

RealFarmer

FOR EVERYTHING FARMING AND FAMILY

AUGUST / SEPTEMBER 2019



Daring
to be
different

A lifestyle
of love

25th Ruralco
Instore Days

China's
challenge shifts
with time

Arable award
showcases Canterbury's
finest farmers



From the Group CEO

Welcome to this edition of Real Farmer.

In this issue we take a look at our recent Instore Days which celebrated its 25th anniversary. We were humbled by the huge level of support shown to us by both our card and retail suppliers and by all of you who made this our best ever Instore Days. Support came from all over the South Island, by way of online purchases and from visitors travelling from as far away as North Canterbury to attend the event.

Not only did we have an incredibly popular \$250,000 Big Prize Draw competition running, but the two day event also recorded our best ever turnover, with sales doubling on the previous year. This increase shows a strong level of positivity and financial stability within the farming community, which is good news for all of us. Congratulations to all of the prize winners in the Big Draw promotion. It was fantastic addition to our celebrations and it wouldn't have been possible without the wonderful support shown to us by a number of long-standing and supportive retail and card suppliers.

Another success story for Ruralco is its ongoing association with the United Wheat Growers competition. Despite recent tough times for many arable farmers, the on-going drought in Australia is providing a silver lining for local growers with good forward contracts ahead. We catch up with the winners of the annual competition who once again have displayed excellent results.

Moving off-shore, rural reporter, Richard Rennie shares his findings following a recent trip to Beijing and Shanghai. Over the last decade New Zealand's exports to China have quadrupled, and Richard takes a look at the challenges and opportunities this growth is creating for our primary sector.

Back in the South Island, we also catch up with Lincoln University Professor Pablo Gregorini. The Argentinian born scientist with a passion for pastoral livestock production systems shares his story and gives us an insight into his busy life. We also catch up with former dairy farmers, Richie and Kate Bocock and find out about their Banks Peninsula farming operation, tourism and plans for planting avocados.

Happy reading and we hope you enjoy meeting our Real Farmers.

Rob Sharkie
027 801 9929
robert.sharkie@ruralco.co.nz

RealFarmer

FOR EVERYTHING FARMING AND FAMILY

RURALCO NZ LIMITED

PO Box 433, Ashburton 7740
0800 RURALNZ (787 256)
www.ruralco.co.nz

EDITORIAL ENQUIRIES:

Our team welcome your contributions, enquiries and letters.

Please email to:
marketing@ruralco.co.nz

ADVERTISING ENQUIRIES:

Please contact the Marketing Department on:

Tel: 0800 RURALNZ (787 256);
marketing@ruralco.co.nz

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CONTRIBUTORS

Anita Body
Amy Piper
Annie Studholme
Emily Herbert
Niamh McCarthy
Rachael Rickard
Richard Rennie

PHOTOGRAPHY

Annie Studholme
Emmily Harmer
Hele Power
Larry Prosor
Richard Rennie

TECHNICAL ARTICLES

Ballance Agri-Nutrients
Tel 0800 787 256
ruralco@ruralco.co.nz
www.ruralco.co.nz

Compliance Partners
Tel 0800 249 7233
info@cp.org.nz
www.cp.org.nz

DairyNZ
Tel 0800 4 324 7969
info@dairynz.co.nz
www.dairynz.co.nz

FAR
Tel 03 3455783
far@far.org.nz
www.far.org.nz

Horticulture NZ
Mike Chapman, CEO
Horticulture New Zealand
Tel 04 472 3795
mike.chapman@hortnz.co.nz
www.hortnz.co.nz

Irrigation NZ
Tel 03 341 2225
admin@irrigationnz.co.nz
www.irrigationnz.co.nz

Property Brokers
Tel 03 307 9176
www.propertybrokers.co.nz

Ruminate
Tel 0800 787 256
ruralco@ruralco.co.nz
www.ruralco.co.nz

Tracey Gordon
Ruralco Energy Account Manager
Tel 0800 787 256
Tracey.Gordon@ruralco.co.nz
www.ruralco.co.nz

Ian Hodge
VetEnt Riverside Ashburton
Tel 03 308 2321
riverside@vetent.co.nz
www.vetent.co.nz



ON THE COVER:
Richie & Kate Bocock daring to be different at Te Wepu, Banks Peninsula

Contents

AUGUST / SEPTEMBER 2019

Cover Story



2

Daring to be different



7
25th Ruralco Instore Days



12

A lifestyle of love



20

China's challenge shifts with time



54

Arable award showcases Canterbury's finest farmers

Interest

- 2 Daring to be different
- 7 25th Ruralco Instore Days
- 8 Winning sites showcase best of the best
- 12 A lifestyle of love
- 20 China's challenge shifts with time
- 54 Arable award showcases Canterbury's finest farmers

Technical

- 11 New dam and pond safety regulations a concern
- 17 Coastal challenge continues to charm
- 23 New Zealand's wellbeing not just about the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff
- 25 Dairying in grain country
- 26 Disbudding—doing more than the minimum
- 41 Five ways to wellness
- 44 Meeting challenges head on
- 47 Electricity generation landscape shifts under low carbon demands
- 51 Test deep for cereals
- 57 Avoiding disease during calving
- 61 Sometimes its good recognise a proven performer

Card

- 59 Looking to the future with a brand new showroom
Honda Country

In Season

- 33 SF LIFTA is back
- 37 Making positive changes on-farm

Daring to be different



IMAGE: Kate & Richie are pleasantly surprised by just how much the avocado trees have grown so far

After a lifetime involved in the dairy industry a Banks Peninsula couple is putting their faith in a South American superfood.

WORDS & IMAGES BY ANNIE STUDHOLME
(SOME IMAGES SUPPLIED BY RICHIE & KATE BOCOCK)

Banks Peninsula is the last place you would expect to find avocados being grown, but Richie and Kate Bocock have gone out on a limb and planted 80 trees on their 30-hectare property at French Farm with dreams of supplying the local market. It's part of a new venture for the couple, who in 2017 walked away from the dairy industry in search of a slower pace of life where they were able to put family first.

Originally from Te Awamutu, Richie spent his summers growing up working in neighbouring dairy farms. With that experience behind him, he headed off to Massey University, completing a degree in agriculture. To begin with, he didn't want to go dairying, so after graduating, he managed to secure a job as a stock agent in the Manawatu and later northern Hawke's Bay.

But ready to do something for himself, Richie saw the burgeoning dairy industry as his ticket forward. He started farming on his own account in 1995, first in the Waikato, followed by a stint in Australia, before ending up in Canterbury working for Dairy Holdings where he progressed up the ladder to Contract Milker, then Share Milker. "I absolutely loved it. It was a growing industry and one where hard work was rewarded and you could build up some equity. It was a great industry to be involved with," Richie explains.

Richie and Kate wound up as equity partners on a property just south of Ashburton milking 800 cows. He was always 'hands-on' and after some 4,700 4am starts (or thereabouts), he started to lose the drive and passion for cows he'd once had. "I just started to lose enjoyment for what I was doing. The industry had got us to where we wanted to get to. It was a case of do I embrace it and go with it, or do we start looking outside the box," he says.

After much deliberation, the couple opted to put their part of the farming operation on the market. "The hard part was that we made the decision and then we couldn't get out for a further 12 months, but in hindsight, it worked out well. We'd made the decision, but now what? We needed to find somewhere to live," explains Richie.

Despite having a holiday home in Tekapo, neither of them wanted to live there permanently, so they put it on the market and started looking elsewhere. Keen to continue farming in some capacity, the Bococks dreamed of living somewhere with real wow factor; with its seaside outlook, scenic bays, wonderful wildlife and largely untapped potential, it was hard to look past Banks Peninsula.



ABOVE: Richie and Kate Bocock with daughters Millie (left) and Pippa, and the family dog, Louis
BELOW: Richie with the young avocado trees ready for planting

They looked at a handful of properties all over the peninsula, before visiting Te Wepu at French Farm near Duvauchelle, on the western side of Akaroa Harbour. A dairy farm in a former life, the 30 hectare property had most recently been used as a holiday home for a Christchurch family.

Split into just two or three paddocks the farm was largely run down and overgrown, and the old villa needed some serious work, but straight away it felt like home, says Richie. "The view was spectacular and it just had the right feel about it." Kate too immediately fell in love with the property. It not only had spectacular views out to the Onawe Peninsula but boasted lots of old established trees and stunning areas of native bush. "It ticked lots of boxes for me," says Kate.

So, with the deal done, the Bococks split their time between the new property on the peninsula and running the dairy farm until the right partner was found to take over in June 2017. During that time, Richie spent as much time as possible at Te Wepu, fencing off all the waterways to exclude stock, installing a new water supply and re-fencing. The old villa was also extensively renovated before they moved in.

Right from the outset, the big question was how they were going to generate an income off just 30-hectares. "It was a pretty big step down in farming terms," smiles Richie.

Perhaps strangely, avocados were the first thing that sprung to mind. Not only was it something interesting to grow, but they are widely known as a superfood. They are rich in mono-unsaturated oil, proteins, vitamins A and B, low in cholesterol and sugar, and contain a large number of minerals, explains Kate.





Encouraged by reports there was the odd avocado tree growing well on the peninsula, the Bococks couldn't see why they wouldn't be able to grow a commercial crop at French Farm.

Nestled into the hillside, the fertile, sunbathed French Farm (originally known as Decazes Bay) valley has long been renowned for its unique microclimate. It was used by the early French settlers in the 1840s to grow vegetables and raise animals. Hence the name, French Farm. "It's known for its climate, water and free-draining soil, and we thought we might as well utilise that," says Kate.

After doing their research, they believed they had the perfect paddock - it was north-facing, had good free-draining soils in full sun, natural shelter from strong winds, and relatively frost-free. Low temperatures were the biggest risk. Even a light frost will burn any tender growth, and anything cooler than -3 degrees C has the potential to kill a young tree.

"It's like any type of farming, you try to make sure you cover your bases," says Richie. "We thought, why not. We are risk-takers. Although they are temperature intolerant, you can control that. Kauri (trees) grow here, so we see no reason why avocado trees won't. The big question is whether or not they will set fruit. We are pretty confident, but people still think we are kind of crazy." Determined to press forward, the Bococks ordered their first 80 trees, with more to follow if the initial grove produces fruit. After almost two years of waiting, there was great excitement when the grafted two-year-old avocado trees finally arrived last November for planting. Initially, the focus has been on getting the trees well-established. Working on a ratio of 10 per cent pollinators, the Bococks ensured every plant was well-staked, surrounded by shade

cloth, and well-mulched around the base to help conserve water, improve root growth, provide nutrients, reduce stress on the tree and suppress weeds.

Although the plants have taken off, it could be another year or two before the Bococks will see whether or not their gamble has paid off.

It's been a constant learning curve, explains Richie. Avocado trees are unusual. Most people don't realise that once the fruit has set it can take anywhere up to nine months for the fruit to reach full maturity. The fruit can hang on the trees for months and not lose any quality as it doesn't ripen until its picked. Industry standard makes certain avocados reach a minimum of 24 per cent dry matter before they are harvested, ensuring a creamier avocado. Trees fruit bi-annually as a rule. Curiously, the very interesting flowers open for only two days of the year - the first day they are female; the second day they are male. They rely heavily on bees and sometimes wind for pollination. Trees mature by about 10 years of age.

"We've been pleasantly surprised by just how much they have grown," says Richie. "The more we have got involved with them, the more excited I am. I think they are going to go okay, but others probably think we are a bit nuts. The jury is still out. If it doesn't work, we haven't lost much. It's been a relatively small investment."

Long term, the Bococks dream of producing enough avocados to sell locally in Akaroa, and maybe even set up at a stall at the Christchurch Farmers' Market. "As consumers these days are more and more dedicated to knowing where our food is grown."

While they were waiting for their avocado project to bear fruit, the Bococks toyed with other ways of generating an income. "It was



ABOVE: Each full self-contained pod has snug sleeping pod, a changing pod and a wooden hot tub
ABOVE LEFT: Richie celebrating the planting of the first 80 avocado trees

all about what we could do on 30 hectares; we had to look outside the box," says Richie. Capitalising on the rise in tourism in the area, they kept coming back to the idea of doing some kind of tourist accommodation. "We had the idea when we were working up on the farm one day, at the top of the property, where the views are magnificent. Because it was an old dairy farm all the tracks were already there, and the native bush was already there, but we wanted a point of difference. We wanted to host couples, not families; and, we didn't want to have a tent glamping set-up as there was already one at nearby Lavericks Bay," says Kate.

Kate had heard about the Methven-made Mount Hutt Pods, and after seeing the hobbit-like little cabins, she knew they were exactly what they had been searching for. Getting council approval took time. "We had to jump through a lot of hoops. In the end, we had to employ a consultant, but it was money well spent," says Richie.

