

Agriculture and Rural Affairs Policy

Vision

A resilient and diverse agricultural sector contributes to thriving ecosystems, people and rural communities.

Values and Principles

- *Honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi*: Tangata whenua ancestral land ownership, including its return, tino rangatiratanga, through Matike Mai, and kaitiakitanga must be upheld and honoured.
- *Ecological Wisdom*: Agricultural practices should regenerate our soils, water and biodiversity and lock away carbon, caring for its foundations.
- *Social Responsibility*: Everyone, including future generations, should have secure access to sufficient food and fibre that is produced locally and traded fairly.
- *Appropriate Decision-Making*: Mātauranga Māori, as well as local knowledge, should be combined with recognised best practice to guide agricultural activities.
- *Non-Violence*: Agricultural practices should avoid harm, including harm to farmed animals, native ecosystems, and harm caused by novel and introduced species.
- *Value*: Agricultural practices should focus on quality, recognising the value of sustainably produced agricultural products, and should avoid damaging intensification.
- *Rural livelihoods*: Farming systems should help support a decent quality of life for all rural people who live and work on and around them.

Summary

The Green Party will support the agricultural sector through a just transition to reduce its emissions, minimise harmful inputs and practices, regenerate rural land and water, and build resilience. We will work to restore opportunity and vibrancy outside major cities, and foster better linkages and relationships between urban and rural centres.

Strategic Priorities

The Green Party's strategic goals include:

"...regenerative practices in all areas of economic activity, including land use and food production, will predominate."

Actions in this policy that will help achieve this include:

- Uphold and return ancestral land ownership and kaitiakitanga responsibilities in rural areas to the hāpu of the rohe. (1.2)

- Regulate agricultural production in Aotearoa New Zealand to:
 - significantly reduce livestock numbers
 - reduce the proportion of land used for livestock, based on requirements that are informed by soil types, regional climatic conditions and river catchment.
 - phase out synthetic nitrogen fertilisers
 - ensure that Aotearoa New Zealand honours its commitment to the International Methane Pledge. (2.1)
- Phase out palm kernel expeller (PKE) and other imported animal feeds. (3.2)
- Incorporate soil carbon, the health of biological soil systems and soil water within climate change response frameworks, acknowledging their vital role, in conjunction with plant life, in sequestering carbon in the soil and cooling the area. (2.16)
- Assist farmers to transition to regenerative farming, including through on-farm regenerative organic advisory services, financial tools to assist with the upfront cost of transition, funding for regenerative primary industry bodies, and support for certification. (4.3)

Connected Policies

Please see the Green Party's [Environmental Protection](#), [Housing and Sustainable Communities](#), [Food](#), [Climate Change](#), and [Trade](#) policies for other relevant information. Our Animal Welfare Policy outlines how animals living in primary production facilities should be treated humanely and with respect throughout their lives, their sentience meaningfully acknowledged. Biosecurity is addressed in detail in our [Conservation](#) Policy.

Policy Positions

1. Honouring te Tiriti

Issues

Honouring te Tiriti is core to building an Aotearoa that is fair, just, inclusive and provides for all. The Green Party's principled approach places Te Tiriti at the centre of its policymaking process.

Actions

- 1.1. Support the development and leadership of indigenous regenerative agricultural practices through organisations such as Te Waka Kai Ora.
- 1.2. Uphold and return ancestral land ownership and kaitiakitanga responsibilities in rural areas to the hāpu of the rohe.
- 1.3. Ensure that approaches to access issues, wāhi tapu protection and resource management issues honours Te Tiriti and upholds their tino rangatiratanga.
- 1.4. Provide public education to increase understanding of Te Tiriti and its fair and practical implementation in rural areas.

- 1.5. Ensure that the development of incentives, disincentives, ratings, carbon credits and other economic instruments take into account the owners of multiply-owned Māori land.
- 1.6. Support Māori land use through methods such as requiring banks to make credit available for use on multiple-owned Māori land as if it were singly owned.
- 1.7. Support protection of mātauranga Māori , and intellectual property rights, from bio-prospecting and other means of misappropriation.
- 1.8. Ensure that agricultural strategies and interventions for Māori customary and freehold land, and general land owned by Māori, are developed in partnership with Māori, to ensure equity and relevance.
- 1.9. Create a buyback scheme to purchase land used for industrial agriculture, prioritising indebted farmers, and return it to hapū ownership.
- 1.10. Increase access and ease of certification and verification for organic methods of farming, including support through partnership with Māori organic and verification businesses.
- 1.11. Resource hapū, iwi and Māori-led groups to practice mātauranga Māori-based food production.

