



Agriculture and Rural Affairs Policy

Vision

The agricultural sector in Aotearoa New Zealand as a whole is currently implicated in worsening environmental issues, including degradation of land and freshwater ecosystems, declining biodiversity and global climate change. The Green Party envisions a strong, healthy and diverse agricultural sector that, instead, is a solution to these problems – that contributes to a thriving Aotearoa New Zealand in which:

- Farmers and growers are locally celebrated, nationally valued and internationally renowned for regenerating our soils, water and biodiversity and locking away carbon through regenerative farming.
- Rural land is valued for its ability to produce healthy food, fibre and wood and is regenerated and managed sustainably to ensure that its productive potential is protected and enhanced, while enhancing and respecting its amenity, cultural, spiritual, historical, conservation and ecological services.
- Everyone has access to sufficient, safe, nutritious and affordable food that is produced locally and traded fairly, and is resilient to global and local changes in climate that will increasingly affect food production.
- Rural communities are viable socially, environmentally and economically. They have a high quality of life and good access to a diverse range of social, economic, educational and recreational opportunities.
- Agricultural families have secure livelihoods through high value, resilient, regeneratively grown foods.
- The Aotearoa New Zealand Government regulates and supports the agricultural sector to develop widespread regenerative practices and resilience to climate change.

Please see the Green Party's [Environmental Protection, Conservation, Animal Welfare, Housing and Sustainable Development, Food, Climate Change](#), and [Trade and Foreign Investment](#) policies for other relevant information.

Key Principles

1. Farms should be able to provide a decent livelihood for people who live on them, and a good life for animals farmed, without compromising the ecosystem services of the land.
2. All New Zealanders have a responsibility to practice and support good environmental stewardship.
3. All rural production land must be managed in ways that are environmentally and ecologically sustainable and preferably regenerative.
4. Rural communities should be attractive places to live, providing for the economic, educational, health and social needs of residents.
5. Social, environmental, food security and animal welfare goals must be supported by any trade policy relating to primary production.
6. New Zealand should focus on producing high quality, added value products to avoid excessive reliance on trading relatively low value commodities.
7. Animals living in primary production facilities should be treated humanely and with respect throughout their lives. Their sentience should be meaningfully acknowledged.
8. The New Zealand environment must be kept GE free.
9. Local food production for local use must be supported by all levels of Government.
10. New Zealand must live up to its reputation as "clean and green" in order to maintain its ability to sell its products in top-end markets and compete with lab-generated and industrially produced alternatives to meat and dairy products with low environmental cost or animal welfare concerns.
11. New Zealand must be vigilant about biosecurity to protect our primary production base from introduced pests and diseases.
12. Tangata whenua ancestral land ownership and kaitiakitanga must be recognised and respected.

1 A Fair Approach to Trade

Aotearoa New Zealand's clean, green reputation is one of its most important trading advantages. Capitalising on it requires sustained efforts to ensure reality reflects that reputation.

As a commodity exporter, New Zealand faces increasing competition from producers of low-cost food (e.g. milk) and fibre (e.g. wool). Further competition is forthcoming from producers of artificial meat. Cost-cutting and increasing the volume we produce in response to international competition has pushed us over the limits of

environmental sustainability and animal welfare in too many cases. Instead, we need to focus on producing higher value products for export and capitalise on our international reputation as a producer of safe, healthy, ethical and sustainably produced products.

New Zealand farmers also face challenges in the domestic market, competing with low-cost imports of varying quality. This can negatively affect food security and increase energy used and associated greenhouse gas emissions to import greater quantities of food. Policy frameworks and trade agreements relating to primary production should support the domestic supply of food and fibre, and allow consumers to make informed choices about buying domestic or imported products.