They created three fully self-contained, private accommodation areas dotted high up on the hillside surrounded by native bush, with the pods helicoptered into place. Named after native birds which are abundant on the peninsula, each retreat has its own private snug sleeping pod just big enough for a plush double bed, a changing pod complete with composting toilet, outdoor kitchen, outdoor wooden hot tub filled with water from a nearby spring, an outdoor fire pit for roasting marshmallows, and all boasting spectacular views looking out over Akaroa harbour. Electricity for the



pod's lighting is provided by solar panels on the roof. Visitors decide whether they will make the 20-30 minute hike up to the pods on their own accord, or catch a ride up in the side-by-side with Richie.

"They (the pods) have everything you would expect when you go camping except the airbed and the tent," laughs Kate.

Getting the pods fully operational was only half the battle though. When it came to running their own tourism business, Kate and Richie soon realised, they had masses to learn. A fertiliser rep in a former life, Kate took it upon herself to take on the unfamiliar role of managing the website, social media, and reservations. "I thought, I can do this, but I really had no idea what I was doing at the start. It took a bit to come to grips with," says Kate. "I have learnt a lot over the past 18 months."

She's also become a dab hand at cranking out her quality dinner hampers, complete with her famous cob loaf bursting with a rich

creamy centre, local wine and cheese, and personalised extra treats, with three-quarters of guests ordering hampers. They also produce their own Te Wepu-farmed beef, killed and processed at a nearby abattoir.

Te Wepu Intrepid Pods will have been open for two years this December. During that time the Bococks have welcomed more than 1,000 guests, some 70 to 80 per cent hailing from throughout Canterbury. "We have really enjoyed it so far. We have met some wonderful people. Guests always leave with a massive smile on their face, and that's the satisfaction we get from hosting them. They are constantly blown away."

The Bococks also run a small herd of 45 white-faced heifers, including 30 two-year-olds which are due to calve down to Speckle Park bulls. They also have 40 beehives for honey production.

Richie is excited about the Speckle Park offspring. Recognised as a pure breed in 2007, the breed has been stabilised

ABOVE: The three accommodation areas, dotted high up on the property are surrounded by native bush, and barely noticeable from the paddocks below

BELOW: The name Te Wepu, meaning 'the whip' or 'to weep' was found on a fence at the gate and was retained

BELOW LEFT: Te Wepu supplies its guests wonderful dinner hampers packed full of local goodies and their own home-grown meat killed at a nearby abattoir

over 60 years by crossing British white park, shorthorn and Angus cattle in Saskatchewan, Canada, and are seen as an alternative for prime beef production. The cattle also play an important role, cleaning up the pod retreat sites during the winter break (June-July), when the pods are closed to visitors. "It's pretty hard for me to lose the livestock farming side of me—it helps keep me sane," Richie explains.

It's been a busy couple of years for the pair, but they know they've made the right decision. "We are careful not to let it dictate our lives. It's all about the lifestyle," says Kate.



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25th Ruralco Instore Days

More people, greater sales turnover and fantastic prizes up for grabs were among the many successes of this year's 25th anniversary Ruralco Instore Days.

WORDS BY ANITA BODY, IMAGES BY LARRY PROSOR

Catering figures saw the number of members partaking in the famous Instore Days lunch up on last year, and turnover through the stores, farm supplies, fertiliser and seed sales were also up—almost double on the previous year.

"We are delighted the figures back-up what we already knew was a fantastic Instore Days," said Ruralco Group CEO, Robert Sharkie.

"It's testament to the support of all of our members, suppliers and retailers. This year we had exceptional numbers in attendance and in sales, which we are all extremely proud of," said Robert.

Adding to the success of this year's event was the hugely popular birthday celebration campaign—The Big Draw.

"We have been truly humbled by the support shown by our suppliers through their sponsorship of this prize draw," said Robert. "We knew we wanted to make our 25th anniversary a memorable occasion and achieving a \$250,000 draw with such a wonderful range of prizes has been fantastic and has certainly added to the strength of our Instore Days this year."

It's a sentiment echoed by Ruralco Chairman, Alister Body. "There was certainly lots of interest

in the Big Draw and it created a real buzz and plenty of excitement. It really added to the occasion and we are absolutely delighted to be able to offer these sorts of prizes."

These included a Mustang car, a Dominator boat, a Harley Davidson motorcycle, a hot tub, jet ski, and home appliances.

IMAGES CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:
Bev & Rodger Tasker; Emma & Peter Philips; Dane & Allan Broomhall; Liam Jackson & Franko Varela; Julian Kershaw & Judith Murchie; Luke Wiggins & Toni Wilson

(Cont. from page 7)

Among the major sponsors of The Big Draw promotion were some of Ruralco's long-standing business partners.

Agribusiness Key Account Manager for Meridian, Glenn McWhinnie said it was a really good way to celebrate 25 years.

"Ruralco and Meridian have an amazing partnership and way of connecting with customers, and Instore Days is the perfect opportunity for us to get in front of our customers and talk to them face-to-face."

Datamars Area Sales Manager, Brian McFelin said the relationship between Ruralco and Datamars is highly valued and having the opportunity to be part of the 25th anniversary celebrations was never questioned. "We have been involved in every Instore Days so far and we are looking forward to many more."

Nufarm is another business with a long history with Ruralco and Instore Days. Mid/North Canterbury Territory Manager, Jeff Hurst said The Big Draw had certainly given everyone a talking point at this year's Instore Days, and it was great that Nufarm was one of the major sponsors.

"We have been part of Instore days for many years and it's always great to engage with farmers and help them find ways to improve their productivity and results."

Opening day this year saw queues lined up outside Ruralco's Gift & Homeware Store ready to snap up the pre-advertised specials and there was a steady stream of members through the back shop and the big marquee in the carpark for the remainder of the event. Once again the event was at full capacity with over 100 site holders taking part.

Every year the sites are eagerly sought after by suppliers, business partners and retailers and the participants are carefully selected to ensure farmers experience the best of the best by way of products, expertise and special offers.

Both Robert and Alister described this year's Instore Days as fantastic.

"Supplier and member support was unprecedented," said Alister. "I thought there was also a huge amount of energy in the sites. As a judge this year I got to go around the sites and they were quite incredible."

Robert concurred, saying the success of the event could be measured by the strength of our partnerships. "We have been truly humbled by the support shown this year."

"It was also great to see kids involved in the competitions we ran, as they are the future for the next 50 years," he said.

Winning sites showcase best of the best

It was a case of double celebrations for Best Ruralco Card Supplier Site winners, 100% Smith and Church. This year the Ashburton based appliance retailer celebrates its 50th birthday, so it was especially rewarding to also win at this year's Instore Days.

WORDS BY ANITA BODY, IMAGES BY LARRY PROSOR



ABOVE: Jackie Thomson from 100% Smith and Church, winner of Best Ruralco Card Supplier site

100% Smith & Church's Alister Lilley said the business has many parallels with Ruralco—it is a proud local retailer in a competitive marketplace; it has grown and expanded and embraced new opportunities as they have arisen, while also staying true to its original vision.

"Ruralco is a large part of our customer base and they are a very important partner of ours. The business has changed over the years, as we all have but they have never lost their DNA of supporting their farmer cooperative base—they are similar to us in that focus."

The business has attended every Instore Days since it began and Alister said they always

worked hard to be totally involved in providing fantastic product knowledge and service. This was borne out by the judges of this section, the Rt Hon David Carter MP and long-serving Ruralco staff member, Trish Burrowes.

The pair shortlisted the top sites and revisited them to determine the winners, with both coming up with exactly the same ranking. They spoke to different staff members on each visit, and the standard of customer service and knowledge remained the same regardless of

who they spoke to, which was testament to the calibre of the whole Smith and Church team. This was David Carter's first Instore Days and he enjoyed meeting staff and card suppliers, describing Ruralco as a progressive co-operative with a true family feel. He said visiting the sites was fascinating and he was impressed by the enthusiasm and diversity on offer. He described the winning 100% Smith and Church site as a "modern display of products combined with 50 years of heritage."

Winning the Best Ruralco Store Supplier Site was a great honour according to Allflex NZ's South Island Manager, Steve Kelly. "To win is amazing, especially when you see who else is here (at Instore Days)."

Part of the award winning site, was an innovative and hugely popular fundraising initiative supporting the local Rural Support Trust which supports farming folk through difficult times. For a gold coin donation, Instore Days attendees could have their own personalised ear tag created. By the end of the two day event, Allflex had raised \$731 for the Rural Support Trust.

The initiative had been used at other field day events, with different charities being the recipients. Steve said Allflex left it to Ruralco to choose the

beneficiary and thought it was an appropriate choice given the support the Trust had given most recently to farmers affected by MBovis.

"We tried to do something different and judging by social media comments and the numbers coming through, it has worked."

Allflex already has a strong relationship with Ruralco—it has New Zealand's largest ear tag board at the Rakaia Ruralco Store. Being part of Instore Days and helping celebrate its 25th birthday was an easy decision. "It is a great honour to be part of this and we feel very valued by Ruralco."

Judges of the Best Ruralco Store Supplier Site and the Best Ruralco Business Partner Site, Ruralco Chairman Alister Body and former long-serving Ruralco employee, Allan Lilley described Allflex's winning site as an interactive display with the laser tags being a great initiative. The team showed great product knowledge and engaged really well with members.

Similar accolades were bestowed on the winners of the Best Business Partner Site, Seed Force New Zealand. It was the second year in a row the business had won the prize and judges Alister and Allan commended the team on their great enthusiasm, the display

of plants, and the beach and lifeguard theme embraced by staff promoting the business's own holiday prize.

Northern South Island Territory Manager, Stevie Young said the win was unexpected but they were very happy with the result. Visually the site showed the development from seed to plant for Seed Force products, and Stevie said comparing the different stages proved to be a great talking point. It was Stevie's second Instore Days, and she said it was great to see the how people were recognising us and our products. "We work closely with the Ruralco retail reps, and it was great to see the growing belief in our products from those at the Instore Days. We are pretty proud to support Ruralco and to be here."

Plans are already underway to attend next year's Instore Days and defend the Best Business Partner Site title—"we'll be back to try and win again," she said.

BELOW: Best Ruralco Retail Supplier Site, Allflex NZ's South Island Manager, Steve Kelly

BELOW LEFT: Northern South Island Territory Manager, Stevie Young from Seed Force who won Best Business Partner Site



2019 Instore Days Best Site Award Winners

BEST RURALCO CARD SUPPLIER SITE

Winner:
100% Smith and Church

Runner Up:
Colourplus Ashburton

Third:
Blacklows Tradezone Ashburton

BEST RURALCO STORE SUPPLIER SITE

Winner:
Allflex NZ

Runner Up:
Gallagher Animal Management New Zealand

Third:
Purina

BEST RURALCO BUSINESS PARTNER SITE

Winner:
Seed Force New Zealand

Runner Up:
Meridian Energy

Third:
Barenbrug Agriseeds

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Introducing Mitch!

Mitch is a local, "born n bred" Mid-Cantabrian. He has been an essential part of the ElectraServe team since 2006 and **specialises in irrigation and all on-farm electrical installations and repairs**. Mitch's integrity and passion for ElectraServe has earned him a position on ElectraServe's management and planning team. Mitch thrives on being busy, and keeps fit by playing hockey. He has a passion for customer service, providing solutions for clients and with his kiwi "can-do" attitude. Mitch is supported by his wife Abbey, and their 3 young children - Emma, Ellie and Hadlee.

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New dam and pond safety regulations a concern

The Ministry of Business, Innovation, and Employment (MBIE) is consulting on proposed new requirements for owners of dams or storage ponds.

WORDS & IMAGES SUPPLIED BY IRRIGATIONNZ

IrrigationNZ has met with MBIE officials to discuss the proposal and gather more information about how they could work.

We are concerned that the proposed regulations include very small ponds that virtually never present a practical risk of flooding events yet could impose significant new costs on the owners of dams and storage ponds.

The proposed regulations would apply to dams or ponds which are less than four metres high and hold 30,000m³ or more, or are above four metres and hold 20,000m³ or more.

This would result in a very large number of farm storage ponds being captured by the legislation, even if they are on-plains where any spill would quickly become shallow water.

For owners of dams that meet the above criteria, the minimum they would need to do would be commission a recognised engineer to undertake a Potential Impact Assessment on the dam or pond. This is estimated to cost around \$5,000.

If the engineer considered the impact assessment of a dam/pond failure was medium or high then an expensive dam safety assurance programme and an annual audit would be required.

