
LINKONLINE

Short webinars for environmental policy-makers and practitioners

Moving the Middle - Empowering land managers to act in complex rural landscapes

The following questions were asked during our live webinar with Suzie Greenhalgh and Fraser Morgan but due to time restrictions, we were unable to answer these in the session.

Questions about the research - Farmers

Has there been any segmentation of views within the farmer community and areas where they converge/diverge in their perspectives and needs?

There has been no formal segmentation undertaken, but yes there is work that is looking at how perspectives/views may diverge. The narratives research is one area where this is being done using a Q-sort methodology. We are also undertaking some wider surveys looking at farmer perceptions. These build off the Survey of Rural Decision Makers.

How are you taking into consideration, context of each individual farmer? What scales are you working at?

We are mostly focused on intervening on the systems around farmers rather than the farmer themselves. However, we are using what individual farmers are telling us about what they see and hear (from their perspective) to help determine how to most effectively intervene. The scale we are working at varies across the different parts of the research. For the "policy interventions" it is catchment/sub-catchment level (but through nudges that may be provided by organisations such as regional councils, NGOs or processors). For "narratives", it is more of a community level. For "investment practices", it is national. For "agents of change", it is working with individuals who influence many.

What did you mean by property rights in the early slide?

We assume you are referring to the Policy Interventions slide - in which case property rights refers to things like covenants.

Are you testing whether some of the narratives about farming are well founded, or maybe not, and if so, where have potentially inaccurate narratives come from?

No, we are taking the narratives as they are currently portrayed (even if incorrect). Even incorrect narratives still impact farmers. We are currently in the field identifying which narratives have the most influence.

Rules are good for proscribing bad activities. Are they useful for prescribing good activities?

This is not part of our research. However, rules are often used to prescribe what policy makers think are good activities, usually in the context of addressing a problem. We think this is what you are asking.

Did you talk to all farm types ... dairy, sheep and beef?

Yes, and horticulture and arable as well.

Taking on to the previous question - And horticulture??

This research relates to all agriculture (pastoral, arable, horticultural farmers).

How are these pressures affecting young people who may want to take up farming ?

The agents of change research area involves two schools, one a rural high school with a farm and the other a Māori STEM academy. We hope to get a better understanding of how youth may be affected by these pressures.

Did you consider the influence of farmers as agents of on other farmers

Yes.

Your "now" diagram seems to show few farmers are acting. What data is this based on?

The moving the middle diagram was simply used to illustrate what could happen if you moved a bulk of farmers, i.e. moving the tails of the curve has little impact while moving the middle part of the curve has a larger total effect. Hence our focus on the middle part of that diagram. In reality, farmers could be at the leading edge on one topic but the middle on another topic.

Very interesting thanks. I feel a major issue is that the marked point on x-axis of your 'moving the middle' figure does not stay constant.

The moving the middle diagram was simply used to illustrate what could happen if you moved a bulk of farmers, i.e. moving the tails of the curve has little impact while moving the middle part of the curve has a larger total effect. Hence our focus on the middle part of that diagram. In reality, farmers could be at the leading edge on one topic but the middle on another topic.

Questions about the research – Regulation and interventions**The best nudges work when the subject doesn't even know they occurred.... so how do you envisage picking up on those more subtle approaches that worked invisibly?**

Most nudges are intended to be small, low cost, and tend to be invisible. In reality each nudge only influences a small proportion of the population of interest, however a range of nudges would hopefully influence a larger proportion of the population. The experimental design will aim to identify the effectiveness of nudges.

Are the regulators willing to change from blunt instruments to nudges?

Yes, we do see an interest and potential willingness to look at different approaches within central government. We hope and expect to support more interest in these approaches through the research programme.

Seems to me that while regulation is a long term nut to crack, a great deal of progress could be made by sitting different agencies at the same table and coordinate better. That would help addressing farmers 'conflicting and competing' objectives.

This is something that we think many people have noted before and it is certainly a theme that is coming up in our interviews with farmers. We may potentially look into this further as the research programme progresses.

Is there any appetite from regulators to look at farmers' total required tasks and align better across regulators? (e.g. the year cycle issue mentioned)

This is something that we think many people have noted before and it is certainly a theme that is coming up in our interviews with farmers. We may potentially look into this further as the research programme progresses.

Māori themes**In relation to Māori Agribusiness and the critical constraints % diagram was there any data to see if these were consistent across all geographical locations and farming types? or were there variances?**

The information presented during the webinar was based on literature reviews to ensure we had a good understanding of what the challenges are, and what to focus on for the primary research within this programme.

Who have you talked to within Māori to identify and prioritise the 5 critical constraints?

This research is starting in the 2nd half of this year and will involve Māori agribusiness' from different parts of the country.

About the programme**What is the timeline for the individual research topics included in this? Would be interesting to have results shared in different areas as they are completed rather than waiting 3.5 years for everything.**

Many thanks. Following the interest in this webinar we have scheduled further sessions on each of the research areas. These will begin in the second half of 2023.

Thanks for the presentation. Also very keen to hear info as it becomes available,

We will post research papers, presentations and reports here:

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

How far through the project are you?

About 18 months. We have another 3.5 years to go in the research programme.

Excellent presentation and exciting research, thanks team. How can we stay up to date with the findings of this research?

We will post research papers, presentations and reports here

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

The key is in the Systems and Agencies part of the systems diagram earlier . But did you say you do not have funding for this aspect in the programme?

The Systems and Agency part of the research programme is funded, but this section is only focusing on identifying other systems which sit outside of the ones we are looking at within the other parts of the programme. The aim of that programme is to identify other intervention points. We have some funding to examine these new intervention points (but probably not all).

About stakeholders and end-users

Are you connected with MPI's Māori Agribusiness Directorate?

During the development of the programme we discussed aspects of the programme with MPI's Māori Agribusiness Directorate, however we recognise that we need to reconnect with members of the directorate.

Has the information gathered here been shared with MPI, MfE and regional councils?

Yes, our Stakeholder Reference Group has a range of central government members (MPI, MfE, DoC) and a number of regional councils (including Environment Southland and Waikato Regional Council which is where we are undertaking case study experiments). Regional council staff are also active members of our research team

How is your connection with "Fit for a Better World" from MPI - it looks like it would be a good avenue to contribute with your findings.

We have close connection with "Fit for a Better World". Two of the research team are part of the "Enabling People through Change" accelerator. Another Fit for a Better World participant is on our Stakeholder reference group.

Is anyone from NZ central govt involved in this research?

Yes, our Stakeholder Reference Group has a range of central government members (MPI, MfE, DoC). This group provides invaluable context and also a way for these agencies to receive updates on key parts of the programme.

Other relevant programmes

Suggest looking at the Canechangers programme operating in Queensland

Not really a question - Are you aware of Farming with the Native Biodiversity project?

<https://www.biodiversity.nz/>

Many thanks, we will look into both of these.