Policy Positions

- 1.1. Ensure that international trade arrangements enable the relevant points in this policy. (See our [Trade and Foreign Investment](#) policy)
- 1.2. Support research and development aimed at adding value to primary products.
- 1.3. Encourage domestic processing and value-add for products grown and produced in New Zealand.
- 1.4. Support farmers to trade on New Zealand's environmental brand by continuing to use our clean, green image to market New Zealand produce.
- 1.5. Encourage all food and fibre products intended for export as 'Product of NZ' to meet or exceed minimum sustainability and animal welfare standards.
- 1.6. Work to adjust for "food miles" by supporting farmers to reduce emissions released during production and by working to educate overseas consumers about the total environmental impact of the New Zealand goods they purchase.
- 1.7. Support lower-emissions and clean energy transport options for New Zealand exports, including shipping.
- 1.8. Ensure New Zealand consumers can make informed choices to support local food and other agricultural products by supporting mandatory country of origin labelling for all single-ingredient imported agricultural and horticultural products.
- 1.9. Support mandatory certification of imported produce to show that it complies with minimum environmental, safety and health standards along the lines of the current European Union directives.
- 1.10. Support and improve ways of communicating to the public about the value and importance of buying local.

- 1.11. Enact empowering legislation to support local food production for local use and local food security, including financial incentives.

2 Reducing Dependency and Increasing Resilience

The Green Party aims to reduce our agricultural sector's dependency on oil, agri-chemicals and imported feed, and to increase our agricultural resilience so we are better able to withstand the impacts of changing weather patterns here and overseas.

Policy Positions

- 2.1. Encourage more efficient rural use of energy, especially oil (particularly for soil cultivation, irrigation, and inputs such as synthetic fertilisers, herbicides and pesticides), to reduce current energy dependence.
- 2.2. Support the development of infrastructure for economically and sustainably viable biofuel production especially from waste agricultural products, recognising that biofuel production should not diminish food production.
- 2.3. Increase New Zealand's self-sufficiency in basic foodstuffs, especially grains, by boosting New Zealand's seed supply, to reduce the risk of scarcity due to environmental and geo-political issues and to reduce our dependence on imports from GE contaminated countries.
- 2.4. Contract New Zealand farmers to grow grains which are in short supply domestically because of our current reliance on imports.
- 2.5. Encourage the preservation and growing of heritage seeds, for personal use as well as commercial production.
- 2.6. Phase out the use of palm kernel expeller (PKE) and other imported feeds with large ecological footprints.
- 2.7. Regulate to reduce agriculture's dependence on fossil fuel energy (see below)

3 Growing Regenerative Agriculture

Regenerative¹ production, which includes regenerative organic agriculture, sets the standard for sustainable land management. The Green Party views regenerative

1 **Regenerative agricultural practices** restore degraded land, continually improving the health of the soil, which in turn improves plant health, nutrition and productivity. They include (depending on the particular situation) no-tillage, diverse cover crops, on-farm fertility (no external source of fertiliser needed), no or minimal pesticides, and multiple crop rotations and intercropping, all of which can be augmented by managed grazing. It increases soil organic matter, fertility, texture, water retention, and microorganisms which support plant health and protection. It addresses all common concerns about fertility, pests, drought, weeds, and yield.

production as a model that can be used to guide the primary production sector in developing environmentally sustainable systems and enabling Aotearoa New Zealand to capitalise on its 'clean, green' reputation.

Policy Positions

- 3.1. Promote ambitious targets towards our vision of a large proportion of New Zealand's primary production being regenerative.
- 3.2. Develop minimum sustainability standards for all primary production sectors, and the strengthening of existing ones, such as the already established industry standards of Sustainable Wine Growing New Zealand.
- 3.3. Provide Government funding to assist farmers to transition to regenerative farming, including through on-farm regenerative organic advisory services and financial tools to assist with the upfront cost of transition.
- 3.4. Support a flexible approach to land use so that farms or parts of farms can progress to (mixed) sustainable land use(s) for each part of the farm.
- 3.5. Ensure regenerative (including organic) industry bodies are adequately funded, including those for small-scale farmers and Māori farmers, until such time they are sustainably self-funding.
- 3.6. Subsidise the organic certification of small organic growers and facilitate the development of regenerative agriculture certification.
- 3.7. Encourage broad educational opportunities in regenerative and regenerative organic production, including in rural communities and at tertiary level.
- 3.8. Fund research and development of regenerative and regenerative organic system design and practice.
- 3.9. Ensure Regenerative, Regenerative Organic and Organic labelling that is clear, truthful, and well understood.
- 3.10. Set the New Zealand Organic Standard as the minimum standard for domestic organic production, with consumer and sector selected New Zealand Organic Standards maintenance and review panel.
- 3.11. Promote consumer awareness of different regenerative organic and organic standards.
- 3.12. Encourage development of indigenous regenerative agricultural practices through organisations such as Te Waka Kai Ora.

