

Paying for water

Like all other Councils at this time of year the Canterbury Regional Council (ECan) is reviewing its budgetary requirements to determine what rates it will charge against the property owner for Council services.

This year the process extends to a "Long Term Council Community Plan" (LTCCP) which sets up a cost recovery strategy for the next 10 years. One of a number of proposals in the Regional Council's LTCCP is that some water consent holders (i.e. irrigators) be directly charged just over 30% of the costs for water investigations and monitoring. For the 2009-2010 year this would amount to \$2.2 million. It is proposed that the balance of the costs (\$4.9 million) would come from the General Rate. Currently all investigation and monitoring costs are a charge against the General Rate.



This proposed transfer of these charges from all Canterbury ratepayers to irrigation consent holders comes as no surprise – it is something that some senior Regional Council representatives have been advancing, in various forms, for some time but up to now it has received little support from Councillors.

This year, however, Councillors have agreed to the proposal on the basis that "increasing pressure on use of the region's water resources, particularly for irrigation, has led to an increase in the amount of work required to manage the resource sustainably.... there is also greater pressure on water quality due to the increase in abstractions, intensification of rural and urban land use, and an increase in consents to discharge water to land or waterways"

A meeting of representatives of the South Canterbury Federated Farmers Resource Committee has recommended that the province formally oppose the proposal through the submission process. There are a number of reasons for this. These include:

- **Irrigators are already paying significant "up front" costs on application.** These should cover the "additional" costs that the Council is seeking to recover. In seeking further payment Council is double dipping.

- **Irrigated properties have a higher capital value than non-irrigated properties.** They would consequently be contributing more than non-users through the capital-value rating system
- **Section 36 of the Resource Management Act allows Council to recover "reasonable costs"**. The proposal fails to identify the costing structure and consequently does not validate the proposed recovery charge.
- **Many consent holders (e.g. those on the Opuha system) are already monitoring their use.** This information is already available to Council at no cost.
- **Investigation of Christchurch aquifers was financed through the General Rate** – why should the rules now change for rural people?
- **There is no justification of the 30 percent allocation** and no certainty that this ratio will not be increased in the future.
- **The LTCCP indicates that water monitoring and investigation costs will rise** by around \$7 million over the next 10 years. Neither the current expenditure nor the proposed increases have been justified.
- **The volume of (consented) take is not proportional with monitoring and investigation costs** – as suggested by the proposed formula.
- **Under the Local Government Act, Council is required to take into account the benefits to the wider community when allocating rates.** There is no attempt in the document to justify how the proposed changes comply with this requirement.
- **Scenarios presented at the recent round of Water Strategy meetings varied** (day to day). This suggests the proposal has been poorly researched.

Last year Regional Council stated that the Federated Farmers' submission was regarded as a single submission – even though the combined Provinces represent over 2,500 families. So this year we are urging all members to send in their individual submissions to Council. (We will still be sending in submissions from South Canterbury Federated Farmers and the four combined Canterbury Provinces.) Full details of the process can be found at www.ecan.govt.nz – "Find out more about the ten year plan".

If you would like a template to submit on the water issues outlined above send an e-mail to Bob Douglas at the Timaru office – bdouglas@fedfarm.org.nz

SUBMISSIONS CLOSE ON 28TH APRIL

Bob Douglas - Federated Farmers of NZ, Industry Manager

Farm staffing shortages

We are working hard to ensure that when you are looking for staff, you can get access to the people that you need with the right skills and experience to do the job.

While the dairy industry stands out as an area of critical shortage, across the board in agriculture we know that more people are needed.



In a Federated Farmers of NZ policy survey that we conducted recently, members told us that there is still a significant proportion of dairy farmers who are short of staff (22 percent). Remarkably, despite rising unemployment, 60 percent of survey respondents have found it harder in recent times to find farm workers. Also, 47 percent of those who have tried to hire workers from overseas have found the process difficult.

Federated Farmers is working with the Department of Labour and other stakeholders to try to both make it easier to hire people from overseas, as well as encourage newly unemployed New Zealanders into careers in agriculture. If you want to get more involved in this issue, please contact William McGimpsey, wmcgimpsey@fedfarm.org.nz or 0800 327 646.

William McGimpsey - Federated Farmers of NZ, Policy Advisory/Economist



A fair price for a great product



LOCAL VOICE

PROVINCIAL NEWSLETTER

SOUTH CANTERBURY



APRIL 2009

Brighter outlook

An autumn at last and lamb prices are defying the recession, who would of guessed it? Some long overdue good news for South Canterbury sheep farmers. Wool



is our next hurdle and Wool Partners Ltd, the child of the WIN initiative from Meat and Wool deserves our support. It consolidates our clip, which should give us more clout in the market place and shortens the supply chain by trying to sell directly to the end users. Your levy money has gone into initiating this new initiative.