2. Climate Change and Agriculture

Issues

Fossil-fuel technologies have allowed farmers to use industrial-style agriculture that drives economies of scale. While global emissions must achieve a 43% reduction by 2030, our agricultural emissions comprise half of all Aotearoa New Zealand's emissions, and are still increasing. Our government is now essentially subsidising farming in this country, by paying for offsets overseas. Farmers know that agricultural greenhouse gas emissions must be reduced but uncertainty about the means of doing so is stressful, and extreme weather events are reducing the resilience of farms and rural communities to cope.

Actions

A. Tackling Agricultural Emissions

- 2.1. Regulate agricultural production in Aotearoa New Zealand to:
 - 2.1.1. significantly reduce livestock numbers;
 - 2.1.2. reduce the proportion of land used for livestock, based on requirements that are informed by soil types, regional climatic conditions and river catchment;
 - 2.1.3. phase out synthetic nitrogen fertilisers; and
 - 2.1.4. ensure that Aotearoa New Zealand honours its commitment to the International Methane Pledge
- 2.2. Immediately introduce comprehensive greenhouse-gas emission pricing for agriculture. This includes:

- 2.2.1. using the ETS, where appropriate, to set prices on agricultural greenhouse gas emissions consistent with emissions prices faced by other sectors of the economy;
- 2.2.2. supporting farmers to build their familiarity with the financial accounting required for various gases emitted;
- 2.2.3. continual monitoring and review of the pricing scheme;
- 2.2.4. allowing for ring-fencing of any levy revenue generated from Whenua Māori to be recycled back to Whenua Māori;
- 2.2.5. supporting innovation and emissions reductions that are significant and rapid; and
- 2.2.6. changing the criteria for the Sustainable Food and Fibre Futures Fund so that applications must first pass a screening measure, intending for trials to lead to carbon-negative outcomes before they can progress to the next stage in the application process.
- 2.3. Support farmers to regenerate their land and natural ecosystems in order to sequester more carbon dioxide than the total CO₂ equivalent on-farm emissions released.
- 2.4. Ensure that forestry that is planted for the purpose of carbon offsetting provides multiple benefits and services, such as erosion protection, riparian protection and habitats for native biodiversity.
- 2.5. Develop a system of certification for primary industries to provide incentives for on-farm mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions and carbon sequestration, and resource farmers to engage with it.
- 2.6. Provide more certainty and support to farmers to estimate their greenhouse gas emissions more accurately and validly, through the development and support of robust measurements and models for measuring carbon, other greenhouse gases and nutrient budgets. These would replace or complement the digital tool 'Overseer' and other existing tools.
- 2.7. Incentivise reductions in nitrous oxide emissions, either through on-farm or processor-level levies where the price is that determined through the ETS; or by implementing a progressively reducing cap on the use of synthetic nitrogen-based fertilisers
- 2.8. Widen the scope of the New Zealand Agricultural Greenhouse Gas Research Centre (NZAGGRC) beyond its current focus on livestock farming and require it to work with universities, government farming and land-use assets to research, develop, and showcase best farming practices for supporting the land to sequester more greenhouse gas emissions than it releases.
- 2.9. Reduce the use of fossil fuels in agricultural production processes, including:
 - 2.9.1. Phasing out the use of coal burning for dehydration of agricultural products, greenhouse heating and other processes;
 - 2.9.2. Incentivising uptake of solar energy on farms and in rural communities;
 - 2.9.3. Supporting a transition to electrified farm vehicles, including heavy vehicles; and

2.9.4. Phasing out the use of synthetic nitrogen fertilisers (see below).

- 2.10. Celebrate and showcase best practice regenerative and organic farmers, providing opportunities for others to learn from them.
- 2.11. Facilitate and lead an overall culture shift in Aotearoa New Zealand to help both farmers and consumers to move away from our current focus on meat and dairy products. This should include reduced advertising for these products, and include support from the health sector for more focus on healthier and more affordable diets. (See our Health and Food policies).