The proposed assessment criteria concern us because they appear to result in a bias toward higher potential impact classifications for dams and ponds than are practically justified. This results in substantial compliance costs for

farmers whereas the expense should, in our view, be focused toward dams that have actual significant potential impacts. Even for quite modest sized ponds, the costs of preparing a dam safety assurance programme could range from \$6,000 to \$30,000 with an annual audit cost of around \$5,000.

IrrigationNZ is currently carrying out further consultation with our members to help identify how dam and pond owners are affected by the proposals. We will use this information to prepare a general submission. We also prepared a previous submission to consultation in 2013 which did not support unnecessary regulations being imposed on small pond or dam owners.

You can read more about the proposals online at www.mbie.govt.nz/have-your-say. Consultation closes on 6 August. We encourage all affected dam and pond owners to prepare their own submission.

We have been advised that once the consultation is completed regulations will be drafted and will be in place around mid 2020, with implementation guidelines also being developed by MBIE.

The irrigation season is now not far away and August and September is a good time to schedule training for your staff so new staff are familiar with irrigation operation and existing staff get a timely refresher on this topic.

IrrigationNZ has a great online irrigation learning system that our members (which

include many irrigation scheme shareholders) can use for free.

The first module of our online system covers irrigation scheduling and features animated videos explaining topics like soils, climate, plant water use, water budgets, soil moisture monitoring and scheduling.

Eleven short 10–20 minute lessons make up the first training module. Each lesson is followed by a quick online assessment. If all modules are completed you will receive a certificate of completion which can be included in your Farm Environment Plan records as evidence staff have received irrigation training. As the training is delivered online, it can be done anytime that suits, and fit around farm work.

It's definitely worthwhile ensuring your staff are well trained to make irrigation decisions as operating your irrigation system for even a few hours a week when it's not needed can add a lot of cost to your electricity bill over an irrigation season. Not irrigating when needed also results in similar significant losses from lost productivity.

We are currently filming a second module for our online learning system which will provide a series of short videos demonstrating how to do bucket tests.

To find out more about using the online system visit www.irrigation.co.nz and select the 'E Learning' option.

A lifestyle of love



IMAGE: It's thanks to the couples academic passion that they met at the University of Arkansas in America

What do Lowline Angus cattle, Suffolk sheep, Argentine barbecues and academia have in common? They represent the blueprint of Pablo Gregorini's life.

WORDS BY EMILY HERBERT, IMAGES BY EMMILY HARMER

Pablo Gregorini leads a very full life. University professor, stud farmer, father, husband, keen tramper, wine swiller, researcher, academic; he leaves no minutes in his day unfilled.

Originally from Argentina, Gregorini completed his undergraduate studies in agronomy and a Masters degree in ruminant nutrition at Argentina's National University of La Plata, before completing his PhD in Animal Science at the University of Arkansas in the United States, and a post-doctoral study with the USDA-ARS. He worked as a scientist in nutritional ecology, grazing and range management in the USA, Netherlands and England, before his interest in pastoral livestock production systems, nutrition and foraging ecology of ruminants took him to New Zealand, where he accepted a scientist position in the Feed and Farm Systems Group at DairyNZ in 2008.

In record time, he was promoted to Senior Scientist by 2012; awarded as the 2009 Emerging Scientist for his scientific innovative contributions to NZ agricultural science by the Kudos Hamilton Society of Science Excellence.

"I always wanted to be an academic like my parents," he said. "I also wanted to lead science and be an influence in the future of livestock production and grazing management worldwide. Lecturing is my passion as well; I lecture not only in the classroom, but in living labs, out in the field."

Since his PhD in 2007, Gregorini has authored more than 56 peer-reviewed scientific articles, four international booked chapters, more than 80 conference papers and held 55 'invited speaker' presentations in Australasia,

Europe, USA and South America. After such an illustrious and comprehensive career, his lecturing passion remained and the professor joined Lincoln University in 2017, employed as the Professor of Livestock Production and the Head of the Centre of Excellence Designing Future Productive Landscapes.

"I feel that I'm not only informing, but also forming future farmers, consultants, and scientists," he said. "That is a huge honour and learning experience for me too."

His PhD students are carrying his torch high; looking at using benefits from the natural environment to enhance future livestock production systems. This includes how those on the land can better capture and sequester carbon, as well as improve grazing country. The team of researchers is delving deeply into how farmers can provide better diets and grazing environments for cattle, sheep and deer in the agricultural sector, to better the lives of the animals.



The passionate teacher works full-time at Lincoln University, advising eight PhD students and two post-doctoral fellows whilst teaching three courses: Dairy Production Science; Meat and Wool Production; and Advanced Livestock Production.

ABOVE: It's been a dream of the Gregorini's to own & breed their own livestock
BELOW: Eva (11), Sofia (9) & Manola (6) show their love for animals and the outdoors

The welfare of the animals is of utmost importance according to Gregorini. "People who pay for meat want to know the animals have a life worth living," he said. "These students are putting in a lot of hard work to help provide farmers with nutritional and grazing management tools to enhance their livestock's good lives as much as possible."

This consumer trend towards ideological, 'green' choices is supported by the facts; according to beef + lamb NZ, retail sales of labelled, fresh grass-fed beef reached USD \$272 million in 2016 in the United States—up from USD \$17 million in 2012—with sales doubling every year.

New Zealand remains unique on a global scale; exporting more than more than 90 percent of its sheep meat and beef, while remaining niche producers with a feeding capacity of only 30 million people. And with the United States taking 50 percent of New Zealand's exports, it makes sense for farmers to take



note of this emerging international cultural narrative and how they can be as clean, 'green' and sustainable as possible.

It was thanks to Gregorini's academic passion that he met the next love of his life; his American cowgirl wife Mindy. "I met Mindy while finishing my PhD in the USA; she was finishing her degree in Poultry Science at the University of Arkansas," Pablo said. "She's a real great partner for me, as she loves animals and country life; she's a real cowgirl."

Together, the two have eked out a lifestyle that takes the best from both the professional and farming worlds. Sustainability is key on their 10 acre block; growing and preparing much of their kitchen table produce themselves

"It was always a dream of mine to have a small breeding herd, and I think that small frame score animals, such as my Lowline Angus, are better suited not only for lifestyle blockers, but other livestock operations as well. Our bull is the son of a New Zealand champion, out of Ashmore Stud in Ashburton," he continued. "Suffolk is another great source of meat, and that's why that breed works with me. In addition, Mindy owns two Fresian-Awassi cross milking ewes, and milks for home dairy use, making her own cheese and yoghurt."

Pablo takes care of what he calls his 'mini operation' before and after work at the University, while Mindy handles the feline and canine breeding side; producing quality

The cats are a vital part of the extended menagerie. "Mindy loves breeding ragdolls. It's a breed that's easy to work with, and she can make her own schedule, so she can also help out with other responsibilities. It is, however, something one has to be very dedicated to, as the housing facility must be kept very clean, and each and every cat and kitten must be handled regularly, not only for cuddling and grooming, but also to assess health and wellbeing," he said.

"Mindy spends lots of time making sure the cats have a very clean and comfortable living area, and that they are happy and healthy. She only sells domestically, as she wouldn't want to stress a cat with a long flight; but selling locally enables her to interview each potential buyer for suitability, and gives the buyers the chance to come and meet Mindy and the kittens before making their purchase."

In his rare downtime, Gregorini enjoys getting out into the hills on tramping missions and fly-fishing expeditions. "I also enjoy barbecuing beef at home on our Argentine style barbecue and drinking red wine— Cabernet Sauvignon if possible," he said. "And, I brew my own beer too!"

Pablo has been awarded for his scientific and academic merit many times, from early in his career. In 1998 he was awarded the Advanced Student Award from the Argentinean Association of Animal Production, before receiving the Young Overseas Researchers Award from the Netherlands' Wageningen Agricultural University in 2002. Then in 2005, his academic merit was acknowledged by the International Livestock Congress, and was inducted into the Gamma Sigma Delta Honour Society of Agriculture in the United States a few months later.



with a flourishing vegetable garden, orchard, chickens and two dairy sheep.

A Lowline Angus bull, 10 heifers, a Suffolk ram and 10 ewes are a dream come true for the pair.

"Mindy and I have always loved agriculture and it has always been our dream to own and breed livestock. As soon as we had the resources, we set about forming our little herds and we have enjoyed every moment of it," Pablo explained.

"Of course, it's not without its challenges. Farming on a lifestyle block can be complicated. For example, managing pasture and resources when companies, machinery, and contractors are set for big enterprises can be difficult, and finding time to care for all the stock in between working outside the home and managing the children's school activities can be tricky. However, this is definitely the lifestyle for us, and we are glad to be raising our kids to know not only where their food comes from, but how to grow it and care for the land."

Pablo jokes that his choice of livestock comes from his carnivorous Argentine background.

Ragdoll cats, miniature poodles and fox-red English Labradors. Around their work come the children and all of their idiosyncrasies and extra-curricular itineraries.

"Eva is 11-years-old and loves soccer and training her Labrador, Honey," Pablo said. "Sofia is nine-years-old and enjoys gymnastics and adores the cats and helping mum with the kittens. While six-year-old Manolo is my little cowboy, and loves getting muddy and helping me care for the stock and maintaining our block."

Mindy chose to get into breeding Ragdoll cats eight years ago. "They are characterised by having a very outgoing and friendly nature. They are chatty, always letting you know when they need something, and love their people, often following their owners from room to room," Gregorini said. "Our retired tom cat follows us everywhere, and he's usually right there along with the dogs and I when we do our daily farm chores. I often joke that they're the 'dogs' of the cat world. They even like to have their bellies rubbed!"

ABOVE: Pablo's "mini operation" comprises of a Lowline Angus bull, 10 heifers, a Suffolk ram and 10 ewes
BELOW: Mindy handles the feline and canine breeding side; producing quality Ragdoll cats, miniature poodles and fox-red English Labradors





The professor is organising Lincoln University's first international workshop on 'Grazing in Future Multiscapes: From Mindscapes to Landscapes; Building Health from the Ground Up' to be held towards the end of next year. Open to the public, the event will discuss the future of pastoral agriculture, with 20 expert speakers from around the globe. The panellists and speakers will be delving into the importance of agronomy and sustainable farming while covering all aspects of pastoralism.

Gregorini is especially future conscious, and keen to explore how farming needs to evolve and shift in order to be sustainable, whilst meeting the enormous—and increasing—global demand for food and fibre. This is particularly pertinent when looking forward towards the year 2050, where the estimated world population is a swollen 9.7 billion people.

Gregorini has been an integral part of new initiatives at Lincoln University, including last year's Designing Future Productive Landscapes, which involved students working within a 'living laboratory', 'incubating' ideas in the classroom which could then be 'hatched' in the field; with research projects around the sustainability of practices in hill country, dryland and irrigated landscapes.

In particular, the initiatives have looked at how global pressures are affecting landscapes around the world; diminishing biodiversity, reducing water and air quality and accelerating soil loss.

"Given New Zealand's economic reliance on food agricultural production and provenance, our global brand, prosperity and well-being are at risk," Gregorini said.

Lincoln University's network of farms places the institute in a prime position to delve deeply into how the future of farming could look, and what practices need to be encouraged to ensure the success of the agricultural industry.

"We want to create adaptive agroecosystems to reconnect our landscape, our livestock and ourselves, by restoring broken linkages among plants, herbivores and humans with diets that nourish and satiate, as well as heal our planet." The scientist is also in the process of setting up two 'future farms' to look at alternative land uses. "We are setting up a series of design workshops with farmers, stakeholders, and even primary and secondary school children, to help us create and implement these visions," he said.

"We want these farms to be catalysts for change, exploring concepts of future and systems thinking, future agro-ecosystems, and regenerative agriculture. One of the stations is located near Otago's Lake Hawea, and will become a centre of excellence for high country farming, while near Lincoln University, we're transforming a dry land sheep operation farm into a biodiverse farming operation."

The professor has the future of farming on his shoulders and hopes to see others take similar accountability.

"The future of farming, to me, is all on us," he said. "Agricultural products reflect the history

ABOVE: Their Lowline Angus bull is the son of a New Zealand champion, out of Ashmore Stud in Ashburton

BELOW: The Gregorini's have eked out a lifestyle that takes the best from both professional and farming worlds

of landscapes, foodscapes and thereby agricultural and grazing systems, manifested through soil and plant chemistry, and ourselves and our planet's health. Ultimately, we are what our food eats. What we do to the land, we do to ourselves. In the end, by nurturing the land, we nurture ourselves."





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Coastal challenge continues to charm



Situated in the central zone of the Canterbury Bight and with endless views of the Pacific Ocean, the Ruralco Longbeach Coastal Challenge is a once-a-year opportunity to mountain bike, run or walk along a spectacular section of Canterbury coastline.