The lack of available lambs is certainly keeping the schedule up and it wouldn't be very often we have seen a stronger schedule in March than December

There is no doubt procurement pressure is inflating the prices we are receiving for our lambs and although, as farmers, we are enjoying the change in fortunes from last season, when we couldn't give away ewes and to a lesser extent lambs, you can guarantee our meat companies won't be seeing the record profits they saw last year. It isn't a healthy industry that has this win/loss philosophy and money that should be going into research, development and generally investing in our future is being burnt fighting to secure lambs.

More money in the bank and more grass in the paddock should make for a more positive tugging season than we have had for a few years. Sheep farmers in general must be feeling very happy compared with many in these times of uncertainty.

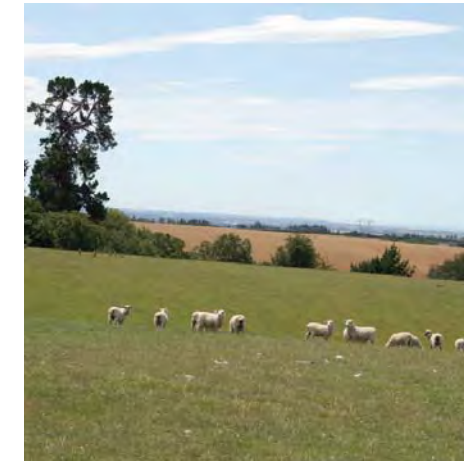
John Gregan - South Canterbury Meat & Fibre Chair



What a season!

I know I have been asked not to talk about the weather all the time, but with the vagaries we have experienced over the past few months, I cannot resist it. What a season! For much of the spring and summer we seemed to have been one rain short. Then it came - and when it did come the heavens really opened up. But, after that, it's back to being very inconsistent. Once again, when we need the next follow-up rain it hasn't come.

The farming scene has changed somewhat with the global recession. Hopefully we as farmers are going to be protected from much of it. I applaud the comments in the editorial of the Timaru Herald of 25 March – at least someone recognises this country's dependence on the primary producer.



One of my concerns, though, is still on the cost side of things with the extra regulation being hoisted on us, as though we have no regard for the environment at all. This is very untrue, and as time goes on this will be borne out as even better systems are established to work alongside the environment. The best results will be achieved through co-operation. It does not have to be done by regulation alone, as some people think. A partnership is a much more effective way forward, I believe.

With another round of council annual plans coming up members and staff will be working very hard on the current issues. This process determines your rates for the coming 12 months and sets the council strategies on which rates are based for the next 10 years. Federated Farmers submits on around 70 of these plans each year in an effort to curb

rises in rural rates in particular. Many councils are urban dominated and their members seem to think that their rural citizens are a bottomless funding pit. This is a very big job for our members and staff and they need all the input they can get. Anyone interested in helping prepare our submissions this year should contact Bob Douglas in the Timaru office in the first instance.

One issue associated with the annual plan process at the moment is the Canterbury Regional Council's ("ECan") Long Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP) This contains a number of important issues to submit on but one of the most crucial would be the proposal to charge water consent holders for the environmental share of monitoring. In the past has been meet out of the general rate, but the LTCCP proposes that it become a targeted rate (separate). As we know from past experience with this Council, in time the cost of this would be ramped up higher and higher. Over the years there has been a lot of information made available by the consent holders which would benefit the Council's monitoring programme. This will continue, whether rated for or not, and is done at the expense of the consent holders. Why, we ask, does the Regional Council need to re-invent the wheel?.

My thanks to the Talbot family who were going to host our first FarmDay in South Canterbury and the preparation they had put into the day, only to have it rained off.

David Williams - South Canterbury President



South Canterbury Federated Farmers ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

11.30pm, 13 May 2009

(see page 3 for more information)

ALL WELCOME

Season of two halves

This season has been one of the best ever ... or it may have been if we could have only swapped the month of February with the month of December. You get sick of talking about the weather but, unlike most other businesses, it is Mother Nature who ultimately decides whether our season will be a successful one or not.



After a very dry growing season spent looking skywards daily for rain (that never came), we all thought at least the harvest would be straightforward. Wrong! Fast forward to February with the ryegrass in the bag and the bulk of the cereal harvest about to begin all was well and then down it came. 170mm of rain (more in some areas) all before the calendar rolled into March, leaving farmers everywhere with sprouted grain, high moisture grain and muddy paddocks. All this caused some growers to take a nostalgic trip back in time, where once again we had tractors towing various threshing machines around.

To say this has been a difficult season would be an understatement. Whether this greater climatic variability we are now seeing is a consequence of climate change is anybody's guess but, with an emerging pattern of weather extremes our challenge will be to accept it and adapt to it.

Right now wet grain in storage is an issue for farmers. As we all know wet grain will cause heating unless the moisture content can be reduced. So monitoring silos becomes extremely important. If the temperature of wheat is cool, at 16 percent moisture, it can be stored for over two months but, as the temperature of the grain gets warmer then that window can shorten up to a few weeks. Grain temperature can be nearly as important as grain moisture.

