

Feds welcomes increased rural assistance

Federated Farmers adverse events spokesman, Frank Brenmuhl welcomed the announcement by government of increased rural assistance payments for farming families facing hardship.



The increase which was effective early September sees the rural assistance payment provided by Work and Income, rise from 75 percent of the applicable unemployment benefit to 100 percent. Rural assistance payments are activated when the government officially declares an adverse event.

"For those farmers whose incomes have dropped to the point where they require this assistance this gesture will be appreciated,"

Mr Brenmuhl said.

"Federated Farmers has a major role in coordination during adverse events. All farmers are subject to the challenges of the weather from time to time, so it is important that we have measures in place to assist when farmers need help to get through these challenges.

"Federated Farmers and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry have worked together to establish a network of rural support trusts throughout the country. If farmers require assistance with adverse events they should call the Federation's hotline 0800 327 646.

"Rural support trusts are invaluable as independent and focused advocates, advisors and mediators for farmers in distress, and provide some assurance that support will be ongoing once the immediate crisis recedes and media interest wanes," Mr Brenmuhl concluded.

For further comment contact:

Federated Farmers spokesman for adverse events, Frank Brenmuhl, 03 318 1565, 027 224 4009.

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PROVINCIAL NEWSLETTER



MID CANTERBURY

OCTOBER 2008

A little rain - please

Looking back a few years to my stint as Mid-Canterbury Grains Chairman I can remember being told in the days following newsletters that I was fickle and could never be satisfied in my weather wants and needs, one week too wet, the next too dry! Well, that's just life as an arable farmer I guess. Foolishly I hoped that, during my spell as Provincial President, that the weather would simply play ball and deliver everything I wanted at the right times in order to save me from ever commenting on the weather again! Wishful thinking I know! So, having come out of a very, very wet winter, an inch or two of rain wouldn't go amiss anytime soon!



Just a short rant this month as it is a busy one for us all in Mid Canterbury and a newsletter article seems like just one task too many.

Last month Lionel Hume and I presented a submission to an Environment Canterbury (ECan) Natural Resources Regional Plan (NRRP) hearing on discharge of fertiliser and effluent on to land. In other words it covered basically all fertiliser and effluent applications and their possible impact on waterways, groundwater etc. Once again our submission was thorough and had a commonsense approach, which received a fair hearing that generated some productive discussion and

prompted some good questions from those we were presenting to. I was dismayed, as I often am, to discover that the logic behind some of the proposals was yet again poorly conceived and showed that those drafting some of these rules have a very poor understanding of just how things are done behind our farm gate.

The example which got me going was the proposal that no fertiliser be spread within a five metre buffer strip of waterways. On my arable property, which is crisscrossed with drains, I estimated an annual cost close to \$100,000 if this was to be put into practice. Taking into account the loss of production off 16ha, and the associated costs of effectively managing what land would be set aside. In some cases, three sides of some fields. Absolutely daft considering my fertiliser spreading equipment can cut off its spread pattern within a metre.

That's just an example of some of the nonsense we all come up against and of course I wouldn't deny that some of this is essential and that we need some parameters around what we do in order to protect our environment, or should I say to convince others that we are concerned about the environment and that we are doing something about it. But my concern is that the effort in responding to this constant barrage of material coming out of the NRRP and other processes are taking their toll on people. The time, money and effort it takes to keep up with all the new nonsense is out of proportion with the end result.

I'm not saying it is all unnecessary because clearly it isn't, but occasionally we need to simply say ENOUGH! We will debate on some issues, but if it is nonsensical, then let's say so and tell them to go away and come back when they are prepared to engage on a sensible level.

That applies to plenty of other issues outside of ECan as well. National Animal Identification Tagging (NAIT, the Emissions Trading Scheme ... and the list goes on. Let's just say a very blunt NO to a few of them, see what happens!

Michael Morrow - Mid-Canterbury President



Ram lamb prices may be discounted

Spring is well under way and a busy season is ahead.