4 Other Steps towards Sustainability and Regenerative Land Use

There are many practical steps farmers and the government can take to increase the environmental sustainability of our agricultural production. The Green Party supports a mix of incentives, regulation, education, and price signals to achieve economically

and environmentally sustainable outcomes, including promoting regenerative agriculture.

Government must lead by example and create the conditions under which farmers increase their environmental sustainability.

Policy Positions

- 4.1. Require the use of government farming and land-use assets such as Landcorp-Pamu and DOC to research, develop, and showcase best practice environmentally sustainable and economically productive regenerative farming.
- 4.2. Celebrate best practice regenerative farmers and ensure that policy and price signals reward existing and new sustainable regenerative production practices and farmers who enhance the environment.
- 4.3. Increase the Sustainable Farming Fund.
- 4.4. Train and resource independent on-farm advisors to assist with the transition to sustainable and regenerative agricultural practices such as no-till farming, cover cropping, agroforestry, on-farm fertility, managed grazing, permaculture, carbon sequestration, irrigation reduction, and stock density optimisation.
- 4.5. Streamline compliance processes for primary production and provide support to small producers who require advice or are struggling with compliance costs.
- 4.6. Prohibit any land use other than primary production on the remaining prime agricultural land and elite soils, excepting vital public works (see our [Housing and Sustainable Development](#) policy for further detail).
- 4.7. Ensure consideration of the impact of urban development on microclimates that protect sensitive ecosystems and agricultural production.
- 4.8. Support training for careers in areas needed to aid the shift to a sustainable rural economy.
- 4.9. Support land use changes, in some parts of New Zealand, as necessary to ensure the primary production sector operates within environmental boundaries.
- 4.10. Ensure land use choices must consider water quality, and conservation and the appropriateness of certain kinds of farming for a given location and, in particular, require resource consent for converting land to ruminant animal farming and intensifying stocking rates (See our [Environmental Protection](#) policy for more detail).

- 4.11. Enhance the role of, and resourcing for, regional councils in supporting sustainable and regenerative land use including facilitating compliance with new sustainability regulations. This will include providing a role for regional councils in advising local farmers on cost-effective options for alternative land use.
- 4.12. Provide incentives to match land use to land use capability (e.g. to encourage erosion prone hill country to be planted in suitable indigenous forest species for permanent carbon sinks, soil conservation, and biodiversity enhancement).
- 4.13. Fund the re-establishment and maintenance of wetlands, lowland forests and green corridors that enhance biodiversity.
- 4.14. Extend the development and implementation of sustainable and regenerative land and water management plans at catchment and farm levels (e.g. nutrient budgets, stocking rate limits, riparian plantings, water extraction limits, and diversification of land use).
- 4.15. Prohibit the grandfathering of unsustainable land use
- 4.16. Encourage diversity in farming activities which are appropriate for the land and climate of particular areas and desired by local communities.
- 4.17. Regulate to reduce the use of toxic chemicals, such as Roundup, and better manage spray drift (See our [Environmental Protection](#) policy for more detail)
- 4.18. Develop and implement a nationwide pesticide reduction strategy to reduce pesticide use by 50% within five years, with annual monitoring and reports on progress, and with emphasis on safer alternatives.
- 4.19. Establish a register of chemicals that are not permitted for aerial spraying.
- 4.20. Implement rules for notifying neighbours of aerial spraying and other use of agricultural chemicals that may be dispersed through the air, ensuring public input, and ensuring agreement from close neighbours and affected parties.
- 4.21. Require plans for mitigating the effects of aerial spraying on waterways.
- 4.22. Make aerial spraying a non-complying activity in district and regional plans, to ensure that an application has to be made for permission to use aerial spraying methods.
- 4.23. Ensure that those who use, require or permit toxic substances to be used, are financially liable for adverse effects that reasonably could have been avoided, such as caused by pesticide spray drift/chemical trespass.

