Caudlefarm

My farm and I run a 450 ha arable unit. We crop the whole farm and there is no livestock in the system except for 70 cows to graze the yards etc.

My concern is that our system of farming in the base line period 2009 – 2013, it is producing 1.99 b/c.f of down to 1.9 kg which will have very limiting effects on our future farming system.

I finished my degree at Lincoln College in the late 70's and came home to a typical mixed sheep and arable operation growing wheat, barley and ryegrass for seed as well as running 2500 ewes by the mid 80's we were with the encouragement of subsidies on livestock and nil or crops we were a self shepherding wintering 6000 ewes. Hogget economics and drought in the late 80's brought a major rethink. Over the next 20 years sheep numbers I reduced to 700 ewes and a major investment in grain storage, and from sheds have been and farm machinery has been ongoing.

The crops grown have also changed from wheat and ryegrass for seed production dominating 10 years ago. Oilseed rape has grown from nothing to a biofuel industry being developed converting rape seed to diesel to now where the rape seed is used for high value culinary oil to produce high value culinary oil. So a crop that had not been grown in N.Z for many years now makes up 20% of our cropping rotation.

Autumn sown barley was unheard of on N.Z cropping farms 10 years ago but with new varieties and technology it has a significant place in our industry. It now also
makes up 20% of our crop area.

In the last 2 years the price of grassland has collapsed and so we grow a bit less than we use to, this area being taken up by more wheat and silage rape.

Flexibility is the key to any arable farmers survival, and on many farms, for great changes have taken place over the last 20 years than in many areas situation grow a greater range of crops and include livestock in their farm systems, which will vary can vary greatly from year to year depending on rotational requirements and markets.

We have continually learned our environmental impact through the use of technology and the limiting of sensitive areas. Key changes have been not applying nitrogen in the late autumn and only apply the nitrogen in the spring as the crop requirements. We also now test for nitrogen and defoliate our crops in conjunction with how much nitrogen is in the soil.

We do field less cultivation than ten years, and will direct drill, mix till depending on the crop, but will still follow specific circumstances as part of our strategy to prevent the build up of resistant weeds. The days of relying solely on herbicides is rapidly coming to an end around the world.

We now have a billies that we used to routinely cultivate are now worn down in permanent grass and we are in the process of building a silt trap on one of those billies.
Although we could not have realised it at the time, potentially the biggest mistake of my farming career was to have had a low emission system of farming during the base line period with figures as low as 4 kg FFA being produced. In hindsight I see that I now would have a high base line figure reflecting the issue we installed irrigation in 2011.

Much has been said about ‘Hinter Dams’, but the reality is that on a farm far less area and far more water is required for the most expensive in the country, with a high pumping component to get the water to the farm, this high electricity cost will be a burden on the scheme for ever. This scheme is very expensive going onto land already able to give good returns and into rolling country for harder to manage contours to the rest of Canterburys. The experience of mid Canterbury with the new schemes that have been expensive and that the majority have converted to dairy to make it pay, but has also been spoken about augmentation but the science for this is dubious.

Ag credits that it does produce will be required by the scheme users to cover the great wave of dairy conversions that will occur. Any dry years that may be offered will be priced beyond what non irrigators could afford because in reality Hinter Dam will not have any environment credit to sell.

We seem to be moving to a system of grandparenting so that farming can continue their emission at their base line figure. But the farming conventions that are fostered to farming systems that produce these high emission figure have only occurred in the last 5 years so it’s not ‘grandparenting’ rights or ‘forest rights’ but about children’s rights. That is has occurred in our children’s lifetime.
The Nutrient Allocation Groups will not work for the low emitter because in a voluntary system it will be the high emitters to maintain their systems by linking up with low emitters. It will certainly not result in the low emitter to go up.

The current plan hokes the low emitters into a time warp while they watch their neighbours having the ability to change their systems.

A low emitter has no room to move, and no ability to change farming systems and in fact be more vulnerable to exceeding limits just due to the seasonality of farming.

We have already seen production brought about by exceeding limits due to changes in seasons. Farm values are being affected by by a forms nutrient limits.

To conclude, I have explained how in my lifetime we have had several changes in our farming systems and if the next generation are to progress they too need the ability to change their farming systems into the future.

I also believe that Hunter Dams is not viable because the cost form supply of water is the most expensive in the country. If it does go ahead then the majority of it will be dairy with all the problems that brings in nutrient loss.
3. Being a low or amnity form will have a severe impact on land values because they will be limited to their former practices in the future.

4. The future profitability of low amnity forms will be compromised because farmland with arable forms what is profit now will not be profitable into the future and their arable crops out there that we don't even know about. This demonstrates a classic example. However, ten years ago, it was profitable now to continue with wheat or grass, but has higher nutrient loss.

3. Under the present separated system, we risk extenuating due to environmental or market changes outside our control and therefore face prosecutions.

4. The only fair way is the objective of equal allocation.
Presentation to Ecan

Conclusion

1/ I have explained how in my lifetime we have had several changes in our farming systems and if the next generation are to progress they need the ability to change their systems.

2/ I also believe that Hunter Downs is not viable because the cost of water is the most expensive in New Zealand, if it does go ahead then the majority of it will be dairy with all the problems that brings in nutrient loss.

3/ Being a low emitting farm will have a severe impact on land values because of the limits to their farming practices in the future.

4/ The future profitability of low emitting farms will be compromised. Particularly Arable farms, what is profitable now may not be profitable into the future. There will be crops or livestock options that we will want to run on our farms.

5/ Under the proposed plan we risk exceeding nutrients due to environmental or market changes outside our control and therefore face prosecution.

6/ The only fair way is equal allocation.

Hugh and Liz Wigley