It appears that some companies are planning to discount ram lambs after 31st March 2009. I would advise farmers to check with the processing companies you supply to, and find out what the conditions are likely to be for the next year. At this stage we have the following information:

AFFCO

Ram lambs will be accepted after 31st March 2009, but they will take a lower priority in the killing order and will probably be used for frozen rather than chilled product.

Alliance

Ram lambs will continue to be accepted after 31st March 2009, unless there is characteristic "ram lamb taint", typically found in heavier lambs from mid to late winter.

CMP

Ram lambs will continue to be accepted after 31st March 2009.

Silver Fern Farms

Ram lambs will be accepted until 31st March 2009. Ram lambs will be accepted on a schedule only basis after this date and will not be accepted on contracts.

Jeanette Maxwell - Mid-Canterbury Meat & Fibre Chairwoman

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MID CANTERBURY

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Earliest silage making in years

The last month has shown that dairy farming in Canterbury can change as quickly as the world financial markets. From a famine of feed to mowing for the earliest silage I've seen in years. The flip side of this may be the temptation to pull back from sound relationships with our feed suppliers, (which we've built up over a period of time) in order to have a short term gain on price. The short term gain may create a long term pain if that feed supplier is not there in the future. We all know from experience that the Canterbury climate can have large fluctuations which means that sometime in the future the feed that we think is dear now will be even dearer in a drought.



There have been a few grumbles lately from the public and dairy farmers about the use of roadsides as dairy lanes. If you are considering this, think that not all people like such a distinctive odour on their exhaust pipes, there is a Code of Practice policy on the Ashburton District Council website. It is well worth a look, because a good image is imperative to our industry. Please go to www.ashburtondc.govt.nz - Council - Policy Register. Page down right hand side find - Services and Operations, then cattle/stock crossing roads.

Final thought; as Fonterra works on their milk price changes. Is it just to allow a better judgement of its performance, or is it to allow comparisons to our competitors (which I note are all corporative not co-operatives)? So if we change too much in our payment structure can we still maintain our co-operative philosophy?

Keep pumping (milk).

Dean McConnell - Mid-Canterbury Dairy Chairman

Marketing or disposal?

Do you as a farmer, or we as the arable industry market our products ourselves, or do we let a firm dispose of it for us?

In the last twelve months we have seen global grain prices increase dramatically, due to global shortages. Very rapidly our costs have increased, leaving farmers in a very vulnerable position should grain prices fall. The world supply of grain has not greatly changed, world production has risen 65 million tonnes, but usage has increased 50MT, resulting in only a small increase in ending stocks. Grain markets are very sensitive to adverse weather in growing areas. The UK has had the wettest harvest on record, resulting in a lot of sprouted milling wheat and many areas in Australia are suffering from severe drought, once again.

I bet the firms haven't told you any of this, all the news is about the supposed ocean of barley in the ground.

When it comes to barley pricing in New Zealand, the "big stick" used on growers is Palm Kernel. Adding insult to injury are full page newspaper ads by one of our fertiliser companies promoting a "Super-Duper" special on PKE of only \$315 per tonne.

That fertiliser company, on its website, has some interesting information about the economics of dairy farmers feeding barley compared to palm kernel (see the graph below).

This is great news for dairy and arable farmers alike! When was the last time your grain representative told you that a dairy farmer could double his rate of return by feeding Barley as opposed to Palm Kernel? This information is not about "them and us" with the dairy industry, but how we can provide

a feed source at a price that is sustainable for the arable farmer, whilst doubling the return on investment for the dairy guys. The production response for wheat is even more impressive.

One would wonder why a particular fertiliser company is peddling PKE rather than extolling the virtues of locally grown, fully traceable New Zealand grain.



Next time your grain representative visits how about asking him/her whether they are marketing your products, or disposing of them.

To assist arable farmers make marketing decisions, the Federated Farmers Grain & Seed industry group has decided to subscribe to a weekly Australian grain market commentary. We intend to make this available on the website www.fedfarm.org.nz. In addition, we will be emailing a fortnightly "Arable Bulletin" containing national and local market information, links to website commentaries and any other useful information we can track down.

We hope this helps you "market" your crop effectively.

