

New Zealand: Concern over 'whole farms' being sold into forestry



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The body responsible for promoting beef and lamb in New Zealand and regulating the country's quality mark for these products has called for "urgent changes" to prevent whole farms being sold into forestry.

Beef and Lamb New Zealand (B+LNZ) released a report last week on whether changes were needed to the country's Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) as it relates to the beef and lamb sectors.

It follows the closing of a consultation the **New Zealand** government ran on the design and functioning of its ETS.

The B+LNZ-commissioned report highlighted concern with the current ETS model over the scale at which whole farms are being sold for forestry, while impeding farmers' ability to diversify through forestry.

Sam McIvor, B+LNZ's chief executive, commented: "B+LNZ has long argued that action needs to address the scale and pace of whole farms being sold into forestry as a result of the increasing carbon price and the resulting effects on rural communities.

He added: "Many farmers also see opportunities to grow their income from carbon revenue from on-farm planting as part of diversifying their farm systems, so there needs to be a balance found in the policy settings.

The report said that a combination of short-term and long term changes are needed to New Zealand's ETS.

Particularly, the report calls for changes to the 'permanent' category of the ETS, as it can be more quickly reformed and, without limits placed on planting, this could be a category that drives significant land-use change to the ETS.



“One of the main changes to the permanent category of the ETS [the report] proposes is excluding exotic plantings except in certain circumstances. It notes that, in future, however, further changes to the ETS that target other categories are likely to be required,” McIvor said.

According to the B+LNZ chief executive, the report is “another example of growing consensus on the need for policy changes to address the issue of wholesale land-use change”.

“The scale and pace of land use change we are currently seeing is far more than what is recommended by the Climate Change Commission and will have a negative impact on rural communities, food production and export income, which affects all New Zealanders,” he commented.

The beef and lamb promotion body is also concerned with the current rules regarding the use of forestry to offset fossil fuel emissions.

McIvor said: “New Zealand is one of the only countries in the world that allows fossil fuel emitters to offset 100% of their emissions.

He added: “Forestry offsets are a key component of a scheme designed to enable our country to meet emissions-reduction targets set in legislation. But they are a tool that must be managed in a way that enables sustainable and equitable social, economic, and environmental outcomes for generations to come.”

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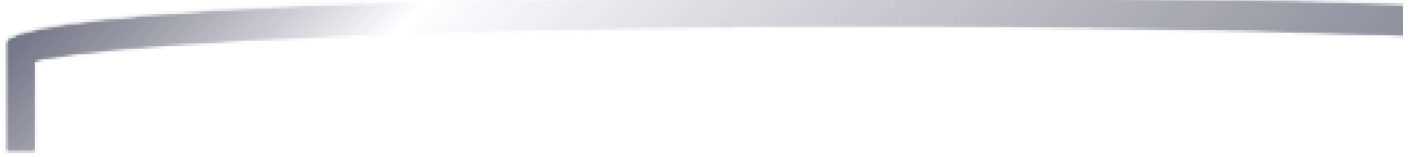
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