WORDS & IMAGES SUPPLIED BY RACHAEL RICKARD, LONGBEACH COASTAL CHALLENGE COMMITTEE

For the past thirteen years the Ruralco Longbeach Coastal Challenge, a partnership between the Longbeach School and Hinds and District Lions, has been a mainstay of the Mid Canterbury events calendar. The event attracts fast-paced competitive athletes, have-a-go weekend riders, recreational runners and enthusiastic children all to experience the unique scenery, challenging but fun course and to support the local community.

In 2007 the Ruralco Longbeach Coastal Challenge began with just 259 competitors. Since then it has gone from strength to strength, reaching over 1,400 at the ten year anniversary. In 2018 the event attracted just under 1,000 competitors who raised \$30,000, which was split between the Hinds and Districts Lions and Longbeach Schools Charitable Trusts. Many locals are charmed by this event and return year after year—to try a new course; to challenge themselves; to better a previous time or to enjoy

a day of community spirit and a delicious steak sandwich (post-race of course!)

The funds raised from this event, more than \$250,000 since the inception, have given both organisations a huge boost. The Hinds and District Lions Charitable Trust invest the funds back into the local community as well as to other worthwhile causes, like the Maia Health Foundation. This Foundation is currently raising funds for a roof-top helipad at Christchurch Hospital, which will eliminate the transit between the Hagley Park helipad and the hospital. The Lions have indicated a commitment to continue their support of Maia whose future projects involve enhancing children's facilities for the hospital.

The Longbeach School Charitable Trust have invested money directly into the school, helping to ensure that there are as few barriers to education as possible. Proceeds from this event help provide extra support for students by allowing the school to employ teacher aides. Teacher aides not only help those students who find learning a challenge but also assist those students who require extension. Other areas of the school which have benefited include; the purchase of additional educational resources, a volley wall, mathematics equipment, funding to support student leadership courses, and assisting the construction of a new senior playground. Entries are open for the 2019 event and planning is already well underway. Continued support from our family of sponsors ensures the committee can keep operational costs as low as possible. The course will again start and finish at the historic

Longbeach Estate and support from landowners and their families is paramount to the success of this event. Enough thanks cannot be given to the farmers who literally throw open their gates and allow access to their paddocks, laneways and boundaries. This year tracks will be largely the same as previous years and will continue to give competitors unprecedented access to historical farmland and amazing coastline.

Come and be charmed by this fantastic event. Challenge yourself with the 35km Classic or 23km Recreational mountain bike ride. Alternatively, get the family together for the 12km Family Ride. If biking is not for you then lace up your trainers and test yourself with the 21km off-road half marathon or get your running buddies together for the 12km or 5km recreational and fun run. After less huff and puff? Then why not soak up the scenery on the 12km or 5km walks. There is an event for everyone, just pop this date into your diary: Sunday 24 November 2019 and enter online today!

Ruralco Longbeach Coastal Challenge

WHEN:	Sunday 24 November 2019
EVENTS:	Mountain Bike 35km, 23km or 12km; Run 21km, 12km, 5km; Walk 12km, 5km.
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and hundreds of beautiful product samples within easy reach. From curtain fabric samples, operational blind, shutters and outdoor awnings displays, wallpaper inspiration, a full-service flooring department and in-store Dulux trade depot.

Jo has owned and operated Colourplus for 13 years. Along with her stylish, professional and down-to-earth team, they bring a fresh eye to every project.

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China's challenge shifts with time



China is now the big engine driving New Zealand's export value and volume for the primary sector, with almost three times the trade there than to the United States. New Zealand has been deservedly proud of the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) signed over a decade ago, the first by any country to do so with China. In that time New Zealand's exports to China have quadrupled, with China our largest trading partner and two-way trade valued at \$27 billion last year.

WORDS & IMAGES BY RICHARD RENNIE



ABOVE: Chinese dairy operation

However, the market today is a more competitive, sophisticated one than it was a decade ago, presenting challenges, but also new opportunities for our primary sector. Richard Rennie recently visited the giant Tier 1 cities of Beijing and Shanghai to see where those challenges and opportunities lie.

When looking at China as a potential market, the biggest mistake to make is to think of it as just that, "China", a bland large description of a country that is largely the same from one side to the other.

As one experienced New Zealand marketer in China said, it's a mistake easy to make, and similar to thinking that all of "Europe" is the same under that single umbrella description, but most Kiwis would well know the stark differences between its constituent countries, with the likes of the Germans, Italians and French never for a minute considering themselves anything alike.

And so it is to some extent for China. With its vast distances and five distinct regions, there are major variations among all in food, customs, business practices and even how they speak.

It is quite possible for a businessman from the southern province of Guangdong to need a translator when visiting clients in the northern reaches of Heilongjiang— China most certainly is not a uniform China, this is part of its charm, but also its challenge. The best move then for a fledgling Kiwi exporter is to break this giant country down into regions, or even better into cities—focussing upon a particular city, understanding that market and working into it accordingly.

Long-time Beijing resident and New Zealander David Mahon frequently offers a perspective on China to media, being generous with his time and his opinions on how the two countries are evolving as trade partners.

He urges firms to do their due diligence very thoroughly, ensure they have the scale to cope and gather as much market intelligence as possible before taking the plunge.

"You have to remember this is a market that has almost quadrupled over this time (of FTA). With that comes a lot more competition, and that includes strong competition from within, from Chinese companies themselves."

This is becoming more apparent in the dairy sector, with state sponsored dairy companies engaged in massive consolidation of farm to factor operations, often owning the farm milk sources.

This helps achieve the government's goal of shortening the supply chain from cow to consumer, helping maintain tighter quality control standards and meet consumers' food safety expectations.

The need for China to continue buying quality New Zealand pasture based whole milk powder is unlikely to diminish, with the infant formula market maintaining strong sales, but competition in the chilled and fresh milk market has grown.

This has come not only from Government efforts to boost consumption of milk as a food dense in healthy components.

It has also arisen thanks to the improvement in infrastructure networks around the larger Tier 1 and 2 cities, where it is increasingly possible to a growing network of app based delivery services shortening delivery times to sometimes under an hour from ordering. Chinese consumers are now ordering up to 50% of all purchases, including food, online, well ahead of New Zealand at under 10%.

New Zealand based Theland Farm Groups whose properties include those once owned by Synlait in Canterbury and Crafar Farms in the North Island is now airfreighting 40,000 litres a week to Shanghai, with plans to increase that to 100,000 litres in the coming year.

Fetching a premium and selling for the equivalent of NZ\$14 a litre, the company is leveraging off its "cow and acre" claim as a free range, pasture-based source for the milk.

The company made good use of Chinese social media influencers at its launch from New Zealand in 2017, teaming up with online giant Alibaba to televise the launch to millions back in China.

David Mahon says the ability of New Zealanders to work well with Chinese counterparts, and being highly trustworthy are traits that should not be underestimated in the enormous market. He points to the efforts by Zespri to correct its problems after its import documentation scandal in 2011 that earned the company a great deal of respect for its transparency and efforts to improve.

Despite the challenges David continues to see opportunities for New Zealand in China. He sees Manuka honey as one with great potential, but also with a need to consolidate its small producers under one umbrella label, lest they start to cannibalise each other for sales.



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New Zealand's wellbeing not just about the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff



The government's Wellbeing Budget in May focused on the wellbeing and health of every New-Zealander. For example, \$1.7 billion was invested in hospital facilities alone.

WORDS AND IMAGES SUPPLIED BY
HORTICULTURE NEW ZEALAND

Like every other country in the world, New Zealand is struggling to keep pace with the demand for health services. One statistic illustrates this point well: global prevalence of diabetes in adults rose from 4.7% in 1980 to 8.5% in 2014 with the major contributor being poor diet.

At the Mystery Creek Fielddays in early June, the Global Head of Agribusiness at KPMG International, Ian Proudfoot said that healthy eating will become an absolute necessity as no country's health system can continue to fund the massive range of treatments now required as a consequence of poor diets and unhealthy foods.

Massive savings could be made on health expenditure if people changed their diet and started to eat more healthy food on a regular basis. There is a catch here, however: to eat healthy food, we need to be able to have the land, water and approval to grow it.

Across New Zealand, the horticulture industry is facing increasing challenges to its ability to grow fresh fruit and vegetables. Having the right land to grow on, enough water for the plants, and councils' regulatory approval are all essential ingredients.

Right now, New Zealand is losing high quality land that is best suited to efficiently growing healthy produce to house and lifestyle blocks. Water consents are becoming more difficult to get and even where there is an allocation, it is being reduced in many catchments. Lastly, councils are not recognising the need to ensure that New Zealand can feed itself with healthy food. HortNZ is working to find ways forward on all three of these challenges.

Access to water is a real conundrum as paradoxically, we are facing a water supply

crisis in all of our key growing areas in New Zealand.

Unlike most of the world, our water crisis is not that we do not have enough water. Our water crisis is we do not capture, store and use our water to sustain our rural economy and meet ever increasing urban demands. According to NIWA, 80% of New Zealand's rainfall runs out to sea, 18% evaporates and only 2% is actually used. Therefore, we have virtually unlimited potential to make much better use of our rainfall.

In many regions, the prospect of water taking being compulsorily reduced is real and as already noted, there is the challenge to get new and renewed water consents. In addition, we face the likelihood of increased droughts due to the impact of climate change.

Water is a critical element to feed New Zealand. Getting this message across to the Government is one of our top priorities at present: water capture and storage is a must for New Zealand's future sustainability.

Water storage has many advantages, including meeting the ever increasing demands of urban New Zealand for a reliable water supply.

Water storage also makes a big contribution to environmental sustainability. This is because during time of heavy rain fall, water is captured and stored reducing the impacts of flooding and the silting of rivers, which makes it all but impossible for the survival of fish and aquatic species.

Of course, when there is drought, the stored water can be used to maintain river and stream flows to enable aquatic life and fish to survive. In addition, for horticulture, it means that crops can continue to be grown and their quality maintained.

As New Zealand steps up to meet the dual challenges of climate change and feeding our citizens healthy food, many more water storage schemes will need to be built. The cost and scale of what is required is such that only the Government—working with local communities—can achieve what will be needed for our very survival and continued way of life as New Zealanders. That is why we need our Government to support more water storage initiatives, which will ultimately save on health care expenditure by preventing ill-health.



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Dairying in grain country

The genetic potential of the NZ dairy herd is, on one hand a reflection of years of hard work and investment and on the other hand lies largely untapped.

WORDS AND IMAGES SUPPLIED BY RUMINATE

So how do you realise the genetic potential of your herd? Well the first two pillars are great management and a balanced diet.

What exactly do I mean by a 'balanced diet'? The science of what a cow needs to perform to her genetic potential is well documented and has been known for decades—our challenge is to make that fit within our farming framework of resources and infrastructure and to do so profitably.

Let's start with grass, it's our cheapest and most abundant feed and will always be a large part of our diet make up, but it is certainly not a complete nor balanced diet. We could get into all sorts of detail about balancing the diet and fine tuning it, but the elephant in the room is starch.

As dairy managers, when it comes to feeding our job is actually to feed an army of microbes in the rumen. If we do this well they will feed the cow. To provide a degrees of perspective, a 5ml teaspoon of ruminal fluid contains more microbes than the planet earth has humans, so when we say it is an army of microbes, it really is an army. The majority of the protein and energy your cow requires is actually a by product of ruminal fermentation by this microbial army.

The important question then becomes 'what does this army need?' In broad terms, three

things—a protein source, an energy source and a stable environment. Grass certainly ticks the first box, it has protein to burn (usually), in fact it often has too much and this requires energy for the cow to process the surplus protein.

So what about energy? This is typically measured as ME but in a rumen we are feeding a continuous fermentation chamber and in this regard not all ME is created equal. The biggest contributor to improving rumen efficiency and feeding our microbial army thereby increasing energy and protein outflow to the cow, is starch. Unfortunately starch is grossly lacking in pasture.

So if you had to farm a dairy cow anywhere you should farm it close to a starch source and in this regard the wider Canterbury plains have nailed it. Surrounded by grain country you have starch at your doorstep and this gives you the opportunity to get closer to the genetic potential of your herd.

Of course there's no free lunch and there are some tricks to feeding starch safely and efficiently to ensure you do optimise your herds genetic potentially and do so profitably. Firstly your choice of starch is important, grain is by far the best and keep the grain coarse. We often see grain milled very finely or even put into a pellet thinking it will be utilised better – if you can't



ABOVE: Ruminal scarring from Acidosis

see any in the dung it must good right? Well no, if you see grain in the dung it means you haven't balanced the diet correctly and further processing the grain isn't the answer.

