Workshop Notes

Session 3: Biodiversity and Farm Planning

Biodiversity and Farm Planning

Presented by Alec Mackay, AgResearch, with support from Fleur Maseyk, The Catalyst Group. Working in caucus areas in break-out groups, participants recapped the topics covered, and identified aspects with which they connected and that concerned them. Following this, participants addressed the following questions:

Given what you have heard about the need to have integrated farm planning, what are the implications for us when:

- *developing national level policy?*
- *developing regional level policy?*
- *working with natural resource management decision makers?*

Thinking about your sector/role, what can we do individually and collectively to:

i) promote integrated farm planning (farm plans that include biodiversity) and
ii) facilitate implementation of integrated farm planning? (e.g. government/industry discourse on farm environmental plans)

What support will we need to do this?

The compiled responses to these questions in relation to each of the three focus areas are set out below.

National-level policy

Responses to the questions above for national-level policy:

Data/resource needs

- Need vegetation mapping of pre and post 1990 forest
- Need additional farm planning resources for rural professionals, e.g. how to link across riparian/freshwater quality to benefits for biodiversity
- Ability to track trends and direction of travel, e.g. using tools like Overseer but there is not one available for biodiversity
- Tools to measure and link impacts of farming methods to the environment, e.g. for water quality and biodiversity
- There is a need to bridge the gap with science through more applied research and demonstration cases for good plans
- Establish baselines and what good, better and different biodiversity would look like
- Develop new understandings of how farms link to landscape diversity
- Helpful to have mapping services available to all farmers

Available resources

- Many industry groups already have farm plans (e.g. Dairy NZ/Beef and Lamb/Deer: LEP (Local Environmental Plan); and Horticulture has GAP (New Zealand Good Agricultural Practice). They all have the same building blocks:
    - What is the farm resource?
    - What is needed?
    - How do you manage the resources you have?

Policy levers

- Incentives to promote integrated farm planning are needed. Perhaps the Common Agricultural Policy in EU could be a suitable model to follow
- Consider social aspects in any policy, e.g. aesthetic values of the workplace which could link to health policies
- What is the potential to have private reserves that are not in perpetuity?
- More incentives to take land out of production

Policy development processes

- Recognise there are two aspects required for planning: farm- and catchment-level plans
- Policy needs to understand how farmers and farms work and how the policy may work on a farm. This understanding could be facilitated through field trips by policy people to farms
- During policy development and implementation recognize value of alternative benefits
- Don't penalise landowners who have voluntarily already made improvements or Māori landowners who may not yet have 'developed' to the extent of others

Knowledge transfer and communication

- Guidance and extension services are needed to let farmers know about it and then support them as they undertake integrated plans
- A single message from science and government is needed
- Farmers learn best from farmers

Implementation

- Enforcement of existing policy, e.g. Wildlife Act
- Better oversight of the biodiversity parts of plans: 'lost is lost' for some biodiversity
- More technical capacity to develop integrated farm plans. Currently there is a shortage of rural professionals

Other

- Beef & Lamb – 25% of biodiversity is on their farms. Farmers must associate with and have some values for biodiversity
- Advocates need to raise concerns, e.g. poor/inaccurate mapping
- Remember there are long collective memories of SNA (Significant Natural Areas) balls-up

Regional-level policy

Responses to the questions above for regional-level policy:

Policy and plans

- National targets for all aspects of biodiversity and land-use types would help the development of regional policy and plans
- With many different types of farm plans it is confusing as they are all slightly different. Central government should standardize the basis of all farm environmental plans
- District plans can be really important for maintaining/increasing biodiversity (need to avoid impacts not protect); however, there is little guidance on when and where to 'avoid'
- Policy and plans should consider how to promote/protect the rarer (low land) biodiversity on private lands
- Regional policy should identify the different ecosystems, where they are and where they were
- Plans should develop integrated catchment plans (soil, water and biodiversity)
- Policy and plans should take risk-based approach to where and what to manage differently within a farm
- Start with those areas where have overlapping aim with protecting biodiversity (e.g. carbon sequestration) and other potential economic benefits
- Regional councils are often about prioritise – incentivise – regulate. However, they don't tend to do the incentivise step very well. Perhaps there is some scope for incentivising/paying farmers compensation for their contribution, especially often don't do something because they can't afford it

Institutions

- There are often internal conflicts within regional councils. This often results in tension within the council, e.g. where there are different priorities between biodiversity vs economic/regional development. To be effective in this space needs a cohesive, whole-of-organisation approach
- To integrate properly we need to connect across all parts of the Council and then across all stakeholders. This is needed to promote and facilitate integrated farm and catchment planning

Monitoring

- Need better monitoring to see how successful biodiversity policy has been
- Need outcome monitoring, not how much you 'kill'.
- Improve compliance with existing policy and plans

Implementation

- Promote integrated farm plans through biodiversity strategies, including getting a commitment at the sector level
- All councils incorporate biodiversity and ecosystem services into their farm plan and land management approaches

- Being able to demonstrate to landowners where they fit in the regional/catchment picture will better facilitate the development of integrated farm plans
- There are resourcing challenges where there is not enough staff to support farm plan development (let alone integrated farm plans) and then to audit the plans. There is some risk with the same organisation doing farm plan development and auditing them

Other

- One implication is that when protecting biodiversity/restore biodiversity there may be other unexpected ramifications (e.g. what happens to flooding and water tables and the effects on them)

Natural resource manager decision making

Responses to the questions above for the natural resource manager:

Tools and resources

- To roll out integrated farm plans practitioners/resource managers will need:
  - examples of ecosystem services and their multiple benefits
  - an understanding of what is happening at the regional scale and connectivity between ecosystems across the region
  - good information of the land resources of each farm
- Make integrated farm planning easy!! (and attractive)
- Have easily accessible and useable resources (e.g. tools and templates) to help land managers make decisions. Include both positive and negative aspects
- Develop a cross-agency scorecard to show how an integrated farm plan may meet the different requirements of different agencies (or even sections within the same agency)
- Address gaps in knowledge, e.g. traditional knowledge, integration.

Engagement and communication

- Profile success stories around the benefits of integrated farm planning. However, these stories should consider heterogeneity in both ecosystem service flows and landscapes
- Demonstrate how integrated farm planning can add value to the land managers' business
- During implementation be aware of the industry/target the group being engaged and ensure messaging is appropriate for that group
- Use terminology that land managers understand and can relate to
- Establish forums to allow land managers, councils, industry and researchers to engage effectively around integrated farm plans with the aim of finding common ground around look and feel of the farm plans and appropriate engagement strategies. Providing opportunities for these groups to present at farm days could also be beneficial

Implementation

- Use other community members and farmers as champions and to promote integrated farm planning. This will help spread the message of the need for this kind of planning more quickly
- Build stronger relationships and trust with landowners. Ask these landowners to provide examples that can share with others. Once you get one person starting to develop an integrated farm plan in an area then others are likely to also start moving
- Have less central government involvement during the implementation phase
- During implementation have greater cooperation between council and industry
- Focus on ecosystem service flows rather than environmental issues when rolling out integrated farm planning
- Remember some flexibility is required during implementation to meet the specific needs of the farmer

Other

- Identify policies that work against each other in the context of contradictory signals for an integrated farm plan and resolve these
- Regulation is a necessary but only for the laggards are regulation should not be the primary way to drive change, in this case the development of integrated farm plans