Another potential problem we all strike is moisture moving up the silo, often following the walls. This moisture condenses at the top and a wet 'cap' forms reducing further air movements. Even grain which may have been fit at harvest, but was hot, can absorb moisture as it cools making the original reading incorrect.

Finally, on the bright side, we are now getting ready to sow our crops and start the process all over again, bringing with it the eternal optimism that THIS coming year ... really could be our best harvest ever.

Michael Taylor – South Canterbury Grain & Seed Chair

Distinguished biotechnologist of the year

William Rolleston - 10 March 2009



South Canterbury Federated Farmers is proud of William Rolleston being awarded the Distinguished Biotechnologist of the Year award. We've taken the liberty of editing William's acceptance speech – it was a great effort and we congratulate you.

"This award is a tribute to three groups of people. Firstly it is a confirmation of all the hard work put in by many good people over the years to establish a biotechnology industry in New Zealand. One of the strengths of the early Biotenz was the forum it provided for networking. Collaboration is essential in science – the business of biotechnology is no different.

As the chairman of Biotenz I have had the pleasure of meeting many interesting and stimulating people. Our underlying principle is that science underpinned and added value to our products and services. That principle still holds true though the notion of what science is and its legitimacy as a means to explain the world around us is constantly being eroded.

Anti science rhetoric abounds and we see it manifested in vociferous opposition to the trans-Tasman drug agency, in opposition to genetic modification and in conservatism in our GM regulation.

This award is also a tribute to those in business, science and politics, who dared to stand up for science in the face of 15,000 people marching down Queen Street.

Our biological innovation is being suffocated by regulation. Onerous and unnecessary regulation distracts our scientists with compliance and stifles creative thought.

My family has been farming in South Canterbury for more than 150 years. My brother, John, and I started South Pacific Sera 20 years ago using the resources of our family farming property. Our goal was to

provide local employment opportunities.

That was at a time when then Prime Minister David Lange famously labelled farming a sunset industry. Boy how things have changed. We really can say that in the last few years farming has saved our bacon!

Farming is the strength of this country. Farming contributes raw material for the creation of biological knowledge and products. We have heard that medical biotechnology could increase our wealth dramatically. I put it to you that our farming system provides an opportunity to disseminate wealth broadly with greater impact.

Consider that an application which increases our dairy return by just ten percent would contribute \$700 million to our economy – each year, every year.

This award is also a tribute to the hard work, loyalty and tenacity of our staff. They have shown that provincial New Zealand is a sleeping giant with plenty to offer the economy of New Zealand.

There are challenging times ahead requiring strong leadership and bold decisions. If we stand up for science, if we bring our regulation up to date, if we apply biotechnology where we have real expertise then biotechnology will flourish - for the good of our economy, for the good of our health and the environment".

RURAL WOMEN NZ South Canterbury Provincial SEMINAR

RWNZ - South Canterbury Provincial will be holding their annual Fairlie Seminar on

**Wednesday 17 June 2009
10am-3.15pm**

Mackenzie Community Centre, Fairlie

Subject

Climate Change -
Women's contribution to
meeting a global challenge.

Speaker

Shona van Zijl de Jong
Environmental Economist, Climate
Change & Natural Hazards at NIWA

The day will take the form of
both workshop and seminar.

ALL WELCOME

South Canterbury Federated Farmers ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING



SOUTH CANTERBURY

11.30am, Wednesday 13 May 2009

The Poplars, Pleasant Point Highway, Timaru

PROGRAMME

- 11.30am Selected Branch Annual General Meetings**
(Relevant branch members will be notified by email)
- 12.00noon Lunch available from noon (no charge)**
- 12.30pm Industry Group Annual General Meetings**
- Federated Farmers Grain & Seed
 - Federated Farmers Meat & Fibre
 - Federated Farmers Dairy
- 2.30 Provincial Annual General Meeting**
Reports and other formalities will be kept as brief as possible.
- 5.15 Social Time**
- 6.00 President's Dinner***
All members are invited to join the Provincial President and Guest Speaker, Tom Lambie, for dinner.
- After Dinner Speaker:** Tom Lambie
Tom, a past South Canterbury Provincial President, will be speaking in his capacity of Chancellor of Lincoln University.

* The dinner will be at your own cost and places will be confirmed only on specific registration and payment (\$35 per head) **BY NOON FRIDAY 9th May** to South Canterbury AGM, Federated Farmers of NZ, PO Box 665, Timaru. Note that because of the utter chaos of the past couple of years, this is a definite requirement and cut off date.

PLEASE DO NOT PRESUME WE KNOW YOU ARE COMING .

There will be no charge for luncheon or afternoon tea. However, to ensure we order enough to go around please register your intention to attend **BY NOON FRIDAY 9th MAY** to: Phone: 0800 327 646 to register with Bob Douglas or Bronwyn Wilson.

We will keep you up to date regarding guest speakers etc. by e-mail. Make sure that your email address is registered with Federated Farmers of New Zealand, phone: 0800 327 646.