David Clark - Mid-Canterbury Grain & Seeds Chairman

	Gross Income Generated per Kg / DM		Net Return on Investment per Kg /DM	
Dairy Price \$/Kg/MS	\$6.50	\$7.00	\$6.50	\$7.00
Palm Kernel @ \$350/t	\$0.48	\$0.52	\$0.13	\$0.17
Barley @ \$450/t	\$0.70	\$0.76	\$0.25	\$0.31

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New look website for the Federation

The new and improved Federated Farmers website is up and running and will soon be a one-stop shop for members. Shortly members will be able to purchase and pay for items through the website as well as find possible employees for their farms. Both functions farmers have asked for.

A working group, comprising provincial presidents and Strategic Communications staff, worked in the development of the new website with the purpose of providing members a more functional and easier to use website. Feedback collected from members and staff drove the changes for the website.

Communications Advisor, Kara Tait says that the new website was an ideal place to showcase the Federation's new branding while also providing a more professional image for Federated Farmers.

Among the many new features on the

website are 'Have your Say' and 'Polls'.

To date, the 'Have your say' feature has been extremely popular with members having the chance to air their opinions on topics such as, debating control in the meat industry and



whether or not NAIT is on the right track.

The online polls, viewed in the members section, allow members to vote on various topics such as what they see as the biggest issue facing farmers. It also shows the results and gives an indication on how other members feel.

The feedback from both staff and Federation members has been positive so far with both parties excited about the future enhancements in the not too distant future. The new look website went live in July 2008.

Phase two, of the website development project, will allow members the ability to pay their membership fees, purchase contracts or agreements, as well as access rural job vacancies across the country. It is planned that phase two will roll out in the next six months.

Phase three will allow members to update their details online in a more streamlined manner. The release date for phase three is to be confirmed.

While there are a number of new features on the website, the website address is still the same. Visit www.fedfarm.org.nz for a look at the new and improved site.

Nuffield travels with Ali



At the beginning of July, half way through my Nuffield global focus tour, I realised that I was starting to think about agriculture and politics

and farmer networks in a much bigger way than just New Zealand. Travel has broadened my perspective. It occurred to me that this is exactly what the Nuffield Scholarship tour was meant to do, encourage me to think bigger and bolder and have confidence in myself.

When I first saw the Nuffield tour programme I felt overwhelmed at the pace and schedule that was being set for us. It turned out not only to be a logistical feat, worthy of being called 'The Amazing Race', it was also a physical endurance challenge. To spend 42 days travelling with 10 other people literally around the world to discover farming on four continents seemed an ambitious and slightly foolhardy task. How could we possibly make any sense of it? Yet that is exactly what we did. We shared meals with New Zealand, Irish, French, American and Chinese farmers,

kicked dirt in their fields and debated issues. We saw produce markets, met with bankers and town planners. We met up with cooperate farmers, peasant farmers, farmers who lived on subsidies and farmers who had to sink or swim on their own initiative.

Farmers in each of these countries took the time to explain their philosophy about farming and what they dreamed of. It has been a humbling and totally motivating experience for me.

I have now set off on my Nuffield solo travels searching for some ways to resolve the urban-rural disconnection. The pace will slow down and I will get to spend more time with people and to develop my thinking. So far everyone I have met has affirmed my study topic and shown an interest in being involved in it. I think that it is true that farmers around the world are feeling the same pressures from negative urban perceptions.

Over the next three months I will participate in a leadership course in America, work for two weeks with leading rural advocacy groups in the UK, meet with some French farmer activists and, I hope, co-lead a workshop

with German and Austrian environmentalists and farmers. In between times I plan to visit past Nuffield scholars and learn more about farming and farm politics. There is a lot to do and take in. I aim to work hard and use this opportunity to really extend myself.

If you are interested in putting yourself forward for a Nuffield scholarship drop me an email: aundorflay@fedfarm.org.nz, I'd be more than happy to answer any of your questions or help you out with an application.

Ali Undorf-Lay, Federated Farmers of NZ Provincial Communications Coordinator

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