? Again no. Are they wanting us to focus on our own climate change targets if it means global emissions increase? NO! The government are using this reason of overseas markets because there is no

rational explanation for taxing our world leading food producing farmers.

Groundswell NZ's position is clear - we oppose an emissions tax on NZ food producers. We are not against change or the need to address environmental issues. It is false to claim NZ farmers are not "doing their bit." Farmers have invested millions of dollars every year since 2003 on emissions research and new technologies. They are also massively investing in the environment through Catchment Groups, native bush protection (QEII covenants) and riparian plantings. That needs to continue.

Pricing emissions is not the same as reducing emissions, nor the same as emissions best practice. Groundswell NZ believes we should aspire to remain world leaders of environmentally sustainable and emissions efficient produced food. The focus should be on best practice actions on farm integrated across all environmental issues (emissions, water quality, biodiversity) and not a blunt tax that increases food prices, increases global



Groundswell environmental spokesperson, Jamie McFadden.

warming, destroys rural communities and is worse for our environment and country.

Jamie McFadden annually undertakes hundreds of environmental projects for Canterbury farmers and is Groundswell NZ environmental spokesperson.






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Levi gives his all to give back

After a year of devastating personal loss, Levi Hart is determined to make the most of all life has to offer.

The 29-year-old farmer has secured a spot at the FMG Young Farmer of the Year Aorangi Regional Final, an annual competition dedicated to showcasing the very best talent of New Zealand's food and fibre sector.

Each contestant competed against 14 people from their district. Levi is one of eight contestants headed for the Regional Final.

With a feed assessment job that takes him and his partner around the country, Hart loves to be social and meet new people, learning about different farming systems and how different places operate.

"Farming is a changing beast, and it puts a lot of people through adversity, but you see that passion and the drive that people have to do better. I think it's fantastic, ultimately, we're caretakers of the land."

People, he's found, are what is most important when 'the going gets tough'. In the past year, he and his partner have suffered multiple

bereavements. Grateful for the support they received from the farming community, this year he wanted to give back by volunteering at Rural Support Trust.

"If having one conversation with one person changes their outlook on what's happening then that's a massive win."

The competition is now in its 55th year, and New Zealand Young Farmers Board Chair Jessie Waite says Season 55 is shaping up to be an exciting one.

"It's great to see the involvement our competitors have in their local community, and how they are giving back to help others."

There are seven Regional Finals running across Aotearoa between February and April 2023. No competition is the same, and contestants start the day not knowing which of their skills will be put to the test.

Each Regional Final will decide who will be competing at the FMG Young Farmer of the Year Grand Final in July 2023 and the winner will receive around \$70,000 worth of prizes.



Levi Hart will take his place in the FMG Young Farmer of the Year Aorangi Regional Final with some extra motivation to succeed.



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Weather shines down in time for pea harvest in Canterbury

Settled weather has come at the right time for process pea harvest in Canterbury.

Talley's says it is finding the weather for the current harvest much more optimistic.

"We are at a good place in the season, with the quality of the crop looking better than last year," Talley's vegetable general manager Danie Swanepoel said.

"We are about two-thirds of the way through the pea harvest, all of which is grown within one hour of our factory, with Rangitata being our furthest location, ensuring all the goodness is retained from the farm to the freezer."

If the product is not delivered within an hour the quality of the peas begins to deteriorate making the location a main priority when travelling to various crops.

"Once harvested, we sell our vegetables throughout New Zealand and to customers overseas in our export markets," Swanepoel said.

Farmers are expected to finish harvesting process peas



Talley's pea Viner in action harvesting Canterbury's pea crops.

around the end of February.

While the vining pea harvest is winding down, the dried pea harvest is only beginning.

Planting of the process pea

crops begins from July- through to November compared to seed peas which are scheduled to plant in September and harvested end of January.

Dried peas are processed, tested, and provide the quality is right they are exported or held for domestic use.

These dried peas are

primarily used for sowing to make processed peas that will be used for the following harvest season.

