
LINKONLINE

Short webinars for environmental policy-makers and practitioners

Agents of change for the adoption of sustainable land management practices

The following questions were asked during our live webinar with Melissa Robson-Williams but due to time restrictions, we were unable to answer these in the session.

CONVENTIONAL FARMING

So the basis of this is that 'conventionally farmed' land is not a 'long term sustainable land use and practices'?

The two sides of the diagram were examples not indicative of all conventionally farmed land and whenua Māori. The point of the diagram was to show that agents of change have a different job to do in these two examples.

Is all conventionally farmed land practices considered to be unsustainable?

The two sides of the diagram were examples, not indicative of all conventionally farmed land and whenua Māori. The point of the diagram was to show that agents of change have a different job to do in these two examples.

How much thought has been given to the barriers of change to conventionally farmed land such as debt levels?

Debt is an important factor. One of the other research aims in moving the middle is investigating investment practices including the role of debt. Information on this will be found here when it is available: <https://www.landcareresearch.co.nz/discover-our-research/environment/sustainable-society-and-policy/moving-the-middle/>

CHANGE

It's when the rubber hits the road that counts - how do you suggest influencing the agents of change?

The research is focussed on what the agents are trying to change. However, as a part of the research we also collect data on what inspires or motivates the agents.

What support is there for people / groups committed to Deep Leverage change?

This project will try and provide some support through building evidence for change and an opportunity for connection with other change agents.

How do survival factors interact here? I imagine deep change may only occur if the agent can afford the cost, while starvation or other economic necessities will override the best will in the world. This is an example of short-term necessity against long-term benefits.

Yes - \$ is an important factor. One of the other research aims in moving the middle is investigating investment practices including the role of debt. Information on this will be found here when it is available: <https://www.landcareresearch.co.nz/discover-our-research/environment/sustainable-society-and-policy/moving-the-middle/>

In order to determine where those levers lie in terms of their efficacy I assume you need first to establish your end goal. What information and process is used to establish this?

Yes - good point. We establish the intended goals through interviews. We also interview examples from the target audience to gather data on efficacy

As you determine which organisations have a more effective impact, will you also be considering why certain agents are more impactful? It may be good to support shallow agents to become deeper in their impact. (E.g. Are more impactful agents considering how to address drivers behind stress... or are impactful agents engaging more widely, etc.).

Yes, really important question. Part of the research is to understand what makes agents more effective.

Are you also looking at agents of resistance to change?

Good question and it often comes up in our discussions. Within each of the case studies we are looking at what hinders the agents of change including agents of resistance.

Where do policies like regulation and/or pricing (e.g. emissions, leaching, etc.) fit into this framework?

These types of interventions tend to be quite shallow.

I work with volunteers encouraging sustainability by doing biodiversity work in local parks and reserves. Many of the sustainable land management practices either legislative or policy require many hands to implement these ideals and forward thinking visions, that funding does not always support.

Sounds like a great initiative. Some other agents have also identified funding and legislative barriers

How would Landcare Research support a cultural shift to support Sustainable land Management practices and engage in positive behavioural change that is long lasting?

The case studies that we have chosen at the moderate and deeper depths of leverage are intended to shed light on this question.

How could this model support all socio economic groups and bring them together to feel all are receiving benefit?

We take your reference to 'model' to refer to the concepts of 'leverage points' that we were talking about in the webinar. With that in mind, we believe the concepts of causality, feedback loops and leverage points can be used to help bring people together to think in a more cohesive way about such issues. So we believe these concepts are one tool to help a range of people to understand how they may all be impacted in different ways by improved pro-environmental land management.

Do you believe incentivising has merit, if so what would you recommend?

Incentivising can be useful, although it tends to be a relatively shallow intervention.

Have you a model-exemplar you can show is relevant and working.

Healthy Families NZ is a good example in the health sector where being aware of 'leverage points' is having meaningful impact. While this is in a different subject matter area, it remains a good example of helping bring diverse communities together for greatest impact. Note: That initiative talks about the 'six conditions of systems change' which a related version of (and informed by) the 'leverage points' concepts we use.

TANGATA WHENUA**What mechanism do you suggest for considering mana whenua in land management change interventions?**

Our initial findings indicate that on whenua Māori that is managed with strong Te ao Māori values, the work of an agent is more about removing institutional and systemic barriers and enhancing reconnection with land. Mechanisms include:

- creating that relationship with mana whenua
- asking if the business, programme etc. is ready for that relationship
- what resources are the business, programme etc. prepared to provide to support mana whenua capacity and capability?

Are you in danger of romanticising traditional tangata whenua land use, the technology available was not the same as subsequently arrived. So how does the effect of technology impact on the causality arguments?

The two sides of the diagram were examples, not indicative of all conventionally farmed land or whenua Māori. Our initial findings indicate that whenua Māori is managed according to strong Te ao Māori values, therefore the work of an agent is more about removing institutional and systemic barriers to expression of these values, subsequently enhancing reconnection with land. So, we argue that whenua Māori that is managed with strong Te ao Māori values and underpinned by a reciprocal relationship with land is the basis for the pull towards sustainability rather than the use of any particular technology. We also want to acknowledge that romanticising traditional tangata whenua land use argument, it does happen. This programme works closely and is supported by a Māori reference group all who are currently influencing pro-environmental land use using mana whenua values and new technologies

All systems are based on resource use, including differing cultures, and the effects of systems always are based around beliefs and values, are we not just prioritising different means of getting the message across,

You're right that all agricultural systems have a dimension of use. However, for some agents the nature of the relationship between people and environment (e.g. reciprocal, resource etc) that is a part of peoples' world views, values and beliefs affects that 'use' - it's scale and intensity.

THE RESEARCH**Where can we learn more different agents of change for different land ownership scenarios?**

Another workstream in the project is looking at different types of land ownership and the bank lending model, and also different types of Māori land/governance structures when looking at what barriers they face and what is driving their decisions. Information on this will be found here when it

is available: <https://www.landcareresearch.co.nz/discover-our-research/environment/sustainable-society-and-policy/moving-the-middle/>

What methodology do you use to do your work for developing this work programme? So that it is sustainable for future generations to make changes in the system, as the environment changes?

There are at least 3 dimensions that we use in the research design. The team is reflective and adaptive, i.e. we have an overarching objective and pause often to reflect if we are on track and adjust if necessary. We are diverse - we deliberately chose a diverse team to reflect many of the tensions that face our research and build them into the work of the research team. Systems based - The way we decide what to work on it informed by a systems and leverage perspective. I might not have understood your questions - if not please feel free to get back in touch.

Will you survey the farmer community directly?

The survey mentioned in the webinar was aimed at organisations supporting agents of change, not specifically aimed at farmers. There are other workstreams in moving the middle who are or have already done surveys and interviews with farmers.

I'm currently engaged in a climate change and biodiversity project in Vanuatu – can you give a quick perspective or whether you think this approach would be appropriate on customary owned land in the Pacific Islands?

Sorry - we don't have the expertise in our team to answer that, but I am happy to have a follow up discussion about who might be able to help.

Thank you to those who provided suggestions of organisations and groups who might be able to help with the survey, we appreciate you taking the time to provide these suggestions.

We also had an overwhelming amount of feedback valuing the content that Melissa shared with you during the webinar – thank you for providing such valuable feedback.