B. Climate Change and Agricultural Soils

- 2.12. Develop and implement a National Soil Strategy that includes carbon sequestration in soils (see our Land Use and Soils Policy).
- 2.13. Incorporate soil carbon, the health of biological soil systems and soil water within climate change response frameworks, acknowledging their vital role, in conjunction with plant life, in sequestering carbon in the soil and cooling the area.
- 2.14. Develop a framework to include farm-based wetland restoration as a form of carbon offsetting.
- 2.15. Support and guide farmers to transition to natural methods for regenerating their soils that improves the overall ecosystem of their soils to sequester carbon such as increasing the diversity of plants, crops and trees in keeping with what the land can support.
- 2.16. Continue to monitor and report on the location and quality of agricultural soils, and their rates of soil carbon sequestration per year.

C. Agricultural Climate Adaptation and Just Transitions

- 2.17. Work with farmers, rural communities, and local councils to develop nationwide climate change adaptation plans with specific attention given to agricultural adaptation and regenerative practices which sequester carbon (see our Climate Change Policy).
- 2.18. Ensure a Just Transition to agricultural practices and objectives that include resilience to climate change, environmental protection, landscape preservation, rural employment, and local food security, such that the rights and dignity of all involved are upheld, with a focus on equity and justice.
- 2.19. Ensure a managed approach to employment and community wellbeing in agricultural areas, including financial and institutional support, and involve communities in planning for their own transition, noting that different people, families, communities, and regions will benefit from different approaches.
- 2.20. Ensure that farmers are implementing changes on their land to build resilience to local climatic changes.

- 2.21. Incentivise farmers to increase the diversity of their food production, in order to better support their local communities in the face of changing global food systems, as well as building Aotearoa New Zealand's food sovereignty.
- 2.22. Provide clear and ongoing communications about what changes are required, how farmers will be supported, and a timeline for the changes.
- 2.23. Encourage and provide more support to people beginning and transitioning to producing plant-based food and fibre using organic and regenerative methods.

3. Reducing harmful inputs and practises

Issues

The production and use of nitrogen fertiliser and PKE leads to biodiversity destruction abroad and harmful intensive animal farming; their use, alongside inhumane intensive practices such as winter grazing and feedlots, allow New Zealand's agricultural sector to sustain production beyond environmental limits. Agricultural waste, for example, includes unused produce (e.g. non-export quality, spoiled crops, food waste), excess nutrients that leach into waterways, and greenhouse gas emissions. Waste is present across the whole agricultural system, from the production and transportation of inputs like fertilisers and machinery, to the processing, packaging and transportation of the products.

Actions

- 3.1. Develop sources of phosphate fertiliser, including organic sources, that do not contribute to harm in conflict zones.
- 3.2. Phase out PKE and other imported animal feeds that are connected with harm to people or biodiversity.
- 3.3. Support ways to reduce the environmental impact of nitrogen-based fertilisers, including:
 - 3.3.1. Maximising conversion to regenerative organic production methods which fix atmospheric naturally in the soil, including by supporting farm-specific programmes.
 - 3.3.2. Research into and encouragement of the most appropriate and efficient fertiliser management practices and stocking rates.
 - 3.3.3. Research into the effects and economic feasibility of wide implementation of "alternative" emerging technologies such as soil remineralisation, biochar and bio-intensive farming.
 - 3.3.4. Phasing out the use of synthetic nitrogen fertiliser through regulation.
- 3.4. Increase the number of assessments of chemicals per year that are used in biocides, and other agricultural purposes, to ensure their safety for human use; and prevent their use until such assessments have been undertaken.
- 3.5. Minimise the use of synthetic fertilisers, pesticides, herbicides and fungicides, including:
 - 3.5.1. Implementing a nationwide reduction strategy;

- 3.5.2. Prohibiting the use of extremely toxic or ecologically harmful products, such as neonicotinoids and toxic seed coatings;
- 3.5.3. Replace current synthetic fertilisers with natural products derived from organic waste;
- 3.5.4. Regulating aerial spraying; and
- 3.5.5. Prohibiting grandparenting of current usage.
- 3.6. Support ecologically sound methods of managing effluent and waste from the processing of agricultural products (e.g. offal), such as biodigesters.
- 3.7. Protect waterways on agricultural land (e.g., through fencing) and resource the restoration of riparian barriers and wetlands (see also our Freshwater Policy).
- 3.8. Require effective systems to distribute non-export grade produce to local consumers.

