

(1)

My name is Irwin Hawkes. I did not grow up on a farm but at age 17 I joined the Farm Cadet Scheme run by the Federated Farmers and worked on farms in the Waikato learning to be a farmer. At 19 I bought a herd and became a 50/50 sharemilker at Te Poi. In 1974 aged 21 I married and in 1978 my wife and I purchased our first farm. I have been farming for 49 years. At the present time we own a 130ha dairy farm at Reporoa and a lifestyle block at Piarere.

(2)

At the dairy farm we use System 3. Since 1995 all the streams on the farm have been fenced off and the riverbanks planted. Open drains have also been fenced off. Steeper slopes have always been fenced off, planted in pine trees, and re-planted after harvesting. We have installed efficient effluent storage and disposal systems. To lessen the environmental impact on the land the herd is grazed off over the winter months. I believe that we farm in an environmentally sustainable manner with consideration to the natural capability of our land.

(3)

We support the objective of better water quality, but do not believe that limiting farming practice is the answer.

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There is no scientific evidence that cattle are solely responsible for the ecoli in our waterways. The tests do not establish whether the source is avian, piscine, canine, bovine, human or industrial.

(5)

We believe that in the Waikato it would be economically disastrous to all farming communities and their service towns if this plan is enforced. The fencing off of land with a slope of >25% would render our farm and many others economically unviable, in that we would no longer have sufficient land area to graze our dairy herd. Also the cost of fencing off all the gently undulating slopes would be financially crippling. Regionally this would have a flow on effect of increased unemployment and also the loss of overseas income. An increase in mental health issues and farmer suicides could also be expected.

(6)

We do not believe that the wholesale planting of pine trees on all gently sloping farmland is the answer environmentally or economically for the Waikato. No ecosystem on earth exists without animals. Without animals all soils grow sterile. Animals are as necessary to life as the vegetation they eat and the micro-organisms that make the soil a living thing. The most effective producers of fertility are well managed grazing animals and in particular the cow. She is an alchemist that transforms sunlight through grass into fertility and supports the health of nations. This is why we have been given animals to convert grass into food, that we can eat, and to make our soils fertile with their dung and urine.

(7)

We believe that the goals we all want to achieve regarding water quality are achievable with the use of Farm Environment Plans and implementing the results of research into grass types and other plantings, such as Manuka along waterways, will reduce the impact of the farm's use.

(8)

We also need the right to change the use of areas of our farm in times of drought or severe winters, by introducing feed crops to prevent animal welfare issues when grass is in short supply. Flexibility in the use of our land is paramount and is in our Farm Environment Plan.

(9)

We believe that the Nitrogen Reference Point is a good tool, but it should have been calculated over a longer period eg 5 years thus covering a variety of seasonal conditions.

(10)

All farmers believe that they are caretakers of the land they farm and wish to be allowed to farm it in an environmentally sustainable and economic manner for the benefit of their extended community, the nation and future generations. For the last 50 years dairy farmers have been under increasing pressure from the Government and dairy companies to increase production and thus overseas returns. Now is the time for this not to be the motivational force for our farming practices, and in this we support the aims of the Council.

(11)

While acknowledging the need for some changes we do not believe that the wholesale planting of forests on farmland is the answer. If the Council looks at the bigger picture they will have to agree that the slash from the milling of forests results in negative environmental impacts – ie flooding as seen in Gisborne, and also environmentally harmful forest fires as seen in Nelson recently. These events have a huge environmental and economic cost. It would be short-sighted not to acknowledge that these events will become more prevalent with the implementation of this plan of forestation.

(12)

New Zealand has two golden goose. One is the returns from agriculture and the other is Tourism. By radically decreasing the amount of agriculture allowed and destroying the landscape the tourists come to see, as they travel through our countryside, are the Council not in danger of killing both of the golden goose?

BEFORE THE

Waikato Regional Council

IN THE MATTER OF

Healthy Rivers Wai Ora Plan

Change 1 and Variation 1A

STATEMENT OF

Irwin Lawrence Hawkes

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