Seeing the forest and the trees through the Survey of Rural Decision Makers

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

Could you elaborate on the optimist/pessimist view on self-assessment of ETS competence

We asked people how well they understood the ETS. Those who are enrolled in the ETS understand the scheme better than those who don't, which is what we would hope for. On the other hand, few people (including people who are enrolled) scored that question very highly. So, we can look at the same piece of information with two different lenses on.

What did the survey discover in terms of recent purchasers of farms for mass planting?

Given that the survey is confidential, it's hard to identify this group in the respondents.

Is the interest in planting kanuka/manuka and other indig sps - specifically planting or does that include allowing reversion?

The slides that I shared were specific to planting. The survey includes another section on reversion and maintenance of native bush.

Was there any indication from the survey that sustainable forestry management practices were not being fully implemented or if there was limited awareness around this?

The survey didn't have a lot of detail about specific forestry management practices apart from seeking advice. This would be a great topic for follow-up research!

You focused on forestry and planting. Was there anything that stood out from the other parts of the survey?

I focused on forestry and planting for today's seminar. As I mentioned, biosecurity and resilience were other focuses for the last survey. We prepared a report on biosecurity for MPI and are working on a number of research papers on other topics.

Maori stats would be interesting - is this possible? There is a similar growth in native focus I believe amongst Maori. I am also interested in "other exotics" what are these, and what thinking is out there to ensure optimal values achieved from other exotics (biodiversity, unique timbers etc.)

This is a really interesting question. The share of land intended for planting in manuka and kanuka is higher for Maori than for non-Maori, but the share intended for other natives is identical. Larch and poplar are common exotics that fall into the 'other exotics' category. Poplar is especially common for erosion control.

I find it interesting that among those who have been surveyed there is an average of 5.9 of those registered understand the ETS. Do you know how many of those who participated in the survey?

This was based on 169 respondents who A) had post-1989 commercial forest and B) were registered in the ETS.

How was the land use identified prior the survey and how was the survey done?

Respondents selected land use from a comprehensive list that we provided. They also identified their primary industry from among the choices that they selected. See https://www.landcareresearch.co.nz/science/portfolios/enhancing-policy-effectiveness/srdm/srdm2019/4.-current-land-use-and-land-use-change/4.1-current-land-use

How do we find out more about the 300+ questions that were asked?

Two options: A) visit https://www.landcareresearch.co.nz/science/portfolios/enhancing-policy-effectiveness/srdm/srdm2019 or B) invite me for coffee

Planting trees in SI is discouraged in some areas - may be part of the negative perception?

That could be, although farmers who were concerned about 'negative perceptions' were geographically spread throughout the country.

I was surprised that 48% of forestry isn't profitable according to the survey, does this also show a move away from radiata to planting trees for other reasons than financial gain?

I think that a forester is better placed to answer this than I am, but a couple of possibilities come to mind. First, small investors with single age class forests may be enjoying tax losses while growing their forests in anticipation of income in their retirement. On the other hand, it may reflect the fact that for many foresters, the cost of small woodlot harvest exceeds the revenue from log sales.

Any insights on deforestation (land use change away from forestry)?

MPI conducts a deforestation intentions survey; I imagine that that will have more thorough information that we have in the Survey of Rural Decision Makers. Still, we have some data available here: https://www.landcareresearch.co.nz/science/portfolios/enhancing-policy-effectiveness/srdm/srdm2019/7.-forestry-and-tree-planting/7.1-forestry

Was there a question regarding carbon emissions measurement on farms?

We had questions about mitigation, but not on measurement.

Was there any specific question on non-wood forest products?

No, but I would be very happy to hear ideas for the 2021 Survey of Rural Decision Makers.

If I understood correctly there was a discrepancy between incentives and 1 BT not being strong motivations whereas financial barriers came up as big hindrances?

The results showed that incentives were not a primary driver for planting among those who had already decided to plant additional trees. However, financial barriers were the second most common explanation for why people with plantable land have chosen not to plant. If financial incentives could be targeted toward people in the latter group, that could potentially reduce that barrier.

Have you looked into the number of foreign ownership/funding and land use when planting?

The survey didn't ask specifically about foreign ownership. That's something to think about for 2021.

You commented to the effect that sheep & beef farmers weren't planning a lot of tree planting, in contrast to media concerns. Did you ask anything that might indicate whether farmers might sell land, creating an opportunity for forestry without that being their personal intention?

Thanks for this insightful question. We did ask about intentions to sell. 10% of commercial sheep and beef farmers intended to sell, subdivide, or lease all or part of their land in the next 2 years. This figure is lower than for dairy, deer, and other classes of stock.

Did you identify where trees were being planted on their land, i.e. to protect waterways or gullies from erosion? If it was waterways, did you identify the length and setback width?

The survey covers both erosion control (https://www.landcareresearch.co.nz/science/portfolios/enhancing-policy-effectiveness/srdm/srdm2019/5.-management-practices/5.2-erosion) and riparian buffers (https://www.landcareresearch.co.nz/science/portfolios/enhancing-policy-effectiveness/srdm/srdm2019/5.-management-practices/5.5-conservation). However, it does not get into compliance issues such as the width of setbacks.

Did you adjust your results to account for the under- or over-representation of certain groups of respondents? How?

We didn't include survey weights in the results that we presented in the seminar because most results were reported by industry. However, most of the results on our website do incorporate probability weights, which were helpfully provided by StatsNZ.

What impact has the technological change impact on your survey (automation technologies)?

We'd like to do more work on forestry practice, including automation, but that was ultimately beyond the scope of the 2019 Survey of Rural Decision Makers. This could perhaps be a good topic for a follow-up survey!

Do we know what the negative perceptions of tree planting are?

Unfortunately, we didn't probe this further.

What is the difference between "animal health" reasons and "Shelter"?

The category 'promote livestock health' would include shelter and win breaks for livestock. The category 'provide shelter or privacy' was intended to reflect human comfort. We should have worded the latter a bit better!