



FAQs on Extension Service Model Initiative

What is agricultural extension?

Agricultural extension is the process of sharing knowledge, innovation and technology to improve farming systems.

Extension programmes already exist and help farmers to achieve a range of goals, including: increasing productivity and market value; reducing costs; making better investment decisions and developing business operations; and using science and technology to reduce environmental impact.

How will this differ to extension programmes already operating?

The main point of difference with existing extension programmes is a change in focus to sustainability, value creation and environmental performance.

The Model will use the most effective mechanisms and approaches from existing extension programmes, such as Extension350 & the Red Meat Profit Partnership.

We want to partner with industry and experts on approaches which support farmers to achieve environmental goals, deliver sustainable premium produce, and adopt high-value production techniques.

Why is the Extension Service Model needed?

There is more urgency around environmental issues. Resource limitation will slow our ability to grow wealth through continuing the same farming practices.

Coupled with changes in consumer preferences and expectations, the sector needs to prove to customers that New Zealand produces sustainable, high-value, quality products. New knowledge, technology and ways of working need to be embedded into the primary sector.

Information farmers can benefit from includes work done by MPI, industry and academia on environmental and sustainable practices, consumer trends, and expectations for quality and transparency.

We want to ensure that all farms have an opportunity to develop. We know there are groups of farmers who aren't using extension services, and we want to support all farmers to take up the services and support that's available and to showcase what can be achieved.

What does the Extension Service Model aim to achieve?

The programme will focus on how we can ensure farmers access and use information on environmental sustainability and value creation as part of their farm planning.

We will target a range of farmers who can benefit from different types of advice and information - from the more confident farmers seeking specific information to help them achieve environmental goals, to farmers who have not used extension services before.

For high performing farmers the aim is to build their expertise, particularly around market requirements and sustainable production and environmental performance that can be certified to assure consumers that New Zealand production is sustainable.

For farmers requiring more assistance, the aim is to raise their on-farm performance, as well as their resilience as environmental requirements increase over time.

The programme will help to expand and deepen the skill base among farmers; support co-ordination and sharing of ideas; encourage the use of multiple channels to get information to targeted groups; and support capacity and capability building among rural professionals.

We also want to refine MPI's overall approach to extension services. We want to test and refine how we use different tools and approaches to deliver information and support to targeted groups.

We will work with industry, government bodies, district councils and other groups to trial different approaches and content to see what works best.

What steps have you taken so far and what's next?

We have been building a picture about what is already available and where the gaps are. This has involved cataloguing the range of current extension initiatives, and starting discussions with industry.

As part of the first phase we are co-ordinating the resources required, and identifying initial farmer groups in selected regions. We will then work with industry and other partners on how best to implement and tailor these initiatives.

When will the first farm be using the Extension Service Model?

Engagement is already underway with industry, and the first groups will be operating in early 2019. The programme will initially work with 300 farms, and then progressively a further 300 farms each year.

How much is being invested?

\$3 million over four years.

What tools will be used to deliver the programme?

A range of tools and approaches will be used – for example, one-on-one meetings, e-material, online modules, market insights, evaluation, and focus groups.

We know farmer-to-farmer learning is a core element of effective extension practice. However, this relies on the willingness of individuals to share their knowledge. We want to look at what approaches and tools enable more uptake.

How will you be working with industry?

Industry and academia have invested considerable time and resources to develop extension programmes across a range of areas, including productivity, soil, water and waste management. We have already had initial discussions with industry and this will continue.

How will you review the Model?

At the end of each year of the programme, a review phase will occur to allow lessons learnt and feedback to be incorporated into the model's design and approach.