

FEP and Lease land across sub catchments

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Context

- About 25,000 ha of land used for maize growing in the greater Waikato
- About 15-18,000 ha of maize in the Waikato/Waipā catchments
- About 8-10,000 ha of maize grown off the dairy platform (lease or owned land)
- Size of these blocks range from 2ha to 220 ha (average 30 ha)

Farm Environment Plans – Positive

- Best things since sliced bread – (almost)
 - Recognise uniqueness of farms, farmers and farm systems.
 - Based on GFP
 - Allow farmers and their advisors to identify risks and plan mitigation strategies around loss of key contaminants
 - Most likely to succeed because the process is individualized and therefore more likely to be “owned” by the farmer
 - Can have a positive economic benefit to farmer (when used in conjunction with current technology)

Our place

Lost area =
1ha

Lost maize =
5,000kgDM@
\$0.25 = \$
1250

Cost/ha =
\$2300/ha

Saving =
\$1150



Farm Environment Plans - Negative

1. Time frame too short because
 - Not enough qualified planners (Arable – less than 5?)
 - The time they take to do effectively
2. They are costly (FAR, GTL exercise for WRC. 8 farms. 2017)
 - \$4324/farm completion costs (range \$12-\$75/ha)
 - \$4308/farm mitigation costs (range 0-\$63/ha)
3. CFEP needs to have a good farm systems knowledge to
 - Accurately identify risks
 - Recommend mitigations that work for the farmer

Farm Environment Plans – a way forward

1. Extend time frames to enable training and certification of planners
2. Incentivise farmers to adopt best practice (rates relief, longer time frames between FEP renewals?)
3. Penalise laggards
4. Need to include minimum standards as part of the FEP that are linked to the goals of the sub-catchment

Minimum standards - GFP

1. Annual soil testing
2. Fert applied according to soil test results
3. Minimum cultivation
4. No-till and contour tillage of slope over 15 degrees
5. Catch crops mandatory
6. No fallow ground for longer than 6 weeks
7. Setbacks based on slope, soil type, type of cultivation employed

2. Lease land – who is responsible?

- Many maize contractors own and/or lease multiple blocks of land across a number of sub-catchments
- The length of each lease varies hugely from 6 months to continuous right of renewal
- Most have total management control over how the land is farmed.
- Many are owned by absentee land owners who are totally unaware of what is happening on their land

2. Lease land

- Because each block over 20ha will be required to have a land use consent and an FEP will be part of that consent, then the FEP sits with the block.
- However, if the leasee changes, then the new leasee will be required to implement the current FEP
- If they want to change farm practice, then they should need to submit a new FEP.
- How much will this cost and will contractors do it when the margins are already slim?
- Who is accountable for any breaches of consent?

Thanks

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