5 Climate Change and Agriculture

New Zealand has a unique greenhouse gas emissions profile compared to other OECD countries because agriculture produces about half of our emissions. In order to help ensure a stable climate for future generations, it is vital that we both harness the potential of agriculture to permanently sequester carbon dioxide in plants and soils and reduce methane and nitrous oxide emissions from livestock. The most certain way to achieve this is through reduction of livestock numbers and a diversification into more plant-based foods and fibres grown using regenerative methods. Agriculture has options for doing so in ways that are sustainable, many of which are already cost effective for farmers. (See our [Climate Change](#) policy for our full policy on climate change).

Policy Positions

- 5.1. Work towards net zero greenhouse gas emissions from the agricultural sector as part of an economy-nationwide net zero emissions goal, recognising that it may be unavoidable that some biological emissions will continue and these will need to be offset.
- 5.2. Develop a system of certification for primary industries to provide incentives for on-farm mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions and carbon sequestration, and resource farmers to engage with it.
- 5.3. Ensure that forestry that is planted for the purpose of carbon offsetting provides multiple benefits and services, such as erosion protection, riparian protection and habitats for native biodiversity.
- 5.4. Ensure that agriculture is included in nationwide emissions pricing systems by, for example, phasing out free allocation of carbon credits.
- 5.5. Ensure individual farms are exposed to price signals that reward emissions reduction, and that these price signals take a “whole of farm” approach recognising on-farm emissions sequestration as well as emissions produced.
- 5.6. Support ways of reducing methane production per hectare and per animal, including intensified research into alternative feeds, breeding and selection of lower emitting animals, and rumen biochemistry. This may include the use of new genetic technologies in the laboratory as part of the research, but not the release of living genetically modified organisms, whether cows or bacteria, into the farm environment.
- 5.7. Support ways to reduce the release of nitrous oxide from nitrogen-based fertilisers that emit nitrous oxide through denitrification, including:

- a) Maximising Enabling conversion to regenerative organic production methods which fix atmospheric naturally in the soil, including by supporting farm-specific programmes .
 - b) Research into and encouragement of the most appropriate and efficient fertiliser management practices and stocking rates.
 - c) Research into the effects and economic feasibility of wide implementation of "alternative" emerging technologies such as soil re-mineralisation, biochar and bio-intensive farming.
 - d) Phasing out the use of synthetic nitrogen fertiliser through regulation by instituting a sinking cap on the allowable per-hectare use of synthetic nitrogen fertiliser.
- 5.8. Work with farmers, rural communities, and local councils to develop nationwide climate change adaptation plans with specific attention given to agricultural adaptation and regenerative practises which sequester carbon.
- 5.9. Support and enable farmers to move from largely animal-based to largely plant-based production, where this would improve outcomes for local ecosystems or animal welfare.
- 5.10. Incorporate soil carbon, the health of biological soil systems and soil water within climate change response frameworks, acknowledging their vital role, in conjunction with plant life, in sequestering carbon in the soil and cooling the area.
- 5.11. Reduce the use of fossil fuels in agricultural production processes, including:
- a) Phasing out the use of coal burning for dehydration of agricultural products, greenhouse heating and other processes
 - b) Incentivising uptake of solar energy on farms and in rural communities
 - c) Supporting a transition to electrified farm vehicles, including heavy vehicles
 - d) Phasing out the use of synthetic nitrogen fertilisers (see above)
- 5.12. Ensure a Just Transition to regenerative agricultural practices, so that the rights and dignity of all involved are upheld, with a focus on equity and justice. Ensure a managed approach to employment and community wellbeing in areas that have traditionally relied on unsustainable agricultural practices and involve communities in planning for their own transition, noting that different people, families, communities, and regions will benefit from different approaches.

