

**GROWING FOR GOOD:
INTENSIVE FARMING, SUSTAINABILITY AND
NEW ZEALAND'S ENVIRONMENT**

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This report originated from a range of issues that emerged from our studies of matters as diverse as urban water management, biosecurity, peri urban landscapes and the place of native plants on private lands. In all, we were examining the sustainability (ultimately in triple bottom line terms) of resources and the systems and processes used to utilize them. Against this background many individuals and organizations around New Zealand were raising concerns about the impact of more intensive farming (particularly dairying) on New Zealand's waterways. This led to the simple proposition that for a country, New Zealand that is very dependent on its natural resources for a high percentage of its wealth generations, it is essential that our production systems do not degrade our natural resources. But are we and if so what are we doing about? By drawing on extensive research and over 150 interviews with a wide variety of individuals and organizations we examined:

- the characteristics of farming systems in New Zealand – particularly the more intensive forms of *food production*, such as dairying, intensive sheep and beef farming, horticulture, and viticulture
- the impacts of farming on the environment – with a focus on *fresh water* quality and quantity

In essence, we examined how well we are sustaining the natural capital that generates over 40% of our foreign exchange, and whether current farming practices – particularly the rapidly expanding use of nitrogen-based synthetic fertilisers, increased stocking rates, and increased irrigation - are ultimately mining this capital. We take a 'paddock to plate' approach by teasing out some of the complex economic, social, political, environmental and global forces that are shaping New Zealand's food and fibre businesses and driving farmers to produce more and more from the same areas of land.

Our starting position is an optimistic one. My team and I believe that New Zealand's farming sector will continue to play a vital role in our economy far into a distant future. We also believe in the ability of New Zealanders to innovate, to recognise when new directions are needed, and to redesign systems to meet new challenges and opportunities.

The report attracted extensive media coverage when it was released in November 2004. Six regional workshops are planned for early 2005 to develop its main themes and to work out how agriculture can move forward within a sustainable framework.

The presentation will cover the key messages contained in the report, which is available on the PCE website, www.pce.govt.nz or can be ordered as a hard copy via our web site, email, and phone.