The most important aspect when feeding starch is ruminal pH buffering, providing a stable environment. As we discussed earlier we are feeding a microbial army and when we do that with starch we greatly increase their numbers and their production. One of the downsides of this is the increased production can result in a rapidly decreasing ruminal pH leading to acidosis and sub clinical acidosis. Many farmers have seen the effects of this and it can make you very nervous about feeding too much starch. With the technology and additives we have available to us today this no longer has to be an issue. Ruminal pH buffering can not only make grain feeding very very safe but in doing so it greatly improves the efficiency of high grain or high starch diets and therefore improves the return from that investment.

If you want to learn more about safely feeding higher starch levels in your herd and getting closer to the genetic potential that already exists in your cows then talk to your Ruralco team.



Disbudding—doing more than the minimum

Farmers should be proud of the progress they've made in provision of pain relief for their animals, and disbudding is a great example of this

WORDS & IMAGES SUPPLIED BY JACQUELINE MCGOWAN, DAIRYNZ DEVELOPER, ANIMAL CARE TEAM

The dairy sector is committed to ensuring the disbudding process is as pain-free as possible for calves. I know this first-hand, as in the Animal Care team, we work closely with farmers across the country.

From October 1, 2019, all cattle must be provided with effective local anaesthesia before disbudding or dehorning. But the good news is that most farmers won't be required to make any changes. If their calves aren't already receiving local anaesthetic their veterinarian or disbudding service provider will start using it this October.

Options for farmers who disbud their own calves

The challenge we have is how to support the 15 percent of farmers who currently disbud their own calves. To continue to disbud their own calves after 1 October 2019, farmers will need to be trained by their veterinarian to administer a local anaesthetic block.

I appreciate these farmers need a method that is easy to learn and numbs the horn buds quickly and reliably, because they won't get as much practice as vets or disbudding providers, and they need to fit disbudding around other farm work as well.

Vetlife, a veterinary practice in the South Island, have been researching the bleb-block method of administering local anaesthetic as an alternative to the traditional cornual nerve block which takes about 10 minutes to work.

I believe the ease of administration and the faster onset of the bleb block method might be a good option for farmers who disbud their own calves.

The next step in Vetife's research is to investigate the effectiveness of the bleb-block when administered by trained farmers.



Extending pain relief beyond local anaesthetic

It's positive to know that farmers are increasingly wanting to do more than the minimum for their calves. That's because, while local anaesthetic must be used, it only numbs the horn bud for about two hours. And most farmers know that calves feel pain for four to six hours after disbudding and are tender for much longer than that.

Research has demonstrated that providing more comprehensive or longer lasting pain relief can improve milk consumption and growth of calves after disbudding.

For many years, long-acting nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) were the only option farmers had to extend pain relief beyond the two hours provided by local anaesthetic. NSAIDs are very effective but are not cheap and they sometimes cause upset tummies if not managed well, so uptake by farmers has been a bit slow.

I'm excited to see new options, such as a topical anaesthetic that dramatically improves pain relief and is about \$1 per calf. It's well worth farmers talking to their vet or disbudding provider about what pain relief options are available so they can continue to feel they are doing the best for their animals.

Pain relief benefits

Aside from protecting calves' wellbeing, pain relief has many benefits:

- Easier and safer handling—calves struggle less when given local anaesthetic prior to disbudding, making it safer and easier for the operator and less stressful for the calf;
- Reduced risk of regrowth—because the calves are easier to handle, more care can be taken to completely remove the horn bud;
- We are world-leaders in animal care and our consumers expect high standards of animal care;
- Calves grow faster after disbudding if they are given pain relief. New Zealand research has found higher growth rates in calves that received more comprehensive pain relief prior to disbudding, meaning they reach weaning weight about six days earlier.

Key points

- Pain relief is essential for disbudding and improves recovery;
- Training is required before administering local anaesthetic;
- The most common method of administering local anaesthetic, via a cornual nerve block, requires patience and practice to be consistently effective;
- A bleb block is an alternative method of administering local—it's quicker and consistently effective;
- Local anaesthetics in New Zealand last about two hours, so a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug or long-acting topical anaesthetic can be used to extend pain relief for a further 24-72hrs.

See the June issue of DairyNZ's Technical Series for more information dairynz.co.nz/TS-June-2019

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SF LIFTA™ is Back!

ARTICLE SUPPLIED BY:



This season Seed Force is pleased to announce the availability again of the proven fodder beet variety SF LIFTA. Which is great news for farmers looking for a high performing and versatile variety which can be grazed in-situ, self-harvested with a beet bucket or mechanically harvested.

"An important characteristic of SF LIFTA is its bulb uniformity, which makes it suitable for mechanical harvesting, while its proportion of bulb above ground allows for high utilisation when grazing," says Seed Force Commercial Extension Manager James White.

"SF LIFTA is a medium to high dry matter variety and is a standout with its high leaf quality. This dry matter range enables high yields to be achieved, and we have observed this in both our long-term variety trials and

across a range of commercial paddocks throughout the country," James says.

To achieve the high potential yields that SF LIFTA offers, it is important that the crop is well planned, and some key tips followed. Now is an opportune time to plan for this year's beet plantings, if you haven't already.

"The targeted end use of the crop is one of the very first things to consider, as this will determine the required row spacings if some or all of the crop is to be mechanically harvested due to the requirements of the machinery being used. If the crop is to be grazed then this is less crucial, although having the flexibility to lift if need be is a good planning tool regardless," advises James.

Once the end use is determined for the crop, paddock suitability and selection are essential next steps in the planning process. James says several considerations are key, including; paddock location, soil type, paddock suitability, topography, proximity to waterways, environmental and nutrient

regulations, run off availability, paddock accessibility and allowing for feed consistency. Thorough paddock planning and preparation is time and money well spent, he says.

"Three drivers help determine a successful crop – even germination, speed to canopy cover and maintaining a healthy canopy. With up to two thirds of total crop yield dictated by activities carried out before seedling emergence, it is important farmers follow best practice from the outset."

"Paddocks should be identified early and tested to determine the soil pH (the aim is 6.2) and availability of other key nutrients. Always check the chemical history of the paddock as some residual chemicals used previously can have a negative effect on the subsequent beet crop."

"Fodder and sugar beet roots can go down to 1.5 m with no obstructions, so we always recommend checking soil structure before paddock preparation and sowing. A good way to do this is to dig a soil inspection pit to determine if any pans are present, and if so to determine their depth for shattering by subsoiling. After spraying out, farmers can then use a subsoiler/ripper if required (leaving wet soil at depth) set to a depth of 50 mm maximum below any pans," James says.

Following winter and when conditions allow, the main cultivation should be carried out well in advance of planting to allow soil weathering and a weed flush. Base fertiliser should be applied after the main cultivation and aim for a level finish.

"It's always worth the wait to be patient for correct ground conditions to allow working." Workings can be consolidated within a few days to help minimise moisture loss, and subsequently final working can be carried out to create the seedbed for planting. To avoid weed beet, pest and soil consolidation issues, double or multiyear beet crops in the same paddock should be avoided.

"Taking the time to plan all the stages of beet from preparation through to growing and feeding will help ensure the best results."

For more detail on planning for your SF LIFTA fodder beet crops contact Ruralco Seed.

IMAGE: An example of SF LIFTA being utilised for both grazing and harvesting in Mid Canterbury

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Making positive changes on farm

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competition from a productive pasture will challenge the young seedlings establishment and vigour.

It is recommended to start by adding 3–4 kg/ha of Ecotain in with a full pasture mix. It is important to add it on top of your planned mix and not substitute it for ryegrass or clover. If a substitution approach is taken, it is worth recognising that weed control can be more problematic and there is a need to reduce the sowing rate of Ecotain to compensate for less grass and clover in the overall mix. For example, if a sowing rate of ryegrass is reduced to 16 kg/ha, the Ecotain should also be reduced to 2 kg/ha instead of 3–4 kg/ha.

Weeds in Ecotain based pastures can be controlled using various techniques. The most popular among farmers is to use stocking rate and grazing pressure early in the life of a new pasture. Soil fertility is also an important part to get right. If anything is limiting (particularly nitrogen), establishment can take considerably longer and give rise to weed pressure. In the event of high weed pressure pastures can be proactively topped. One of the merits of this technique is that it comes with little cost and is more environmentally friendly. Pastures containing Ecotain are generally more resilient than straight rye/clover mixes as the diversity adds quality and growth through warm summer conditions. While it is not often considered a drought tolerant species, it is very fast to respond to rainfall through autumn.

For more information on Ecotain talk to your local Ruralco representative.

Changing milking frequency from twice a day to once a day or going to 16 hours isn't hard, but it requires a change in mindset. Introducing Ecotain® environmental plantain into a farm system is the same.

For many years farmers have made re-grassing decisions based on production, persistence and pasture quality. While this remains true, now is the time to also consider using forages that will reduce nitrate leaching.

Having a focus on environmental impact including nitrate leaching should be at the forefront of re-grassing decisions as agriculture very quickly moves into a new era of environmental compliance.

Ecotain offers many benefits; it will enhance forage diversity and pasture quality, while also delivering significant proven nitrate leaching reductions. In the near future this will be recognised by models and regulatory agencies as a mitigation tool.

Ecotain is the only plantain scientifically proven to work in four independent ways. While the science behind Ecotain is important, it's the integration into a farm system that is paramount. Therefore, there

are several considerations to be aware of before using Ecotain.

Ecotain is best sown in with a new pasture from the outset as some reductions in N-leaching can start from the first grazing. Aiming for 30% of the sward is a good starting point, while still recognising the important contribution that clovers and grasses provide for milk production and animal health. Opting to leave Ecotain out at establishment can make it more challenging to establish later, as

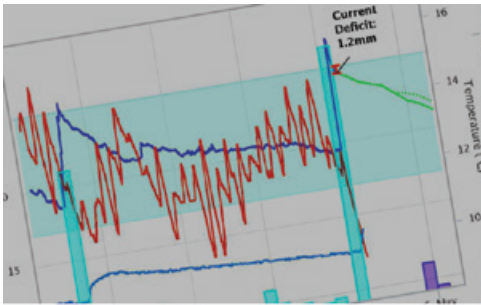


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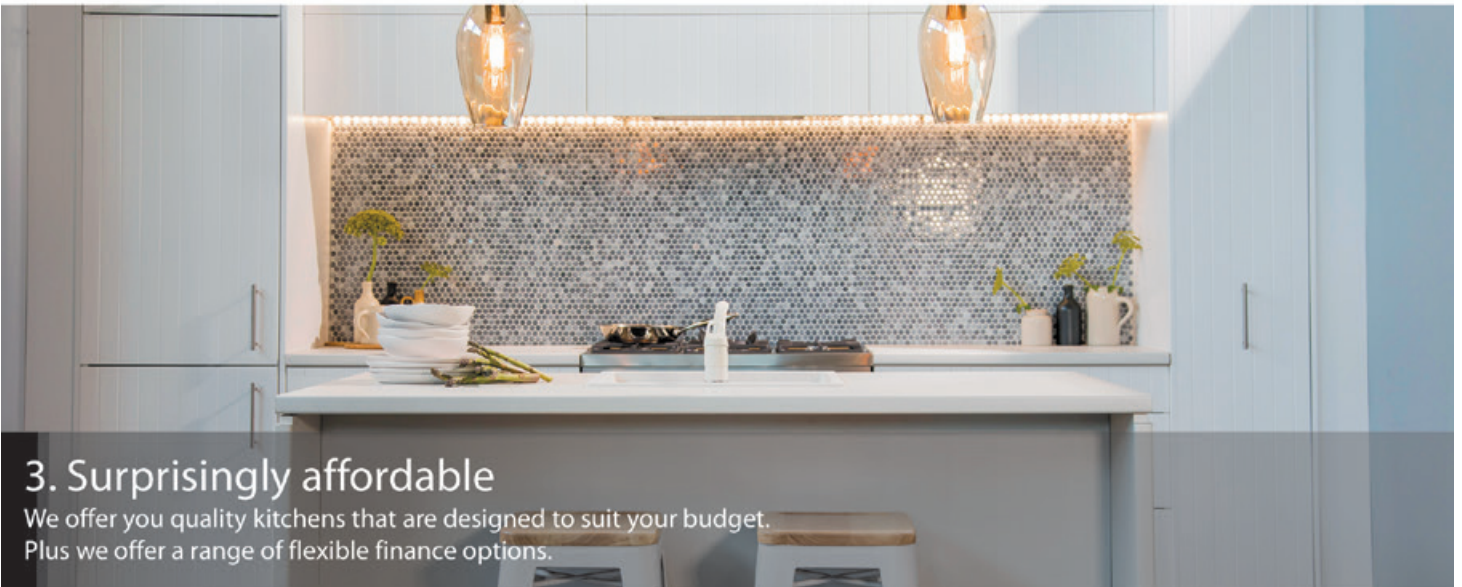
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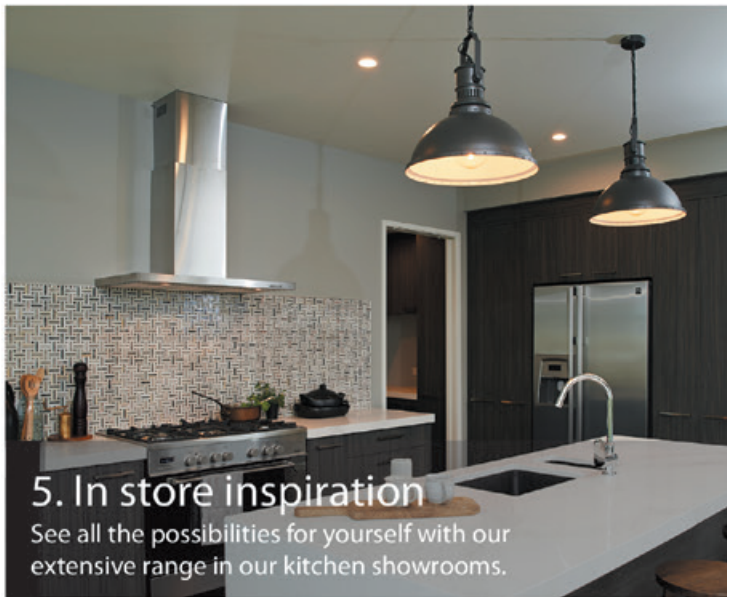
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Five ways to wellness