- By Charlotte Mulder

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2022 Science Fair winners

Canterbury/Westland

- Junior: Holly Fraser, year 7, Selwyn House School with 'Spray Away'
- Senior (1st equal): Millie Palmer, year 10, Cashmere High School with 'Microplastics, Macro problem'
- Senior (1st equal): Charlie Caddilac, year 11, Cashmere High School with 'The Effects of Allelochemicals on Seed Germination'

Timaru/South Canterbury

- Junior: Mitchell Digby and Jack Bennet, Wakanui School with 'Project Possum'



Award winners from the 2022 Science Fair Awards alongside representatives and judges.

A Christchurch high school student believes a simple wool filter could go a long way in stopping microplastics from entering our waterways – and she has evidence to back up her theory.

"A third of all microplastics found in the ocean originate from our laundry – every time we wash our clothes, tiny strands of fabric come off and get washed away with the water," Cashmere High School Year 10 student Millie Palmer said.

"If we could stop these microplastics from ever leaving our washing machines, then we would be doing both the environment and ourselves a huge favour. If everyone had these cartridges (filters), millions of microplastics will be prevented

from reaching the water cycle."

Taking water samples from her local stream, Millie added equal amounts of microplastics to each sample and experimented with five different filter materials – natural wool, processed wool, bamboo cloth, woodchip cloth and coconut husk.

She discovered that wool performed best as it filtered 100 percent of the microplastics, confirming her hypothesis.

Her efforts have won her the Wrybill Trophy, an annual science prize for school students across Canterbury named after the bird with a distinctive bent beak that is found only around braided rivers in the South Island.

The Wrybill Awards is backed by Environment

Canterbury and has been running since 1996.

To win the top trophy, students must exhibit outstanding projects on environmental themes relating to the Council's portfolios or work streams, particularly around how we look after our natural resources while offering innovative solutions.

Winners from local science fairs present their projects to a panel including Canterbury Regional Councillors, Environment Canterbury staff and an external judge.

This year's external judge, Lincoln University Professor Jon Hickford, said it was a tough decision, however, Millie took out the award for her work on microplastics, which he described

as our "next wicked problem".

"Microplastics have been found in the highest mountains and deepest oceans – it's an emerging problem we're only beginning to understand. Seventy-five percent of fish have been found to have microplastics in them, 500,000 tonnes of microplastics found in textiles enter the global marine environment each year, and we eat on average five grams of microplastics a week – the weight of a credit card," Millie said.

"Over the past five years, microplastic filtration has begun to develop. However, no products I came across used sustainable filter materials."

Prof Hickford was "blown away" with the quality of the presentations and was impressed

to see how Wakanui School students Mitchell Digby and Jack Bennet used technology for their experiment on finding the best bait to catch possums.

He also admired the "great science" and chemistry involved in Cashmere High School student Charlie Caddilac's project on how allelochemicals affect seed germination, and Selwyn House School student Holly Fraser's experiment on safer weed sprays.

Environment Canterbury Chair Peter Scott said running the awards was a team effort, with teachers and parents providing support for students.

– Information and image provided by Environment Canterbury

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Annual report a highlight of all that's been achieved

It's only when you sit down to read the Environment Canterbury adopted annual report that you get the opportunity to realise what's been achieved in the past year according to chair, Peter Scott.

ECan released their adopted annual plan for the financial year 2021/2022 last month and while it hasn't been plain sailing, Scott said there has been plenty of work undertaken and achieved and that's worth celebrating.

"Of course, not everything has gone smoothly, but we would like to take the opportunity to pause and celebrate all who have contributed to our work in the last financial year," Scott said.

"Not just councillors and staff, but especially the community. You have really helped us deliver for our environment."

"This year has had its up and downs, due in part to the impacts of Covid-19. Not only did we experience restrictions due to the protection framework, but staff were also affected and experienced



Good progress has been made by ECan on consent reviews within the Ashburton Catchment.

illness just like many in our community.

"We thank you for your patience as we battled through these impacts and look forward to what the year ahead will bring."

Within the water and land segment, the annual report highlighted a number of areas where significant progress has been made in the 12 month

time-frame including that all Canterbury Water Management Committees have completed their action plans for the year.