4. Regenerating land, water, and rural communities

Issues

Over the past three decades agricultural intensification has degraded land and water, and reforms that damaged regional economies have hollowed out rural communities. A programme of regenerative¹ and sustainable change can help agriculture turn its environmental impact from negative to positive, and restore opportunity and vibrancy outside major cities. In turn, it can foster better linkages and relationships between urban and rural centres.

Actions

A. Transition to Regenerative Agriculture

- 4.1. Set ambitious targets for a large proportion of New Zealand's primary production being regenerative and develop sustainability standards for all primary production sectors.
- 4.2. Support a flexible approach to land use so that farms or parts of farms can progress to (mixed) sustainable land use(s) for each part of the farm (see our Land Use and Soils Policy for policy on sustainable land use).
- 4.3. Assist farmers to transition to regenerative farming, including through on-farm regenerative organic advisory services, financial tools to assist with the upfront cost of transition, funding for regenerative primary industry bodies, and support for certification.
- 4.4. Increase the Sustainable Farming Fund.
- 4.5. Ensure that policy and price signals, including compliance, reward existing and new sustainable regenerative production practices and farmers who enhance the environment.

¹ **Regenerative agricultural practices** restore degraded land, continually improving the health of the soil, which in turn improves plant health, nutrition and productivity. They include (depending on the particular situation) no-tillage, diverse cover crops, on-farm fertility (no external source of fertiliser needed), no or minimal pesticides, and multiple crop rotations and intercropping, all of which can be augmented by managed grazing. It increases soil organic matter, fertility, texture, water retention, and microorganisms.

- 4.6. Require resource consent for converting land to ruminant animal farming and intensifying stocking rates.
- 4.7. Fund research and development of regenerative and regenerative organic system design and practice.
- 4.8. Require government assets that are used for farming to research, develop and showcase best practice for regenerative farming.
- 4.9. Encourage and resource broad educational opportunities in regenerative organic production and associated professions.
- 4.10. Establish the New Zealand Organic Standard as the minimum standard for domestic organic production.
- 4.11. Ensure food labelling concerning 'regenerative' and 'organic' is clear and truthful (see our Food Policy).

B. Rural Communities

- 4.12. Develop a strategy for ensuring the sustainability of rural communities.
- 4.13. Ensure essential infrastructure in rural towns such as potable water supply and wastewater treatment systems.
- 4.14. Ensure access to basic services such as rural roads, education, health (including mental health), financial, tax and welfare services, country stores, communication and justice.
- 4.15. Encourage people to move to rural towns and areas to work, especially in activities that contribute to sustainable and regenerative land use, and to establish businesses, especially those involved in adding value to primary products, while remaining mindful of the need to avoid perverse outcomes for vulnerable people.
- 4.16. Encourage the development of sustainable processing plants for co-operative ventures run by local producers.
- 4.17. Address security of tenure of rural land by reviewing the Public Works Act to give people confidence in decision-making about land management, and ongoing involvement in their communities.
- 4.18. Ensure the Overseas Investment Act restricts the sale of rural property to New Zealand citizens.
- 4.19. Develop legislation to encourage farm ownership to be held by the farm resident operator. This will encourage family farms and Māori or community co-operative structures and will discourage excessive consolidation of farming properties and the negative community effects of absentee corporate ownership.
- 4.20. Promote better links between rural and urban New Zealanders.
- 4.21. Ensure a rural - urban community mix and dialogue in catchment, regional and district management plan development.
- 4.22. Foster consumer-supported agriculture and direct marketing of produce to local consumers.

