

B+LNZ farm planning

Beef + Lamb New Zealand's (B+LNZ) farm planning approach is designed to help you:

- ensure the sustainability and profitability of your business by adapting to climate change, understanding and managing your greenhouse gas emissions, and protecting the health of your soil, freshwater and biodiversity
- meet emerging consumer and regulatory requirements
- provide an evidence base to tell your farming story.

We're taking a **modular approach** that allows you to initially focus on the aspects that are most important to your business and continue building your plan over time.

The plan is **practical and flexible** and it's a **living document**, allowing you to continually build and adjust as you see fit.

The starting point for the plan is your farm business goals. This is the foundation that all modules are built on.

About the first module

The first module to be launched covers the **environment**. This builds on the content in B+LNZ's previous Land Environment Plans (LEPs) and consists of chapters including soils, freshwater, biodiversity, climate change and forage cropping (including winter grazing).

Over time we'll be adding further modules covering other elements of your business, but we've focused the first one on the environment as it addresses many of the current needs.

The starting point for the environment module is to identify and record core features of the farm and land resources. There's a focus on the capability of different soils and landscapes in relation to optimising their use, and interaction with the wider environment.



By Farmers. For Farmers™

Chapters in the environment module

The following chapters help identify risks and opportunities and create action plans that are linked across the business:

- **Managing soil health.** Soils are a critical component of New Zealand's grazing systems and are a key contributor to productivity. They are also vulnerable to degradation and loss. The soils chapter helps define the characteristics of similar areas – commonly known as Land Management Units – to identify and mitigate risks and protect both the soil and receiving environment while also optimising productivity.

- **Freshwater ecosystem health.** Farmers and our wider communities all want healthy freshwater. This starts with understanding the health of freshwater in and around our farms and how farming activities can protect this health now and into the future. Simple stream health checks are outlined to assess the current health of waterways – and identify impacts, and possible farm management responses – that are cost effective and targeted.

Note: B+LNZ is seeking to get the freshwater ecosystem health elements of its farm planning recognised as a certified farm plan under the essential freshwater requirements. We expect clarity on this later in the year and encourage farmers to start recording their freshwater risk factors now, as this will make it easier to complete once the certified farm plan process is confirmed.

- **Integrating native biodiversity.** Sheep and beef farmers are custodians to a large amount of New Zealand's unique biodiversity and help maintain a rich and diverse range of native species. Recording guidelines and templates provided in this section enable biodiversity to be documented and help identify opportunities to further protect or enhance your native biodiversity.

- **Responding to a changing climate.** Farming is directly affected by changes to the climate. Building resilience to the impacts of changing climatic conditions, along with understanding on-farm emissions, are key actions in the response to a changing climate. Guidance is provided on estimating on-farm emissions and sequestration and developing a plan to manage these emissions in the future (as required within He Waka Eke Noa). In addition, B+LNZ will soon provide a free and easy to use greenhouse gas calculator tool that will help farmers estimate their emissions and sequestration. 'Knowing your number' is a key part of meeting the sector's He Waka Eke Noa commitments.

- **Waste and chemical management.** Waste products are a typical outcome of most activities and chemical use occurs in most processes (whether using natural or synthetic chemicals). Understanding the risks of these, and managing them well, reduces the potential impacts on people, livestock, crops and the environment.

01 Managing soil health

Why is it important to look after the health of soils?

Soils are fundamental to a farming system. The soil resource will determine what the limitations and opportunities are for farm management and production. Soil health comprises of physical structure, chemistry and biology. Looking after the health of the soils helps us to optimise production and ensures soils are not degraded or lost. Good soil health supports biodiversity, both within the soil itself and by sustaining whatever is growing on it. Soils formation is influenced by a range of factors interacting together – climate, parent material (rock type), topography, biological activity and time. Management influences soil health. Soils take thousands of years to form and hence are not a renewable resource. Given this, it is important to look after them to optimise their use.

- **Forage cropping (including winter grazing).** Forage cropping is an integral part of many farming systems but can also increase the risk of faecal, nutrient and sediment loss. This chapter focuses on managing forage cropping, paddock selection, the identification of Critical Source Areas (CSAs), other risk factors, and recommended management options. This ensures forage cropping is well managed and able to provide quality grazing feed for livestock, while protecting the health of freshwater and soil.