Compliance Partners have been hosting Calving Survival Workshops throughout Mid Canterbury this June/July. Along the road, we've been talking about mental health and wellbeing with Pup Chamberlain. In this article we thought we'd outline the five ways to wellness. WORDS & IMAGES SUPPLIED BY COMPLIANCE PARTNERS



First and foremost, being mentally well is just the same as being physically well. As Pup would say, if our mind isn't working as it should be then we're not on the top of our game. It's OK to be unwell physically right? So, it's actually OK to be unwell mentally, it's the same principle, just different part of our body.

Five Ways to Wellness

Evidence shows us that CONNECTION with others promotes our wellbeing and helps us to build our support network for when things aren't going quite right. It's important to have those social moments, those times when we're there with others, talking and listening and feeling like you belong. How do we connect? Have a coffee with a friend, ring a mate, plan for some friends to come for dinner, play with your kids, join a local club or play a sport. Anything that takes you either off farm to surround yourself with others or brings others to you for that social time. Go on, give it a go, ring a mate and catch up, see how you feel after?

Keep up the LEARNING. Setting self-goals and learning new things helps boost our wellbeing, improves our self-esteem and helps us to find meaning. It's not just about formal learning either, it's about embracing new experiences or trying something out with others. We can learn through taking a

training course, learning a new language on the Duolingo app, visiting the museum or art gallery, setting a goal, joining a club, trying a new sport or listening to a podcast or radio show. Decide today on what you're going to embrace that's new to you and see how it helps your mood?

Being ACTIVE is a major contributor to how we feel. It can improve our mood as well as our overall mental wellbeing. Also, being with others helps us with that connection, and we might be motivated to set a goal or learn a new sport. The physical benefits also help! It doesn't have to be that you go for a full-blown workout either, just take the time to go for a walk or bike ride with your kids or maybe do some gardening. Something that just takes you away from work or farm jobs. What will you do today to get active on farm?

When we GIVE to others it helps give us a sense of purpose and self-worth. Giving also builds mana and connection with others. A culture of giving helps build a positive environment and can also promote teamwork, so a perfect thing to encourage amongst the team on farm. Giving doesn't always have to be about money, giving someone a smile or a compliment, helping someone with their work, getting involved in a community group or event can be just

as beneficial to your mental wellbeing as donating money to a cause. Think of the last time you gave something do you remember how it made you feel?

Have you ever heard about being in the moment? TAKING NOTICE of where we are and what we have is extremely important to our wellbeing. Becoming more aware of the moment means noticing the sights, smells, sounds and tastes we're experiencing, as well as the thoughts and feelings that occur from this. It's about reconnecting with the world around us, appreciating the little things and savouring the moment. We live in a beautiful part of the country and as farmers we are lucky enough to get that gorgeous early morning light which is the best light we can get. Take a moment each day to look at the mountains and appreciate them, sit quietly and reflect on your day, listen to your favourite music and take a break from the screen!

If you feel that you might like to talk to someone about how you're currently feeling, approach someone in your network, or free text or call 1737 at any time for support from a trained counsellor.

For more information and to read more about this, our information was sourced from the Mental Health Foundation (www.mentalhealth.org.nz).

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Meeting challenges head on

I often blithely tell people that organising a conference is just like organising a child's birthday party. WORDS & IMAGES SUPPLIED BY FAR

Check there's no date clash, lock in a venue, get the invitations out in plenty of time, ensure the entertainment is good, that the food and drink are better, stick to the budget and finally, keep your fingers crossed nothing terrible happens (I've had conferences impacted by snowstorms and earthquakes) and that everyone goes away happy. But in truth, planning a conference is nerve wracking and a lot of work.

The final lead up to FAR's 2019 Conference was more nerve wracking than usual. There were no problems with the basics; venues, sponsors, speakers, and menus were all sorted, and registrations were flowing in.

The anxiety came as we looked closely at the key messages coming out of each of our three sessions: Soil, Water and Nutrients, Crop Protection, and Innovation and Technology. Where previous conferences had introduced new strategies and tools to help our growers solve problems and produce more and better crops, this time the messages were more sobering. Our speakers were outlining serious challenges, things like climate change, nutrient leaching, ongoing access to agrichemicals and a whole lot of compliance. There were definitely more problems than solutions, and a definite risk of sending our audience of hard working, passionate

cropping farmers and professionals home feeling anything but cheerful.

As it turned out, we needn't have worried. Feedback on the range of topics and the quality of the speakers has been very positive, but more importantly, there was overwhelming support for our readiness to acknowledge such big challenges.

In fact, the general message has been that FAR's 2019 Research Leading Change conference was our best ever. It is fantastic to know that the arable industry is recognising the issues coming at it. We look forward to working with you on designing and delivering practical solutions.



IMAGE: The general message has been that FAR's 2019 Research Leading Change conference was our best ever

limited and the principles of resistance management are not always agreed. On top of this, recent moves to promote more integrated practices and reduced reliance on pesticides have been hampered by resistance developments. New fungicide actives are likely to be available in the UK in 2020, but these too will need to be stewarded against resistance. Fungicide resistance management is a global issue and the UK perspective may help to inform on the most likely win:wins in best stewardship advice."

The third keynote speaker was University of Canterbury Professor of Toxicology, Ian Shaw, who asked whether it might be "time to rethink our use of glyphosate". Prof Shaw outlined the regulatory processes around pesticide approval, before moving on to explain how scientific understanding of glyphosate's toxicity profile has developed over time. He recognised the role of glyphosate in arable systems, but concluded that glyphosate, like all chemicals, should be used with care, and only when less benign options were not available. He also saw merit in introducing withholding periods for livestock grazing after glyphosate application.

The final keynote speaker, in the Innovation and Technology session, was Andy Macfarlane, who provided a long list of challenges for arable growers, processors and marketers. He reminded the audience that while there is a lot of hype around plant based diets, New Zealand grown plant proteins would need to compete with soybeans on a commodity market, and that at present, most protein crops are reliant on glyphosate and GE technology. He warned that many of the world's most productive arable soils are low lying, and near cities, that global grain yields look less stable under climate change scenarios and that any productivity gains in output will have to be carbon neutral or negative.

However, he also listed a number of positives as well, pointing out that global demand for protein, carbohydrate and essential nutrients will rise with increased population and that New Zealand was well set up to meet increasing societal expectations for managing health and wellbeing through special dietary components and healthy food. He concluded by noting that system integrity, transparency, efficiency, demonstrable ethics and a professional mindset, will be a key to success.

So in the end, the take home messages from the conference were definitely positive. We have a strong industry, united in its determination to acknowledge challenges and seek solutions. Go arable!

FAR CEO Alison Stewart says such positivity makes her feel confident about the way forward for the arable sector.

"Even though we are being faced with challenges from every angle, the mood was definitely upbeat. Growers recognised the need to embrace new systems and technologies, encouraging each other to step up to the challenge, and more importantly, look to capture the many new opportunities out there for plant based products.

"Our industry has many highly successful growers who are adept at managing change and have been able to stay relevant, and most importantly, profitable. We have to learn from their experiences and support the wider industry to achieve similar success. Supporting effective grower to grower knowledge exchange is going to be a major focus for FAR over the coming year with the idea that the theme of our next conference will be "Growers Leading Change."

Conference highlights

Our first keynote speaker was Simon Upton, Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, who pointed out that while the pastoral industry's four legged "mobile bioreactors" get the most attention as polluters, the arable sector, also contributes. He noted that the manufacture and use of nitrogen fertiliser dominates the arable sector's greenhouse gas emissions as well as its contribution to water quality degradation, concluding that "managing nitrogen inputs to crops will be crucial in decreasing the sector's environmental impact".

The second keynote, in the Crop Protection session was Prof Fiona Burnett from Scotland's Rural College. Prof Burnett outlined the development of fungicide resistance in the UK as well as some of the challenges of implementing fungicide resistance advice.

"The science of fungicide resistance is complicated—information is often



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Electricity generation landscape shifts under low carbon demands



Over the coming months New-Zealanders are going to start getting a clearer picture of what life will be like heading to 2050 as the country attempts to move towards the goal of being a zero-carbon economy.

WORDS BY RICHARD RENNIE

The rural sector in particular has become familiar with how some of this will look, now methane has been separated from other gas emissions and cannot be offset by planting trees.

This requires the sector to make real and measurable steps to curb the gas released by its ruminant animals, namely cattle and sheep, while other sectors like transport and energy can offset emissions through tree planting.

This is part of the aim behind the government's "billion trees a year" policy, one that will require about 100,000ha a year to go into trees over the next 10 years. Of that about half comprises established forestry country, but the remainder has to come from new country being committed to forestry. However the Productivity Commission's report into achieving a low carbon economy called for this planting rate to continue to 2050 to achieve a zero carbon economy.

Debate is presently swirling around how realistic the goal is, and whether the pastoral sector can afford to lose about 50,000ha a year from its area to trees for the next 30 years.

Forest Owners Association president Peter Weir has challenged the numbers on the sheer scale of plantings required to achieve the commission's mid-point goal of 2 million extra hectares in trees. But an equally important challenge to the zero carbon goals has also been raised by the electricity sector. As part of the zero carbon

goals the government plans to move to a 100% renewable electricity sector by 2035.

This would only be required in a "normal hydrological year", allowing for some gas fired back up generation in particularly dry years.

At present New Zealand has an already enviable global record of having 85% of its energy coming from renewable sources, largely hydro and geothermal, and itself a significant increase from 66% in 1987. But making the move to 100% renewable, as small as that step may appear, could prove to bring more than its share of political and economic headaches.

David Prentice, the chair of the interim climate change committee revealed earlier this year it could prove extremely expensive to require a 100% renewable energy supply.

Typically, about 20% of New Zealand's electricity is supplied through burning carbon-based fuel, whether it is coal or gas, and along with road transport has helped push up the country's total gross emissions. Agriculture now accounts for 45% of the country's emissions, while energy generation is 25%, and transport 20%.

Somewhat ironically in this age of global warming, lower water levels in our renewable hydro sourced sites have required more carbon based generation, in turn pushing up electricity generation's contribution to warming by 18%.

At its simplest, the 100% renewable policy would require more power stations on hand to produce renewable energy in power crisis years.

Prentice told the New Zealand Agriculture and Climate Change conference in Palmerston North earlier this year prices could be pushed north by 39%, with little environmental gain. This would include a rise of between 30-40% for industrial and commercial electricity prices. His figures highlighted the marginal costs New Zealand faces getting its already relatively high renewables use

even higher, with estimates of \$1200 a tonne of CO2 for the last one percent.

The interim climate change committee has already advised the government getting to 100% would be an "extravagant" move.

This is because of the need to have multiple power stations capable of maintaining a base load supply from renewable sources like wind, solar or geothermal. Gas fired "peaker" stations would be required to meet peak demand in winter when extra wind and solar generation simply cannot meet the high demand on calm, cold winter nights.

Wind and to a lesser extent solar generation are not as predictable in terms of output and the electricity they generate cannot be stored cost effectively. Large scale battery technology for doing so is advancing, but remains expensive for some time yet.

Capturing the last percentage points of renewable generation would require multiple wind stations all over the country, and possibly major investment in solar power on household and commercial properties.