- 4.23. Enable the development of commercial farm kill services for commercial sale of products produced by small farms, heritage breed growers, and regenerative farmers not serviced by commercial abattoirs.
- 4.24. Support urban people to engage more with landcare groups and volunteer schemes.
- 4.25. As part of the incorporation of environmental education into the core school curriculum, support the teaching of the origins and production of food, nutrition, and basic cooking and regenerative and organic gardening skills.
- 4.26. Resource the Walking Access Commission to explore a tikanga Māori based system of public access (similar to a "right to roam") to Crown and private land, in partnership with tangata whenua.

5. Increasing Sector Resilience

Issues

The agricultural sector is increasingly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, geopolitical trade headwinds and biosecurity incursions. Increasing climate resilience in the sector through adaptation measures and sustainable practice, as well as diversifying and adding long-term value to our export profile, will ensure Aotearoa New Zealand protects its ability to trade world-leading primary products for generations to come.

Actions

A. A Fair Approach to Trade

- 5.1. Ensure that international trade arrangements enable the relevant points in this policy (see our [Trade](#) policy)
- 5.2. Support research and development aimed at adding value to primary products.
- 5.3. Encourage domestic processing and value-add for products grown and produced in New Zealand.
- 5.4. Support farmers to trade on Aotearoa New Zealand's environmental brand by continuing to use our clean, green image to market New Zealand produce.
- 5.5. Encourage all food and fibre products intended for export as 'Product of Aotearoa New Zealand' to meet or exceed minimum sustainability and animal welfare standards.
- 5.6. Work to adjust for "food miles" by supporting farmers to reduce emissions released during production and by working to educate overseas consumers about the total environmental impact of the Aotearoa New Zealand goods they purchase.
- 5.7. Support lower-emissions and clean energy transport options for Aotearoa New Zealand exports, including shipping.
- 5.8. Ensure consumers can make informed choices to support local food and other agricultural products by supporting mandatory country of origin labelling for all single-ingredient imported agricultural and horticultural products.
- 5.9. Support mandatory certification of imported produce to show that it complies with minimum environmental, safety and health standards along the lines of the current European Union directives.

- 5.10. Support and improve ways of communicating to the public about the value and importance of buying local.
- 5.11. Enact empowering legislation to support local food production for local use and local food security, including financial incentives.

B. Efficiency and Self-Sufficiency

- 5.12. Encourage more efficient rural use of energy, especially oil (particularly for soil cultivation, irrigation, and inputs such as synthetic fertilisers, herbicides and pesticides), to reduce current energy dependence.
- 5.13. Support the development of infrastructure for economically and sustainably viable biofuel production especially from waste agricultural products, recognising that biofuel production should not diminish food production.
- 5.14. Increase Aotearoa New Zealand's self-sufficiency in basic foodstuffs, especially grains, by boosting seed supply.
- 5.15. Encourage the preservation and growing of heritage seeds, for personal use as well as commercial production.
- 5.16. Regulate to reduce agriculture's dependence on fossil fuel energy.
- 5.17. Increase government funding to better resource tertiary institutions to include more education in plant-based production of food and fibre as well as to perform research into plant-based solutions to environmental challenges.
- 5.18. Encourage and increase funding support for the development of processing infrastructure and robust supply chains for plant-based food and fibre products.

C. Biosecurity and Pest Management

- 5.19. Enhance our ability to prevent unwanted exotic species, including livestock diseases, from entering Aotearoa New Zealand and the ability to respond to any incursions that do occur (see our Conservation Policy).
- 5.20. Encourage the preparation of effective pest management plans that are area/ecosystem-based strategies as well as species based.
- 5.21. Establish a definitive policy for controlling livestock diseases in Aotearoa New Zealand.

D. Biotechnology

- 5.22. Support the limited and ethical use of non-genetic engineering (GE) biotechnology, and GE biotechnology in containment (see our Research, Science and Technology Policy), within agricultural systems for crop and animal improvement, as a tool in diagnostics and treatment of crop and animal diseases, and to understand the heritable lineages of animals and crops.
- 5.23. Protect the right to produce food, such as organic production, without risk of GE contamination, including by maintaining zero tolerance to viable GE-derived micro-organism, seed, plant and animal imports.
- 5.24. Support the marketing of Aotearoa New Zealand and its food, fibre and agricultural products as GE free.

