
Government assistance for sustainable land management will mean more afforestation

David Allen

Much of New Zealand is at risk from natural disasters and adverse climatic events including drought, flood and landslide. Land use in rural New Zealand often does not reflect the risks that are associated with it. With each adverse climatic event the physical properties of such land will continue to deteriorate. The current use of this land is not sustainable.

Long-term adjustment of land use is necessary to prevent continuing ecological, social and economic costs being born by individuals, regions and the nation after storms and drought. The issue is how to adjust to sustainable land use patterns.

The Ministry for the Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries in conjunction with other Government departments and local authorities have prepared proposals for a FARM (Facilitation for Action on Risk Management) Partnership; a Programme for Sustainable Land Management. A public discussion paper was released on October 12, 1990. This programme is the result of an investigation into the role that Government could take to facilitate and encourage a change towards a more economic and sustainable land use in the primary production sector. The paper proposes a partnership between land-owners, regional government and central government to achieve a more sustainable land use.

Recent experience has shown that in areas at risk the ability of individuals to manage within their own resources is limited, and a partnership approach from all beneficiaries is required to address the problem. On October 17, 1990 the Minister of Agriculture released a further paper which drafts details of a pilot scheme to test and develop the FARM Partnership proposals.

The pilot scheme is directed at the East Coast of the North Island from the Esk Valley to East Cape. This region has been identified as having the most to benefit from a faster rate of land-use change compared to other regions. The partners will identify areas where land use must change, prescribe the mechanism to facilitate change and decide how it would best be funded.

The Government will grant approximately 72% of the total programme costs, with the balance being provided by the other partners. The proposed pilot scheme is scheduled to run over the period March 1, 1991 to June 30, 1993. The total cost over this period is \$27.815 million inclusive of GST.

Of particular interest to both farmers and foresters is the suggested change from predominantly pastoral land use to forestry use on highly erosion-prone land. Exotic production forests are not the only option; native trees and non-commercial exotic trees and shrubs are others. Activities will include targeted grants, to assist in the adjustment of farm boundaries and ownership agreements, to encourage afforestation where

it would be unattractive in purely commercial terms, fund non-commercial aspects of commercial forestry establishment where slope stability and erosion control is a priority and to encourage the further expansion of commercial forestry on Maori land. Grants will also be targeted towards retiring and revegetating land that has no potential for production forestry or continued pastoral use.

A regionally based establishment group working with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, in consultation with other affected Government departments, industry organisations and community groups, will prepare operating details and criteria for the pilot programme to become operational from March 1, 1991.

West Coast forests to be formed into a company

The Government announced on October 19, 1990 that a new company to take over the management of the Crown's forestry assets on the West Coast would be formed.

Mr Prebble said that the decision was in line with the proposal made to the Government by Sir Kerry Burke in September.

The Board members of the new company, to be known as Timberlands (West Coast) Ltd, are: Mr Rex Loach (Chairman) of Nelson, Mr David Haslam and Mr Peter Cox of Christchurch, Mr Graeme Williams of Greymouth and Mr Gordon Bloomfield of Hokitika.

Although the company will be a subsidiary of the New Zealand Forestry Corporation it will be a fully stand alone and independent company run on successful SOE lines.

"The Government has not so far received any bids which it believes reflect the true value of the forestry resource on the West Coast," said Mr Prebble.

"This announcement will allow a business to be formed which can develop a credible track record building on the already successful operation based at Greymouth."

Timberlands (West Coast) Ltd will continue under the existing Accord, covenants and will manage exotic pine plantations under a Crown forest licence in the same way as other State forest sales.

This proposal will achieve the objective set out in Sir Kerry's proposal:

- * to ensure that the commercial forests on the West Coast continue to be operated in a business-like way;
- * that maximum advantage is taken of the rapid increase in wood supplies that will occur through to the year 2000 by way of processing on the Coast;
- * to avoid a return to old bureaucratic methods of managing the forest resource;
- * to minimise the uncertainty being felt by the staff of Timberlands, the New Zealand Forestry Corporation's subsidiary which has been managing the forest resource.

Mr Prebble noted that the decision to form Timberlands (West Coast) Ltd together with the decision announced earlier in the week would effectively

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