"We continue to use the Land, Air, Water Aotearoa (LAWA) platform to share monitoring data for Canterbury and our website provides quick access to the frequently requested monitoring data for rainfall,

river flows, air quality and coastal wave data.

A rolling programme for monitoring networks is used and within the 12 months, four monitoring networks were reviewed; aquatic ecosystem health, hydrometric (rainfall and surface water flows), groundwater quality and groundwater quantity.

"We also published technical

reports on a variety of topics, including land use change on the margins of Canterbury braided rivers, arsenic and manganese in Canterbury groundwater and a history and stocktake of our aquatic ecosystem health monitoring."

Good progress has been made on consent reviews within the Ashburton catchment to implement the rules that come into effect in 2023 requiring a reduction in water take at times of low flows. The change should improve conditions for fish migration and water quality especially at the haupua and river mouth.

"We continue to also participate in a number of catchment-based work programmes, including Whakaora Te Waihora, a restoration programme under the Te Waihora co-governance group, Whaka-Ora Healthy Harbour working to restore Lyttleton Harbour and the Te Mohiki programme in the Mackenzie Basin.

A full break-down including highlights of achievements can be found on the ECan website.



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It's a proven fact that without access to good, clean water no human or animal can survive. And when it comes to rural life, nothing is more important than a clean and reliable water access for stock.

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management of what's available on their farms.

A good stock water system can assist with easily achievable management of grazing, increased subdivision, improved utilisation and production, better performance from stock on the farm and ultimately better returns to the pocket in the long run.

Industry experts have proven that the benefits of animals having access to quality water and while an investment, the return is shown to be worth it.

An on-farm trough, cleaned and managed well has huge benefits and decreases the chance of stock running into trouble in other waterways, especially in the heart of summer when water levels can be reduced.

And stock drinking from troughs are less likely to come into contact with pathogens.

With pressure on natural waterways to be fenced off this has also increased the need for waterlines to be laid and troughs installed in each paddock. Installing a water system properly is critical and needs to be researched and planned in the area you are in.

Laying of the pipes is very important and ultimately they need to be underground to save them being damaged by stock or vehicles.

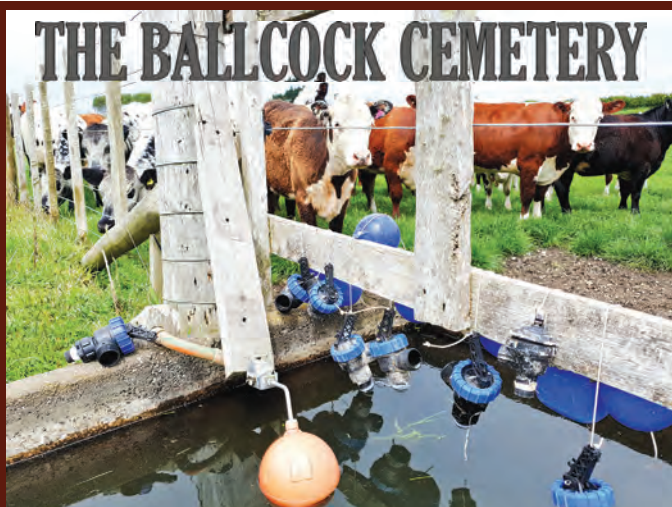
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Water stoppages mooted in wettest corner of New Zealand

Despite the West Coast's reputation as one of the country's wettest spots, parts of the region are now grappling with a potential drought.

The Grey District Council has imposed bans on sprinklers and automatic irrigation, and people are being asked to restrict water use, with the council warning it may have to introduce rolling water stoppages.

Grey District Mayor Tania Gibson said at this stage the message seemed to be getting through.

Although it rained last week it was not substantial enough to do more than wet the ground a bit and the most rain the district had seen recently was just before Christmas, she said.

NIWA is not calling it a drought yet because of a few showery days, Gibson said.

"But it's getting dire for like the agriculture industry, like the farming industry's starting to suffer and we are having these problems with the water and we are putting contingencies in place.