6 Genetic Engineering

The Green Party remains committed to keeping the Aotearoa/New Zealand environment free of genetically engineered (GE) organisms. The deliberate adoption of and unintentional contamination of GE organisms into food and other crops overseas means that our GE-free agricultural produce is increasingly valued in local as well as international markets. As a GE-free country, Aotearoa New Zealand also offers a protected genetic base for the development of future crops.

Policy Positions

- 6.1. Support limited and ethical use of genetic science as a tool in diagnostics, understanding of heredity, and development of medicines, provided that any genetically engineered organisms are completely contained in a secure indoor laboratory
- 6.2. Support the use of marker-assisted breeding for crop and animal improvement
- 6.3. Prohibit the growth, development and field-testing of genetically modified and transgenic organisms that are intended for release into the environment or food chain.
- 6.4. Maintain zero tolerance for all GE-derived micro-organism, seed, plant, and animal imports
- 6.5. Discourage GE products, such as enzymes and processing aids, vaccinations and animal remedies, from being released into the New Zealand food chain or environment
- 6.6. Develop legislation to ensure that liability for any GE contamination falls on those responsible
- 6.7. Support the marketing of Aotearoa New Zealand and its products as GE free.

7 Biosecurity

One of the greatest advantages New Zealand's primary production sector has over the rest of the world, is its freedom from numerous pests and diseases. We must take strong measures to maintain this status by having a strict border security, quarantine and internal biosecurity regime and capacity. The Green Party will better protect the country from new exotic pests and diseases.

Policy Positions

- 7.1. Enhance our ability to prevent unwanted exotic species from entering New Zealand and the ability to respond to any incursions that do occur.

- 7.2. Ensure there is a biosecurity strategy in place that is based on a precautionary approach:
 - a) Recognises that many pest incursions are irreversible and so promotes the lowest practical risk approach.
 - b) Considers the harmful effects of toxins on human and non-target species, in decisions on the use of ground and aerial spray, and ensures chemicals are only used as a last resort.
 - c) Addresses the risks from new and imported organisms and ensures the Ministry of Primary Industries maintains and constantly improves biosecurity protocols, including protocols for seed importation and GE organisms such as micro-organisms, seeds, plants and animals.
 - d) Only permits new species of biological control after extensive consideration of indigenous and existing naturalised exotic species.
 - e) Amends the Biosecurity Act to include, as its purpose, the need to protect New Zealand from pests, diseases, and GE organisms.
- 7.3. Encourage the preparation of effective pest management plans that are area/ecosystem-based strategies as well as species based.
- 7.4. Ensure there is a biosecurity services levy on all freight, passengers and vessels arriving in New Zealand.
- 7.5. Prevent livestock diseases entering New Zealand, by following World Health Organisation advice and global best practice.
- 7.6. Establish a definitive policy for controlling livestock diseases such as *Mycobacterium avium* Paratuberculosis (MAP) in Aotearoa New Zealand.

8 Strengthening Rural Communities

The withdrawal of public services, farm consolidation, and the substitution of capital for labour in rural enterprises have impacted many rural communities. The Green Party believes that rural living and working can be attractive to more New Zealanders.

Policy Positions

- 8.1. Develop a strategy for ensuring the sustainability of rural communities.
- 8.2. Ensure essential infrastructure in rural towns such as potable water supply and wastewater treatment systems.
- 8.3. Ensure access to basic services such as rural roads, education, health (including mental health), financial, tax and welfare services, country stores, communication and justice.