Note: B+LNZ is also seeking to get the winter forage cropping part of the environment module recognised as an alternative pathway for farmers under the essential freshwater rules. We expect clarity on this later in the year and encourage farmers to start recording their forage cropping and winter grazing activities now, as this will make it easier to complete once the rules are determined.

- **Irrigation management.** A section is provided for farmers with irrigation to also include related management and actions. References are provided to the IrrigationNZ website rather than repeat this material in the environment module. Irrigation management actions can be added to the action plan and annual review.

OUR PLAN

A further section called **'Our Plan'** contains templates to record your planning (examples are provided in each chapter). Additional pages can be added as needed, and the actions and plans updated as required.



The farm planning delivery approach

B+LNZ's farm planning approach will be primarily delivered through **workshops** with a strong **practical** focus. The workshops are expected to be available for farmers to start attending from mid-April 2021. We're looking to hold around 40 workshops this year. The workshops will initially be delivered by B+LNZ, but we're also looking to partner with other organisations that could deliver our farm plan in the future.

The strength of a workshop approach is access to expert knowledge and the ability to share with and learn from other farmers addressing the same issues as you. The technical content of the environment module will be delivered through two, five-hour workshops with no cost to farmers to attend. By attending these workshops farmers will be able to create much of their environmental farm plan.

Later in the year, depending on demand, we may deliver workshops focused on specific chapters from the environment module, like climate change or winter grazing. When government regulations are confirmed we'll update the farm plan chapters as required to assist farmers meet regulatory requirements.

Further information

If you're interested in doing a farm planning workshop, contact your local B+LNZ Extension Manager. If you don't have their details, call **0800 BEEFLAMB (0800 233 352)** or email enquiries@beeflambnz.com

We're also keen to hear from catchment community groups - let us know if you'd like us to deliver a workshop for your group.

Questions and answers

Why should I use B+LNZ's farm planning approach instead of another option?

B+LNZ's farm planning approach is tried and true with over 4000 sheep and beef farmers having completed the earlier LEP versions. The environment module updates this to account for new knowledge, emerging consumer needs and the emerging rules for freshwater and climate change. It's based on sound science and the resources have been built by industry experts. It takes an integrated approach to the four components of soils, water, climate change and biodiversity, ensuring that farmers' actions plans achieve the most impact across those domains.

What if I've already done a farm environment plan/LEP?

If you already have a farm environment plan (FEP), or Land Environment Plan (LEP) 1-3, you're already on the way. Your existing FEP or LEP can be used as the basis for building your farm plan by adding any areas or detail not currently included, and as part of a regular review to ensure it meets the current needs of your farming business.

B+LNZ's farm plan ensures that your farming business protects the health of your soils, biodiversity, and the freshwater in and around your farm, ensures your farm is resilient and adapts to climate change, and will help you get ready to meet any changing regulatory requirements including the new essential freshwater rules.

The integrated approach to environmental issues means the decisions you make in one area will support others, and together help tell your story to consumers.

The B+LNZ climate change chapter will help you get started on the journey to measure your emissions and on-farm sequestration and develop a plan to manage your emissions, as part of the sector's He Waka Eke Noa commitments.

Why should I do a farm plan now? - especially with uncertainty around some regulations?

Farm plans are active documents. They can be adapted or refined as new requirements are confirmed. We therefore recommend you start the journey now, as it'll be easier to tweak things later rather than start from scratch. While we don't have certainty about all the requirements, we do understand and have certainty on what good farm practice looks like. The key is to document what you're currently doing and any changes in practice in the future. Doing this provides evidence of, and supports, sound decision-making practices.

B+LNZ's farm plan will be continually updated as new resources and tools become available. We'll also be looking at whether we need to further tailor the delivery of our farm planning approach over the coming months - for example, to help farmers get to grips with 'knowing their numbers' around greenhouse gases, and to undertake winter forage cropping.



How will B+LNZ's farm plans meet the essential freshwater requirements?

The B+LNZ farm plan is designed to help farmers get ready to meet the new essential freshwater rules.