The Grey District Council has imposed bans on sprinklers and automatic irrigation as the region faces a potential drought.

"We are actually installing three new water reservoirs that we've been working on last year and this year and some new bores, so this would actually mitigate this problem."

Reports are that it has not

been this dry in the Grey District for about 25 years with no rain forecast in the immediate future, she said.

Meanwhile, Fire and Emergency is suspending all fire permits in the Grey District

due to the current water shortage in the area.

No new permits will be issued across the Grey District until there have been significant downpours.

West Coast district manager

Myles Taylor said fighting vegetation fires used large volumes of water and would place more pressure on already depleted water supplies.

A further two water tankers have been moved to Greymouth.

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All machines brought into New Zealand are top-level products in their own countries,

which focus on worldwide research and development, and this, combined with the local experience, and local knowledge of EuroAgri's own team becomes a recipe for success.

For management and staff of EuroAgri, sustainability, and looking after future generations of farmers are major aims. James McCloy, General Manager, believes excellent service and

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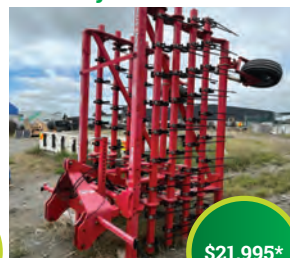
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Farmers doing the sun dance ahead of harvest

Canterbury farmers are doing a sun dance as they prepare for, and begin, this year's harvest.

One of those farmers is Federated Farmers arable chair Darrell Hydes who began his harvest in the second week of January.

"We just started with the Rapeseed today after waiting for the moisture to come down to 9%," Hydes said.

Hydes said farmers are looking for a good year this year after a difficult season last year due to rain disrupting harvest, delaying getting the crops out of the ground, and reducing the yield.

"We need some good fine settled weather, most of the crops are at the stage where they don't need any more rain."

"Last year was disastrous with all the rain."

One crop that has suffered is the white clover, which struggles with the rain as leaves keep growing, and the flowers get trapped under the leaf.

Along with a rough 2022 Hydes said that farmers are also battling with rising costs like many industries.

"A big issue for arable farmers is the rising costs, everything has got more expensive, seed, fertilisers, diesel, rates, but the sale price for crops has stayed the same," Hydes said.

While Hydes had got his harvest underway Mount Somers arable farmer David Clark still had some waiting to do with nothing in the pipeline until the third week of the month.

Along with Hydes Clark is hoping for some good Canterbury sunshine.

"We need to go back to a traditional Canterbury hot, dry summer. Otherwise, it will start to have an impact on yield," Clark said.

"Potentially harvest looks promising, but's never a good harvest until it's in the bag."

"A good harvest has to be harvested."

"If this weather pattern was to carry on, we would have a major problem, this wet humid conditions."

Clark said conditions this season have been particularly wet.

"We haven't had to irrigate since November."



Federated Farmers arable chair, was busy getting underway with harvesting some Rapeseed that will be turned into animal feed earlier this month.

Clark has a range of crops in the ground many of which will head offshore.

"The peas go to Asia to be eaten as a snack food, the canola

goes to Europe, the radish goes to the northern hemisphere.

Despite all the exports some of Clark's crops do stay in New Zealand, with all the grain

staying in the country.

But before Clark can think about where the crops are going they need to come out of the ground first.

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Mark or remove probes before hitting the harvest

As harvest gets underway across the South Island the Foundation for Arable Research is reminding farmers to either clearly mark or remove soil moisture probes in paddock before hitting the header.

Hi vis flags on fibreglass poles above the crop canopy are the recommended method for those who elect to leave their probes in the ground according to FAR's technology manager, Chris Smith.

This can save accidental damage to the probe, the telemetry or even the combine.

If removing the probes, disconnect the telemetry and remove the battery for winter storage, if they aren't going to be reinstalled straight away. When digging the probe up, follow the cable back from the telemetry unit to find the location of the probe, which could be several metres away.

Depending on the make and model of probe the top could be underground. So, carefully remove the top soil above the probe head, which could be around 30mm+ below the surface.