- 8.4. Encourage people to move to rural towns and areas to work, especially in activities that contribute to sustainable and regenerative land use, and to establish businesses, especially those involved in adding value to primary products, while remaining mindful of the need to avoid perverse outcomes for vulnerable people.
- 8.5. Encourage the development of sustainable processing plants for co-operative ventures run by local producers.
- 8.6. Address security of tenure of rural land by reviewing the Public Works Act to give people confidence in decision-making about land management, and ongoing involvement in their communities.
- 8.7. Ensure the Overseas Investment Act restricts the sale of rural property to New Zealand citizens.
- 8.8. Develop legislation to encourage farm ownership to be held by the farm resident operator. This will encourage family farm and Māori or community co-operative structures and will discourage excessive consolidation of farming properties and the negative community effects of absentee corporate ownership.

9 Promoting Rural-Urban Linkages and managing public access

The Green Party believes that there is a growing disconnection between urban and rural people and their livelihoods and experiences. It is important that greater understanding, connectivity and cooperation between rural and urban dwellers is should be fostered. This will facilitate more positive outcomes on complex issues such as public access to conservation lands and paper roads.

Policy Positions

- 9.1. Promote better links between rural and urban New Zealanders
- 9.2. Ensure a rural - urban community mix and dialogue in catchment, regional and district management plan development.
- 9.3. Foster consumer supported agriculture and direct marketing of produce to local consumers.
- 9.4. Enable the development of commercial farm kill services for commercial sale of products produced by small farms, heritage breed growers, and regenerative farmers not serviced by commercial abattoirs.
- 9.5. Support urban people to engage more with landcare groups and volunteer schemes.
- 9.6. As part of the incorporation of environmental education into the core school curriculum, support the teaching of the origins and production of

food, nutrition, and basic cooking and regenerative and organic gardening skills.

- 9.7. Support the right of the public to access conservation areas and paper roads.
- 9.8. Support the work of the Walking Access Commission Ara Hikoī Aotearoa.
- 9.9. Build constructive relationships between landowners and land users.
- 9.10. Provide mediation services to resolve disputes that occur when the needs of residents of growing urban areas conflict with the needs of existing, now neighbouring, farming and horticultural activities.
- 9.11. Provide financial support for landowners to erect signs and to fence their properties.
- 9.12. Provide reliable geographic information on the location of public access ways of all types to users and landholders.
- 9.13. Ensure existing paper roads remain open, are adequately marked, and that complaints concerning obstruction of them are resolved.
- 9.14. Provide community mediation, work with councils and assist them to enforce the law and provide appropriate signage.
- 9.15. Research and collect information from all users about land access issues.
- 9.16. Report to Parliament about whether legislation is needed to resolve issues and improve public access to land.

10 Humane Treatment of Animals in Agriculture

The Green Party believes that all animals must be treated with compassion and respect, and if they are killed this must be done in a humane manner. Animals used in agriculture must be provided with not only all the essentials of food, water, and protection from harm during farming, but also a positive life experience that includes freedom to move and express a range of normal forms of behaviour. The Green Party proposes a range of measures to ensure humane treatment of animals in agriculture, detailed fully in our [Animal Welfare](#) policy.

11 Te Tiriti o Waitangi

Rural affairs operate within a te Tiriti framework and rural communities need support to understand the relationship between hapū and the Crown. Institutions and programmes also need to support Māori to sustainably utilise their rural resources.

Policy Positions

- 11.1. Recognise ancestral land ownership and kaitiakitanga in rural areas.

- 11.2. Negotiate with hapū to ensure that the approach to access issues, waahi tapu protection and resource management issues takes into account Te Tiriti.
- 11.3. Provide public education to increase understanding of Te Tiriti and its fair and practical implementation in rural areas.
- 11.4. Ensure that the development of incentives, disincentives, ratings, carbon credits and other economic instruments take into account the owners of multiply-owned Māori land.
- 11.5. Support Māori land use through methods such as requiring banks to make credit available for use on multiple-owned Māori land as if it were singly owned.
- 11.6. Support protection of Māori cultural and traditional knowledge, and intellectual property rights, from bio-prospecting and other means of misappropriation.