The requirement to make electricity sources more renewable also comes as electricity demand is anticipated to double by 2050. Similarly, industrial site power sources, such as coal fired boilers and gas plants contribute to 15% of the country's power generation emissions and advice from the Productivity Commission is to "decarbonise" by switching to bio-mass fuel, or electricity.

Later this year MBIE will be releasing its initial draft for consultation outlining how to improve the energy efficiency of the industrial sector, including sourcing more renewable energy to supply it. Meantime the government has acknowledged the concerns raised by Prentice and the climate change committee.

Greens leader James Shaw has said the government is not fixed on its views around 100% renewables for electricity and would consider any advice the committee delivers.

Many in the electricity sector have argued the government should pursue a more realistic target, possibly 90% renewables. This would enable the provision for a back-up resource in gas and coal fired stations that can be fired up for surges in winter demand and dry year generation reserve.

James Shaw has said the government would also consider "green" hydrogen as an energy source where renewable generation sources like solar or wind produce hydrogen through electrolysis. This can then be stored and transported to be used directly as a fuel, injected into gas supply networks or converted to electricity use in a fuel cell.

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Test deep for cereals

Deep-rooting crops such as cereals can access nitrogen deep in the soil profile, so a deeper soil test helps in planning optimal fertiliser application for these crops.

WORDS SUPPLIED BY BALLANCE AGRI-NUTRIENTS



"If you've sown autumn cereals, then doing a Mineral N test early spring can help you refine your nitrogen (N) inputs," says Ballance Agri-Nutrients Science Extension Officer Aimee Dawson.

"Finding out the amount of N already available to the crop lets you work out just how much is needed to achieve its yield potential. Overapplying N can be detrimental to the crop, leading to over-tillering or lodging, and undersupplying can reduce yields or grain protein content," she says.

Not all N is equal

"The difference between the two types of N in soil—mineral N and organic N—is their availability to plants," says Aimee.

Mineral N refers to readily available forms of N plants can use, such as nitrate (NO₃⁻) and ammonium (NH₄⁺). Plants use NO₃⁻ and NH₄⁺ for producing proteins which are used for growth and development. Mineral N can change over time due to winter conditions (soil temperature and rainfall) and crop history. A Mineral N test is a snapshot in time that measures the N currently available for plant uptake

The other type, organic N, is found in organic matter which has to be mineralised to NH₄⁺ and NO₃⁻ before it can be taken up by plants. It is a longer term source of N and can change due to crop management. For example, cultivation over an extended period of time

decreases organic N, whereas retaining crop residue or applying organic matter such as manure can increase organic N.

Invaluable test

"A Mineral N test is invaluable for growing crops. It measures NH₄⁺ and NO₃⁻, both of which are readily available for plant uptake. For deep-rooting crops such as cereals, the test is done at a depth of 600 mm. For grass seed it's done at 300 mm," says Aimee.

"For autumn sown cereals, take the test in early spring before stem elongation, ahead of N side dressing. This allows you to know how much is in the soil before supplying the rest via fertiliser to meet the crop's demand for N. For grass seed, the test needs to be taken prior to closing, or as close to N application as possible."

To take the test, collect 10 to 12 samples per paddock, ensuring your sample is representative of the paddock. For accurate test results, fresh is best, so keep the samples cold. Use a chilly bin with ice or ice packs while sampling, and freeze samples as soon as possible. Use a polystyrene box with ice packs to send to the laboratory, and minimise delivery time by sending late on a Monday to Thursday.

Using test results

Laboratory test results will provide separate figures for NH₄⁺ and NO₃⁻ (mg of each/kg

soil) and these can easily be converted into units that have on-farm meaning (kg N/ha). Simply add the two figures together and then multiply by the depth of the sample (in cm), the assumed soil bulk density of the sample and 0.1 (a conversion factor).

$\text{Mineral N (mg/kg)} \times \text{depth (cm)} \times \text{bulk density (1.0-1.4g/cm}^3) \times 0.1 = \text{Mineral N (kg/ha)}$

For example, if test results showed 8.0 mg NH₄⁺/kg and 5.4 mg NO₃⁻/kg, the soil sample depth was 30 cm and the bulk density of the soil at this depth was 1.3 the calculation would be:

$(8.0 \text{ mg/kg} + 5.4 \text{ mg/kg}) \times 30 \text{ cm} \times 1.3 \text{ g/cm}^3 \times 0.1 = 52 \text{ kg N/ha}$

Once you know how much N is available to the crop, you can calculate how much N is required through fertiliser and choose a product to suit the crop's needs, as well as your own. Options to consider include:

- SustaiN: 46% N with the urease inhibitor Agrotain that reduces volatilisation, giving flexibility for application
- Advance SOA: 19.5% N and 22% S, a high quality sulphate of ammonia with a harder granule for greater spreadability
- SustaiN Ammo 36N: 36% N and 9% S, a blend of SustaiN and sulphate of ammonia
- YaraVera AMIDAS: 40% N and 5.5% S, a compound N and S fertiliser.

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Arable award showcases Canterbury's finest farmers

Most arable farmers would agree the past few years have meant some tough times for many, and particularly those choosing to grow wheat for the New Zealand milling market.

WORDS BY RICHARD RENNIE, IMAGES BY HELE POWER



However the coming season is looking brighter, thanks in part to Australia usually the biggest wheat exporter in the southern hemisphere having to import wheat for the first time in a decade due to extreme drought conditions.

The silver lining in the Australian drought is arable farmers here have cause to be more optimistic, with good forward contracts ahead. Another cause for celebration has been the recent announcements of winners in the United Wheat Growers competition.

Attracting the best of the best grain growers the competition has proven an ideal showcase for excellence in the arable sector, and this year's winners are no exception.

Sponsored by Ruralco, the competition covers all wheat types and this year drew a larger number of younger growers, a positive sign the industry's future is in good hands.

Overall winners this year were long time grain growers the Worsfold family, with Syd Worsfold and son Earl taking out Wheat Grower of the Year, and the Feed category prizes.

For Syd the win was particularly special, having claimed the Federated Farmers' arable farmer of the year award last year, recognising over 30 years of commitment and passion for the industry.

Earl says this season proved to line up well after a tough year the season before, and the

ABOVE: Overall winners Syd and Earl Worsfold (left) with Guy Wigley, board member of United Wheat Growers, and Ruralco's Group Manager On-farm Sales, Craig Rodgers

difficult start did not appear to dent crop performance too greatly.

"We lost a lot of sunlight over December, which set things back a bit. However we picked it up and the winning crop came off our dryland crop. This season I think dry land farmers would have done as well as irrigated," he says.

The Worsfolds managed to enter a 13t a hectare winning crop using the Graham hybrid, one Earl says has more than proven its worth.

"We just look at the FAR trial results when selecting and this was one that definitely stood out. It's been pretty exceptional for us, the seed weighed well and every truck that collected the grain was very full."

Winner of the feed wheat protein section was Richard McArthur of Pendarves, with his Graham hybrid yielding 12.5t a hectare. Like all entrants Richard said the season's growing pattern had been a challenging one, with a very wet spring-early summer stifling germination and early stage growth. The irrigated crop nevertheless delivered a high quality grain, despite yield being back by 10-15%.



ABOVE: Peter Burton, Craig Harrison & Phil Smith
 ABOVE TOP: Ryan Cockburn, Lucy & Ian Tait

"It could be the lower yield actually helped lift the protein level, and we had a level of fertiliser applied based on expecting a higher yield.

Richard's 170ha operation includes plantings of processing peas, potatoes, wheat and barley. Remco Stehouwer is better known for his business Canterbury Bulbs, growing lilies for export to the Northern Hemisphere, but he has also proven this year he is more than capable of growing a good wheat crop.

Remco was the winner in the UWG competition's milling and gristing section, picking up the award from the Quartz hybrid he grew as a break crop on his 50ha Rakaia operation. He was impressed with the quality of the Quartz variety, which performed well despite the difficult start to the season.

"It was tough keeping the fungus out of the crop, but we were all facing the same problems that year. In the end, the yield was down but the quality was good."

It was the first year Remco had entered the UWG competition, and he enjoyed the exchange of information with other growers and getting feedback on growing better crops. He says the intensive nature of lily growing lent itself well to helping get a good crop of wheat up to competition standard.

A little further south and east of Ashburton Ryan Cockburn and his uncle Alan Tindall claimed the Premium Milling award with a crop of Reliance yielding 10t a hectare. Ryan said they were extremely happy with the 10t a hectare crop yield on the irrigated planting, and he had every intention to use it again next season.

"It also fits in well with our other crops, tending to ripen early with the irrigation and it gives our other crops we have on the go a chance to catch up."

The 240ha operation has mixed crops including barley and small seeds like pak choy, alongside a Firstlight Wagyu beef operation. Overall about half the property is run for cropping, the remainder in pasture.

"It's a pretty interesting operation, we always have something on the go, and the crops sit well alongside our beef operation," says Ryan.

He says the UWG competition proved to be a good experience, with the prize giving event proving a great night out with other growers.

"And things are looking good for cropping, we are enjoying a good winter, coming after a decent autumn too. We would definitely consider entering the competition again if the crop looks like a good one."

Phil Lovett of Seaview Lovett Farm Limited took out the top award for biscuit wheat with the Spyder hybrid. Phil said he had not known his seed company had even entered the crop into the competition until he was informed he had won it.

"It is not something I would normally enter, we usually just keep our heads down and get on with things," he said.

The 500ha operation south east of Ashburton had a tough start to the last cropping season, with Phil having to re-drill some of the crop after the first efforts were flooded out in late spring downfalls.

He said overall the yield on this crop was back considerably, but still managed a respectable 12t a hectare return.

The Seaview farm business sows a wide variety of crops alongside wheat, including hybrid brassicas and an assortment of vegetable crops.

Craig Rodgers, Ruralco General Manager On-farm Sales said the co-operative was proud to retain its role as key sponsor for the UWG competition. It helped set good benchmarks for growers to aim for, and was an opportunity for a typically low profile sector to hold its head up with pride at the work being done by committed, skilled growers.

Local grain grower and UWG board member Guy Wigley says it is encouraging to see the support growers have given the competition, particularly when growing conditions had proven to be even more challenging than they usually were.

"Farmers expectations have become quite high now. That reflects the level of skill and experience we have in this sector with operators that are among the best in the world."

Like many in the arable sector the lift in prices recently driven in part by the Australian shortage was welcome, and was starting to feed through to forward contracts for next season's grain. This was also buoyed by a move by millers and processors to use locally sourced grains, such as Countdown's policy.

2019 United Wheat Growers Competition Division Winners

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Canterbury Bulbs Ltd,
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Avoiding disease during calving

Calving will now be underway on most dairy farms, and there may well be some early lambs around on lower country. This time of year can be extremely busy, and it is easy to lose sight of the importance of attention to detail while rearing young stock.

WORDS BY IAN HODGE, BVSC., MANZCVS, SENIOR VETERINARIAN, VETENT RIVERSIDE



Calves should be removed from the cows as soon as possible following birth. Pick them up twice daily. The reasons for this are to ensure adequate colostrum intake through stomach tubing, and to avoid umbilical infections, intestinal infections (Johnes Disease) and pneumonia. These problems can all be reduced by early calf pick-up and suitable calf housing. Removing calves early may seem harsh, but in practice it provides the best start in life and optimizes animal health and welfare. This practice also minimizes the chances of the cow getting mastitis after calving.

Once picked up, calves should be separated into males (Bobbies) and females. All calves should have their navels dipped in a strong iodine solution (not iodine teat spray). They should also all receive an amount of fresh undiluted colostrum, equal to 10–20% of

their birth weight, by stomach tube, i.e. 30kg calf will require at least 3L, but 6L would be better. This early feeding of colostrum within 12 hours of being born will provide vital antibodies for the calf, both in its blood stream and in its gut.

The quality of colostrum is very important, and colostrum fed to calves within this “golden period” should be the first milking colostrum from cows or heifers that do not have mastitis and should not be diluted with any other milk. If the herd has been vaccinated with anti-rotavirus vaccines the colostrum will be hyper-immune with rotavirus, coronavirus and E. coli antibodies depending on the vaccine used. Using this colostrum will protect calves against infection and reduce the prevalence of the disease in and around the calf sheds. Colostrum feeding can be continued

for three weeks to continue to provide protection against infection in the calf’s gut. Preventing neonatal scours (diarrhoea) is important, because once infected a replacement heifer may well have reduced growth and productivity for her entire lifetime. Her performance before weaning will be reduced, her weaning weight target will be delayed, her post-weaning growth will be reduced and her reproductive performance at 15 months will be reduced. If the outbreak is severe enough the six week in-calf rate of the herd may be reduced because of a poor heifer calving pattern. Calves should be kept in north-facing covered barns that are twice as deep as wide. This has the effect of preventing the impact of cold draughts and temperature changes in the pens. Draughts are highly significant in the development of scours in calves. The bedding in calf pens should be free draining. Sand is an excellent choice, but fine, soft bark chips are a good choice also. Pen walls should be solid to help prevent the spread of infection between groups. Calves should be stocked at about one per 1.5 square metres and there should be no more than 20 animals per pen.

