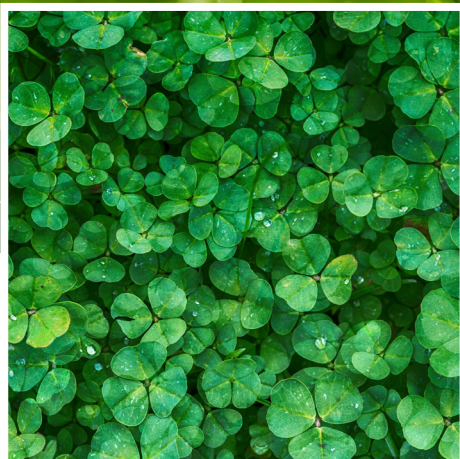


PASTORAL INDUSTRY FORAGE STRATEGY

2016–2036 NOVEMBER 2017

A strategy for sustainable and profitable forage-based grazed farm systems in New Zealand



Pastoral forages are the grass roots of New Zealand's \$20 billion agriculture industry. For the first time, an integrated strategy has been developed for the forage industry which spans across the next 20 years. This plan brings together all key industry players including research organisations, plant breeders, and farmers.

The objective of the integrated strategy is to increase the value of forage grown on New Zealand farms so that individual farmers are more profitable and sustainable. Developed in response to a lack of a framework for investing in the industry, the unified plan enables everyone to work together in a formal way for the benefit of the whole industry.

The plan is split into four themes:

- Working together
- Forage Improvement
- On-Farm Innovation
- Ready and Responsible.

WORKING TOGETHER

Working Together addresses leadership in the forage sector; setting out a plan and governance structure for all stakeholders to co-operate on key issues. The current forage sector steering group (which co-ordinated this new plan) is to be refined into an enduring group to champion the industry. Its objective is to bring together forage related consortiums, collaborations, and projects, in order to present a unified voice for the forage industry.

As it currently stands, multiple agencies are competing against each other for government funding in the sector, which results in lost opportunities and market failures. Working together will enable the industry to bid for research work which clearly aligns with the long-term strategy plan.

Opportunities abound from this work to set industry policy and direction, bring together investment, and to clarify messages from the industry. Two key pieces of market and regulation work are looking closely at forage system provenance and product integrity, and a co-ordinated regulation framework for forages. Under the science and agronomy side of the industry, the new strategy plan pulls together a focus on biosecurity, agrichemicals and forage research and development.

FORAGE IMPROVEMENT

New Zealand's system of forage improvement is mainly driven by commercial seed companies producing improved forage seeds. At the moment, forage improvement focuses on only a few key temperate plant species, most of which are only suitable for land that can be cultivated. These are ryegrasses, clovers, brassicas and maize for forage. The industry wants to broaden its scope to include a wider range of species, extend pastoral renewal beyond current cultivatable land, and work on improving environmental outcomes. Currently pastoral renewal rates are a respectable 8% a year on dairy farms and 2.5% a year on sheep and beef farms. There are real opportunities here to turn around lost potential and improve productivity with improved forages.

Key investment areas are evaluating forages, identifying forage traits, making more genetic material available and doing more research on plant breeding and the symbiotic organisms which live with plants. Forage improvement work goes hand in hand with on-farm innovation; one cannot work without the other.

ON FARM INNOVATION

The key to more profitable and sustainable farming in New Zealand is growing more pastoral forages on farm, and using this forage in a more cost-effective way. Turning forage innovations—from genetic improvements to flying drones—into workable systems that New Zealand farmers can use is critical.

Developing and validating new and existing forage systems, and showing how they work on-farm with demonstration and extension projects are important areas for industry investment. The whole industry wants to see successful adoption of improved forages by helping farmers innovate on their farms.

READY AND RESPONSIBLE

New Zealand's forage sector has to face up and be ready for future market and environmental changes. The industry must ensure product integrity of the forages and inputs it uses, and it has to work together with processing and export marketing companies to develop protocols for product testing.

Animal health and welfare must also be protected when working with new forage systems, which will be ensured by collaboration with both vets and a wider range of stakeholders in developing protocols for new forage innovations.

There are gaps in the understanding of New Zealand's soils because some soil classes are under-represented. More soil sampling of under-represented farm classes will help in creating a comprehensive database of New Zealand pastoral soils.

The industry is committed to making sure environmental sustainability is at the heart of its work. Stewardship of natural resources, and looking after soils and water are core business for the sector. The industry will also develop and promote responsible farm practices, and anticipate potential future constraints for example around intensification, cultivation and environmental footprints.

Issues such as the freedom to operate are simply too big for anyone to solve by themselves. By working together, the forage industry can come up with better solutions, and keep farmers in business.

New Zealand's forage sector wants farmers to have a portfolio of techniques to ensure their use of improved pastoral species into the future.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

- The pastoral industry forage strategy steering group is to be turned into an enduring leadership group for the industry.
- The industry is pulling together several project teams to progress identified issues including forage value index development and funding strategies
- The steering group will be taking the new strategy to the Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment, and is hoping the strategy will be used as an investment framework for the forage industry.
- Within the next 12 months the group will be putting together joint industry bids for research funding.

Collaboration is the key to making the forage industry much more successful financially and environmentally. This new 20-year plan enables a unified structure and voice for the pastoral forage industry.