Farmers are being reminded to remove or clearly mark their soil moisture probes before harvest.

PHOTOS: MOISTURE PROBES

Multi-level sensor probes are generally 30-90cm long. Use something like a screw driver and carefully clear the soil away from around the top 15cm of the probe.

Depending on the soil type, it may pay to pour water in the hole you have made around the

top of the probe. Gently rotate the probe and it should come out easily. If not, let the water penetrate the soil around the probe to release it. Some probes will need to be "unscrewed/rotated" from the soil profile; discuss specific techniques required with your supplier.

Never use a spade or similar to lever or dig the probe out unless your supplier stipulates it. Likewise, don't put too much pressure on the probe head to pull it out – if it won't come out, keep digging down around the probe.

Tell your provider that

the probe has been removed and they can close down the soil profile for you on the monitoring platform. This will ensure your probe will be in a good condition for reinstallation/monitoring in your next crop and your data is intact.



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Tropical insect fall armyworm confirmed to be on West Coast

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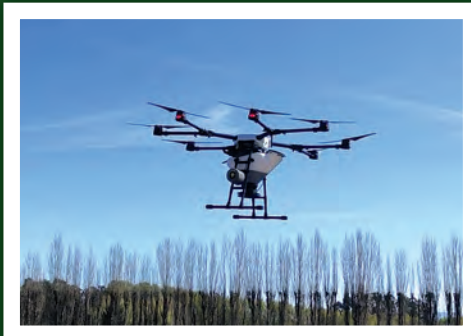


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A tropical insect pest with a big appetite for maize and sweetcorn has been identified on the West Coast, the first time it has been found in the South Island.

Before the West Coast detection, confirmed finds of fall armyworm had previously only been in areas it was found last year, including Northland, Waikato, Bay of Plenty and Taranaki. Fall armyworm was first detected in New Zealand in March last year, likely windblown from Australia.

For the week ending January 13, three confirmed finds of fall armyworm were identified on the West Coast, bringing the total number of finds since September 1, 2022, to 56 in New Zealand. This is up 11 on the previous week.

A find was confirmed in a paddock of maize near Hokitika, and since then other finds in the region suggest several maize crops are affected, Foundation for Arable Research general manager of business operations Ivan Lawrie says.

The industry is working with the government on the response to the pest, with members of the FAR/Seed and Grain Readiness and Response (SGRR) team along with Dr Scott Hardwick from AgResearch/B3 visiting the Hokitika property on Thursday 12 January to assess crop damage and the efficacy of control.

"We are very grateful to the grower and local rep for the swift reporting which raised this important alert," Ivan Lawrie says.

All maize growers, in the North and South Islands should be inspecting crops regularly. Control is easier and more effective if damage is identified at the early stages, before the fall armyworm larvae move into the plant whorl.

Fall armyworm larvae feed on more than 350 plant species, especially sweetcorn and maize.

The maize plants on the Hokitika farm are at the 8-10 leaf stage and the larvae present were large, suggesting that some had already dropped to begin pupation. Well over 25 per cent of plants were affected at the whorl stage, so the grower's decision to spray was the correct one, based on the threshold guide from international data. The insecticide Sparta (spinetoram 120g/L) is now on label for use on fall armyworm in maize and sweetcorn crops for ground applications.

Corn earworm (*Helicoverpa armigera*) was also present in the crop. The pests can look similar, so if growers have any doubts, photograph different specimens and send multiple pictures in to the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI).

Over 200 FAW traps deployed by the response group continue to be assessed throughout New Zealand. As this is still an unwanted organism, all findings must be reported to MPI: <https://report.mpi.govt.nz/pest> or using the app <https://www.findapest.nz/>, by email to FAW@mpi.govt.nz or by freephone 0800 80 99 66.

Ivan Lawrie says there are no negative consequences to growers reporting, as crops where the pest is confirmed will not be destroyed or put under controls.

The models indicate that moths should start to be detected over the final weeks of the month, so farmers are urged to continue to check traps and report online. Growers and reps should be actively scouting for caterpillars on the crop and not just relying on the moth catches from traps.



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