If calves become sick, they should be removed from the pen and isolated for the remainder of the pre-weaning period because they can remain infectious via faecal shedding of bacteria and viruses.

Calves should be fed whole milk twice daily at the same time each day, and from a week of age calf meal can be slowly introduced. The milk temperature should ideally be warm and must be kept consistent. Over feeding can cause gut upsets.

Feeding utensils that are used for the calves must be washed and disinfected between pens using HOT water and disinfectant, and human traffic between the cow shed and the calf shed should be kept to a minimum. A disinfectant foot bath for use by all visitors to the calf pen is a very good idea.

Sick calves should be examined by a vet to establish a diagnosis and treatment plan. At this visit your vet will be happy to check your calf rearing program and to help identify any areas that may present a risk of disease breakdown.

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Looking to the future with a brand new showroom

With a longstanding trusted reputation among the rural and recreational motorcycle community in Mid Canterbury, Honda Country certainly has a very proud history in the area.

WORDS BY NIAMH MCCARTHY, IMAGES SUPPLIED BY HONDA COUNTRY



However, owners Brendan Price and Murray Sexton are very much focused on the future for their business. Hence the impressive newly refurbished showroom at 740 East Street. "We really wanted to let all our customers know that we're here for the long run, supporting the Mid Canterbury community and providing the latest top-quality Honda range of bikes and technical service" confirms Murray. With new polished floors, ceilings, service counter and fittings the modern space is very well suited to displaying the latest in the Honda range.

Honda Country stocks the very latest range of farm two-wheel bikes, quad bikes and side by side vehicles, as well as kids and adults recreational dirt bikes for trail riding and racing. A wide range of demonstrator vehicles are available for customers and finance and insurance can be arranged in-store. Murray acknowledges that the motorbike industry is always changing and Honda are at the forefront of developing top quality bikes. "There's been huge interest recently in the new Honda XR190 farm bike, with a new fuel injected engine, it is one touch start and ride away, customers enjoy that convenience as well as the other great features." Co-owners Brendan and Murray as well as the staff are all passionate motorbike enthusiasts so customers can be assured of a high calibre of technical knowledge and advice

whether its an experienced rider wanting to upgrade their vehicle or a new customer needing some friendly guidance. Since Honda Country started in 1977, and Brendan taking over in 1986, Brendan, Murray and the team have built up a rapport with many of their repeat customers and enjoy listening to their motorbike chat or giving pointers on getting the best out of your Honda. "Everyone in here is into bikes so we're always keen to listen to our customers yarns on what they did on their bike over the weekend and we definitely like to promote our friendly open approach to customer service" says Murray.

Honda Country also stocks an extensive range of parts across all categories which is managed by Brendan's wife Michelle while Brendan manages the service department. There is a staff of nine including six qualified motorcycle technicians to assist customers with any repair or breakdown issues. As another commitment to serving their rural customers, Honda Country has also just invested in a second high-spec on-farm service truck in order to accommodate busier farm clients.

LEFT: Honda Country stocks an extensive range of parts across all categories which is managed by Brendan's wife Michelle, while Brendan manages the service department

BELOW LEFT: The new Honda Country showroom demonstrates their commitment to being a part of Mid Canterbury's future

Not only Honda, but all brands of farm bikes can be serviced on farm too.

Another issue that Honda Country likes to focus on is bike safety. "On-farm health and safety especially around vehicles is a real issue for our rural customers so here at Honda Country we do our very best to ensure the safety of workers and their bikes" explains Murray. Honda Country can help with information, such as ensuring all farm workers are wearing approved, well-fitted and securely-fastened helmets. Normal Ag-Hats with NZS 8600-2002 safety standard are suitable for speeds below 30kph but a proper motorcycle helmet is more appropriate for higher speeds. They can also fit speed limiters to quadbikes and side by sides to limit the top speed the vehicles travel at, further increasing user safety and reducing vehicle repair and maintenance costs.

The new Honda Country showroom is one of the many ways Honda Country is demonstrating its commitment to being very much a part of Mid Canterbury's future. Their continued sponsorship of community organisations and events is another important part of the company values. Nationally Honda are major sponsors of NZ Dairy Industry Association Awards sponsoring the Farm Safety, Health and Bio Security Award, and are long term sponsors of Young Farmers Club. On a local level Honda Country sponsors the top prize for the local Junior All-Black Rugby Calf Rearing Competition supplying the prize of Honda XR150 Farm Bike. "It's something we believe is important, supporting and putting back into the community, rewarding those that are achieving good things" explains Murray, "we really like to support local causes."

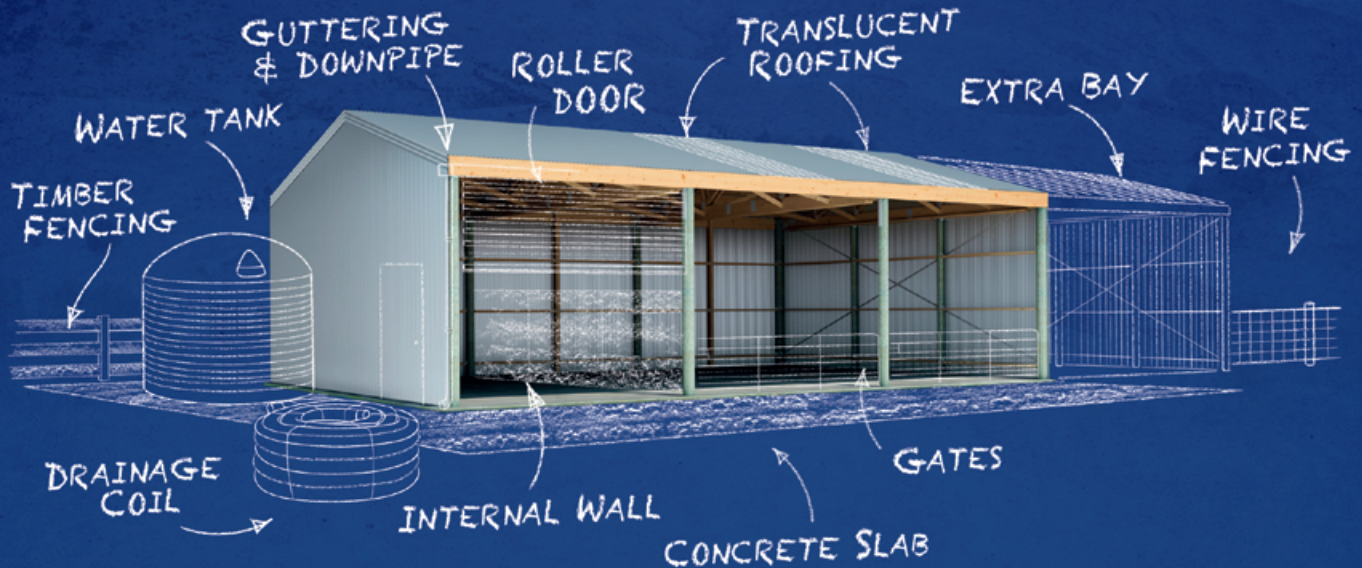
Murray advises customers that plans are in progress to launch the new showroom. "We're looking forward to opening the doors to a brand-new space and we're confident all our customers will enjoy their next visit to Honda Country, we're planning to be around to serve Mid Canterbury for many years to come." Ruralco cardholders will receive a 5% discount across Honda parts and accessories.



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As we close off this production season and look forward to the next with calving all but upon on us, this is a good opportunity to review both the past season and the forward outlook.

WORDS BY CONRAD WILKSHIRE, RURAL GENERAL MANAGER, PROPERTY BROKERS



While the real estate sector is not having to work out current feed covers and condition scores, we do review production and export receipts and forward economic forecasts. One of the go-to documents I've reviewed for years is the MPI Situation and Outlook for Primary Industries, it is much easier to access these days (google click) and it gets updated in December and June which lines up well with Spring and Autumn real estate results too.

What's really different about this year is that the dairy economic outlook has probably never been stronger but rural property sentiment, particularly with dairy real estate transactions reflects a situation more aligned to the global financial crises 10 years ago than our current reality. Government policy settings and biosecurity threats have influenced much of the current sentiment. There is no doubt Reserve Bank of New Zealand (RBNZ) policy settings is having the most significant influence on Agri-banking risk appetite. Dairy particularly is singled out the RBNZ financial stability report as highlighted in the chart below, dairy has two thirds of the total agricultural debt.

So, what gives? Fundamentally it is not the level of debt but the capacity to service it, in this respect our Dairy sector continues to reflect a much stronger story than many, including farmers, perceive. Referencing the June 19 MPI S&O dairy exports for the season just ended are forecast to hit \$17.6b up \$3.56b on five years ago. Dairy revenues are 38.5% of \$47.8b forecast for this June too.

Not only is dairy by far the largest contributor to NZ agriculture receipts, the same can be said for the \$3.56b of improved earnings on five years ago. The five-year forward outlook is expected to hold at this level.

The other supporting factor, particularly for dairy exports is our NZD/USD exchange rate which has lost 20c on 5 years ago and tracking current in the mid 60's on our current interest rate outlook.

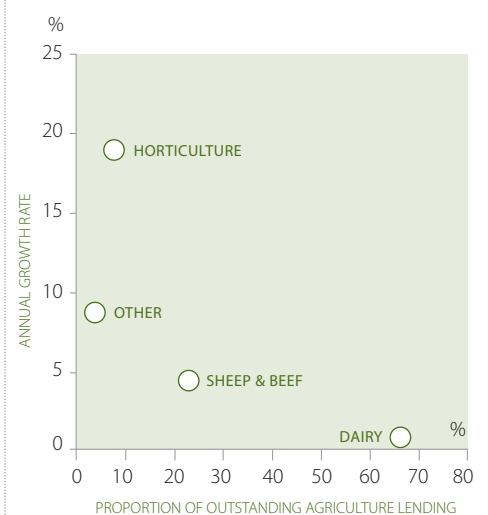
So, having been alongside our primary sector for three plus decades, I would never rule out the NZ farmer's capacity to shut the farm gate and reduce borrowings. Particularly dairy on current returns and record low interest rates

which are significantly below main bank, current lending criteria. We are a unique country with a very successful primary sector my money is on our farmers as we look to the future.

Sometimes there is comfort in looking over the fence too, or this case the Tasman, ABC reported this week that in 1980 there were 22,000 dairy farmers in Australia, now there are fewer than 6000. Australia's share of international dairy trade has fallen from 16% in the 1990s to just 6% last year including some large-scale factory closures. So perhaps our NZ dairy industry is not doing so bad after all.

Our Property Brokers rural team continues to look at all the options on behalf of our vendors and in our view many more dairy properties will sell next season as we all return to the basics of what the farm can sustainably return. Central government policy settings are likely to give that a big tick too.

FIGURE 1: STOCK AND GROWTH OF AGRICULTURE DEBT BY SECTOR (MARCH 2019)



SOURCE: RBNZ BBS

TABLE 1: PRIMARY INDUSTRIES EXPORT REVENUE 2015-23 (NZ\$ MILLION)

YEAR TO 30 JUNE	ACTUAL					FORECAST				
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	
DAIRY	14,050	13,289	14,638	17,610	17,820	18,190	18,510	18,820		
MEAT & WOOL	9,000	9,200	8,355	9,542	10,150	9,900	10,000	10,090	10,190	
FORESTRY	4,683	5,140	5,482	6,382	6,880	6,820	6,940	7,000	7,080	
HORTICULTURE	4,185	5,000	5,165	5,376	6,110	6,130	6,360	6,610	6,960	
SEAFOOD	1,562	1,768	1,744	1,777	1,910	1,860	1,970	2,030	2,100	
ARABLE	181	210	197	243	235	250	255	260	265	
OTHER PRIMARY SECTOR EXPORTS*	2,417	2,714	2,638	2,706	2,800	2,870	2,940	3,000	3,060	
TOTAL EXPORTS	36,079	37,323	38,219	42,682	45,695	45,650	46,655	47,500	48,475	
% CHANGE	-6.8%	+3.4%	+2.4%	+11.7%	+7.1%	-0.1%	+2.2%	+1.8%	+2.1%	

SOURCE: STATS NZ AND MPI; *Other Primary Sector Exports and Feeds including live animals, honey and processed foods.



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