New Zealanders pride themselves on being guardians of the land, investing in improvements for generations to come. Fertile land, clean available water and fresh air are the foundations on which New Zealand's successful farming businesses have been built, so what is good for the environment is also good for farmers. Building sustainability through good environmental management and profitable farming, go hand-in-hand.

What is a Land and Environment Plan?
A Land and Environment Plan (LEP) is a tool that guides farmers through a recorded assessment of a farm's land and environmental issues, and helps farmers to develop a written plan outlining how those issues will be managed. It involves a stock-take of land, soil and water resources, an assessment of production opportunities and environmental risks, and development of a plan showing what actions are going to be undertaken, where they are being targeted, and when they will be implemented.

Why have an LEP?
A well prepared LEP captures stewardship and sustainability as a record showing that measureable actions are being taken to address environmental concerns and to demonstrate good practice. It also provides an understanding of the natural resources on your farm, and allows all those involved with your farm business to understand the plan to manage them for the long-term.

• LEPs can help identify areas where resources are not being fully utilised and production opportunities are being lost.
• LEPs provide a structured approach to new development on-farm by managing areas by their capability as you go.
• LEPs can identify improvements in farming practice that will enhance production, future-proof the business and foster access to environmentally discerning markets.
• LEPs can provide evidence for on-farm sustainable practices to consumers, regulators and others.
• If a plan is written down with achievable timeframes, it is more likely to get done.
• LEPs can add value to a farm.
• LEPs can be integrated with farm business plans.
• LEPs can help meet regional council requirements to manage threats to water quality.
• LEPs are voluntary for many parts of New Zealand, while some regional councils require them.

The Land and Environment Planning toolkit
Provides how-to guides for the preparation of Land and Environment Plans for sheep, beef and deer farmers. Targets improvements in farm production and environmental management through the better use of land, soil and water resources.

Was requested by sheep and beef farmers to help them meet environmental trends and market requirements.
No two farms are alike

There is no single recipe for land and environmental management. Each farm is characteristically unique in terms of landscapes, natural resources, farming practices and business goals. LEPs are tailored to individual farming situations.

There are three levels, starting with an introductory LEP—Level 1. This provides a step-by-step guide on how to identify environmental risks and opportunities, and develop a plan to manage them effectively in the context of your farming business.

More advanced plans are developed in Levels 2 and 3. Level 2 develops the concept of Land Management Units (LMUs), whilst Level 3 builds on the work done in Level 2 with emphasis on adopting specifications and methods used by professional farm planners.

The different levels provide the opportunity to choose the most appropriate starting point for any given farm. Each level represents a successive improvement in LEP quality and comprehensiveness.

LEP workshops

The best way to complete an LEP is through a Beef + Lamb New Zealand LEP workshop. These are run throughout the country with groups of 10 to 15 farmers. The workshops are facilitated by trained professionals who can provide advice and support if needed and will help you complete a plan in the workshop. If you have a local group of farmers (more than six) wanting a workshop, contact your Extension Manager who will try and provide a workshop that suits you, and will advertise to fill the remaining spots. Otherwise, check out the Beef + Lamb New Zealand website or talk to your local Extension Manager to find when an LEP workshop will be coming to your area.

Registering your LEP

When you attend an LEP workshop, this will be recorded when an LEP workshop will be coming to your area. You will receive a toolkit if you attend a workshop. Alternatively, you can download it from the Beef + Lamb New Zealand website at www.beeflambnz.com/lep

What's in the LEP toolkit?

Level 1 guidelines
- The workbook introduce the principles of environmental assessment, response selection, and how to build a plan of action.
- It includes documentation of current actions on-farm to protect environmental resources, and lists outstanding challenges.
- Level 1 is completed in two parts—the first is the farm mapping method, which enables farmers to identify key assets and risks on their farm-map. The second is the risk assessment method which is a series of yes/no questions to assess the likely risk of environmental challenges. You are then offered a range of options to manage any that may be present.

Level 2 guidelines
- Builds on Level 1.
- The farm is broken down by land type and reassembled into LMUs.
- Each unit is assessed to identify strengths, weaknesses, yield gap, and nutrient budget status.
- Opportunities are considered against SMART criteria to develop a response plan.

Level 3 guidelines
- Builds upon Level 2 and aims to produce a LEP with emphasis on standards used by professional farm planners.
- Level 3 requires land resource mapping, detailed planning and a reasonable time commitment.

Menu of practices to improve water quality

The menu is designed to help farmers improve nutrient management and reduce impacts on water quality. A range of practices to help improve water quality are provided. Each practice’s effectiveness at reducing nitrogen, phosphorus, sediment and micro-organisms entering waterways is rated, based on the latest research. The cost and benefit of each practice on the farm business are also indicated.

Stock exclusion resource

A helpful resource outlining options for stock exclusion in waterways.

What if I already have a plan?

Some farmers may already have a Farm Plan or Works Plan. If this is the case, it can be compared with the examples included in the LEP toolkit. If the existing plan is not as comprehensive, consider drafting up an improved plan using the LEP toolkit guidelines and resources and integrating the existing plan. The LEP may also be a good opportunity to revise your existing plan if your farm system has changed recently or you haven’t looked at it for a while.

How do I obtain the LEP toolkit?

You will receive a toolkit if you attend a workshop. Alternatively, you can download it from the Beef + Lamb New Zealand website at www.beeflambnz.com/lep

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