We're seeking to have our plan accepted as a certified freshwater plan under the Resource Management Act (RMA). We may not have certainty on this until the end of 2021, but we are confident our farm plan is consistent with national objectives. By the end of 2024, all farmers must have a certified freshwater farm plan, although some farms may need one earlier than this to meet some of the essential freshwater rules. Getting started now will help you capture the benefits of early action and later make completing your plan easier.

Does B+LNZ's farm plan meet the winter grazing requirements?

Farmers who undertake intensive winter grazing (IWG) and cannot meet the "permitted activity" criteria are required to have applied for a winter grazing consent by 31 October 2021. In December 2020, a working group including B+LNZ recommended an interim system to allow IWG as a permitted activity, provided it is undertaken consistent with the farm-specific IWG module. The forage cropping part of the environment module within the B+LNZ farm plan is based on the industry-proposed farm-specific IWG module.

How will B+LNZ's plan meet our sector's climate change commitments?

The B+LNZ climate change chapter is a user-friendly way for farmers to meet the sector's climate change commitments.

As part of the Government's agreement that agriculture would not go into the Emissions Trading Scheme there are certain milestones the sector needs to meet through He Waka Eke Noa. If we do not meet these milestones the Government has indicated it will bring the sector into the ETS.

The milestones are:

- 25% of farmers need to know their greenhouse gas emissions by the end of 2021
- 25% of farmers need to have a plan to manage their emissions by 1 Jan 2022
- 100% of farmers need to know their greenhouse gas emissions number by the end of 2022
- 100% of farmers need to have a plan to manage their emissions by 1 January 2025.

Farm planning will give you tools to estimate your emissions and develop a plan to manage them.

B+LNZ is working on a free, easy to use greenhouse gas (GHG) calculator which will be available in the next few months and available as part of the farm plan workshops. The calculator will help farmers estimate their on-farm emissions and sequestration.

The methodology to report on-farm greenhouse gas emissions and sequestration is still being refined. The farm plan will be further updated as new resources and mitigation tools become available.

Does B+LNZ's farm plan align with the New Zealand Farm Assurance Programme (NZFAP)?

We've worked with processing companies to align the B+LNZ farm plan with the New Zealand Farm Assurance Programme (NZFAP), so that doing the farm plan sets farmers up for meeting their consumer needs. NZFAP underpins the Taste Pure Nature origin brand and provides assurances to consumers.

Processing companies will shortly be rolling out a new voluntary higher level of assurance called NZFAP Plus. The B+LNZ farm plan environment module is very similar to the farm and natural resources section of NZFAP Plus, so farmers doing the B+LNZ farm planning process will be well set up to go through this voluntary new higher level of assurance.

How does B+LNZ's farm planning approach reflect regional rules?

Regional rules often differ between councils but require similar overall effects-based focus. The farm plan is not specifically tailored to any individual region, however workshops delivered in your catchment or region will have a component that identifies those unique or extra local requirements to ensure they can be worked into your plan.

Can I get a copy of the farm plan and complete it myself?

You can request a copy of the farm plan from the B+LNZ resource team - however, the best way to develop your farm plan is through a workshop process that gives you access to expert knowledge and allows you to share with and learn from other farmers addressing the same issues as you.

B+LNZ's farm plan environment module includes a range of chapters and technical material, within an overall planning framework.

By attending the workshops, a hands-on approach is provided to work through this material and support the development of individual farm plans. If you're already in a catchment group or a B+LNZ Action Group, this is also a great environment to develop your farm plan with the support of a facilitator and experts.

Can I create a digital copy of my farm plan?

A digital farm plan is being developed and will in time provide options for recording on paper or online. Keep an eye out for updates on this.

Are there going to be more modules?

The first module covers the environment to address many of the current needs, and over the next couple of years B+LNZ will be focused on working with partners to enable as many farmers as possible to complete this module.

The approach taken by B+LNZ provides a platform to add more modules as they're identified to be of value to farmers' businesses. We've already developed base material on biosecurity, health and safety, human resources and animal welfare that can be accommodated within the farm plan, and we'll develop these into modules as farmer demand increases.

