

LOW-IMPACT FARMS IN ACTION

PROJECT PART-FUNDED BY THE
SUSTAINABLE FARMING FUND

The Sustainable Farming Fund is investing in a project that aims to support around 720 farmers along the first 100 km of the Waikato River to assess their farming systems and identify best practice in the new context.

THE ISSUE OR OPPORTUNITY

The agreement between Māori and the Crown for co-management of the Waikato River signalled a new era for management of the River and the catchments feeding in to it.

A particular focus for this new regime is improving quality of the water, initially by slowing the rate of decline and ultimately enhancing water quality.

For decades now pastoral farmers have been getting signals that they need to reduce nutrient leaching into waterways, and this latest development adds weight to this.

The key for local farmers is to identify management practices that will achieve the required reductions of leaching and other impacts, while maintaining farm productivity and profitability.

The Sustainable Farming Fund is investing in a project that aims to support the around 720 farmers along the first 100km of the Waikato River to assess their farming systems and identify best practice in the new context.

The farms in this catchment are typically on pumice soils, which are free-draining and easily erode if disturbed.

The project is being led by Headlands Consultancy and delivered with the assistance of DairyNZ, Reporoa VetPlus, Environment Waikato, Red Sky and Waikato University.

They are directly working with 25 dairy farmers in the Reporoa, Broadlands, Atiamuri and Benneydale districts.

Red Sky is providing farm business analysis software, and the project is also using Overseer, nutrient management software jointly owned by the Ministry for Primary Industries, FertResearch and AgResearch.

RESULTS TO DATE

Twenty-five farm visits and collection of economic and environmental information about the farms is now completed.

Investigation has shown that some dairy farmers within this catchment are already demonstrating low-impact farm systems that leach less than 28kg of nitrogen per hectare (while the average is 39kg).

The project team has compiled a DVD of examples of best-practice farms, which is being shown at field days.

AT A GLANCE

SFF project	11/016 Preparing for River Co Management: Low impact farms in action. SFF investment: \$145,100
Other cash contributors	DairyNZ
Total project value (including in-kind contributions): \$353 400	

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