

AgScience

Inside

President's
au revoir

Primary
Growth
Partnership

Passion for
wool





John Lancashire
President

Au Revoir But Not Goodbye

It is traditional to dwell on successes when leaving a position and as this is my last AgHort Talking as President I will follow this route, but will not forget the failures.

Fortuitously there has been some good news for the primary sector and science in recent weeks.

BUDGET

Despite some carping from traditional sources the budget represents government confidence in the primary sector with some real, if small, extra allocations in tough economic times. Most of these are dealt with elsewhere in this issue; suffice to say the government has delivered on much of the content in its science manifesto.

The "Primary Growth Partnership" builds on the "Fast Forward" initiative by the previous Minister, Jim Anderton, but both he and the current Minister, David Carter, must be given great credit for what has developed into a real "bi-partisan" approach to funding innovation in the primary sector. There is also no doubt that these policies were the result of years of lobbying by the primary sector on the reduction of research funding in the area. However, this will not necessarily result in substantial extra resources for science, as the fund covers the entire value chain – education, product development, market development, commercialisation, technology transfer and research and development (R&D).

AGRESEARCH / LINCOLN MERGER

As most of you will know, the merger will not happen and will be replaced by a "closer relationship" which could mean almost anything. The initiative will certainly stimulate some soul searching in the science community and continued government pressure for more interaction between universities and CRIs will continue. What has been overlooked is the huge increase in meaningful collaboration between these organisations in recent years, which has been driven, in part, by our very competitive funding system.

CROWN RESEARCH INSTITUTES

Your Institute (and others) has campaigned for many years for a serious look at the way the CRIs have developed. The lack of a proper oversight of their public good role, which is actually enshrined in the CRI Act, resulting in an over-emphasis on commercial activities, has driven the Institutes to short-term work and consultancies in an attempt to pay the government a dividend. The recent government decision to lift the required dividend to 9% does not suggest that a return to a significant emphasis on long-term research is likely. And competition with the private sector will continue if not increase.

The role of a "corporate" management style does not seem to work well in a science organisation. This is of course reminiscent of the Douglas mania of the 80s, where specialists such as teachers, doctors and scientists were not regarded as capable of an unbiased management role and policy and operations had to be in very separate boxes. As Michael Wintringham, the former State Services Commission boss, has pointed out, "why do we want to take the brains out of operations?" This outmoded mantra may still be alive and well in the Salinger "affair" and it is very hard to understand why "management" had not solved the issue before it came to a public hearing of the Employment Court.

Most of the criticisms of the CRI system are alive and well, but would seem to be quite easily fixed by simply adhering more closely to the CRI Act. The lack of success in achieving change in this area has to be regarded as a failure by many in the science community.

SCIENCE BUREAUCRACY

The increasing size and expense of the science bureaucracy has been of serious concern to the science community for many years. It is very gratifying to see that message is finally getting through and it was a strong part of the National Party science manifesto. FRST are pushing a simplified funding and accountability

system with an advisory committee including working scientists. The MoRST priorities for the 2009/2010 include improving the science system so that scientists can "spend more time at the bench" (and presumably in the paddock).

THE FUTURE

There are still disappointments, of course. The lack of some sort of inflation proofing for long-term funded research is ridiculous as over a 12 year period, say, much of the funding will have disappeared. The dropping of tax credits for R&D does not send a good message to the private sector. And there are still too many organisations representing the concerns of scientists to government.

But more importantly we still need to establish science at the heart of government policy. Despite the excellent appointment of Peter Gluckman as a part-time Advisor to the Prime Minister, it is obvious that parts of government and Treasury do not believe there is a relationship between increased investment in science and innovation and productivity. This is despite masses of international data which support the concept, and the fact that the USA, Australia and the UK have recently hugely increased their science investment in the middle of the biggest recession since the 1930s.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank all members for their support and interest over the past four years...But we always have the challenge of attracting new members by showing we are an effective organisation. Ideas on how to achieve this are always welcome.

I would also like to thank our corporate sponsors for their continued support. We are fortunate to have such an impressive line-up of primary sector players in behind us.

Finally the strong support of council and editor Bob Edlin have been an essential part of any success we have had. And without Jenny "stalwart" Taylor, our secretary, the Institute would be a pretty minor force.

John Lancashire
President

The Budget and the Primary Growth Partnership

The Budget announcement of the Primary Growth Partnership is good news for the primary sector and a very encouraging investment by the National Government in our major export industry, particularly as it builds on the "Fast Forward" initiative by Jim Anderton, Minister of Agriculture in the previous Labour administration. It is very encouraging to see what is virtually a bi-partisan approach to supporting primary sector innovation following years of relative neglect by both parties. The build-up to a total of \$140 million/year by 2012/13 is very welcome.

There are more similarities between the two schemes than differences. They both include matching funding dollar for dollar from Government and Industry and an independent advisory panel appointed by the Minister of Agriculture to assess proposals for investment programmes. This takes it outside the processes for funding science run by the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology (FRST). There is an implied criticism of the status quo via the statement that the "Primary Growth Partnership incorporates a transparent and accountable funding structure that is focused on results, not red tape".

Another reason for the funding being outside of FRST is because the scheme covers areas other than science. Investments will span the whole of the value chain, including education, product development, commercialisation, technology transfer, market development AND research and development. So it will be interesting to learn how the funding is spread.

I don't think scientists should hold their breath. This is not a bonanza for science. But the emphasis on commercialisation could be very important for primary sector CRIs such as AgResearch and Plant & Food, because they have never been funded by government to commercialise their innovations (even though Government is currently demanding a 9% dividend), and have had to try to handle this by diverting funds from research.



David Carter

The scheme also puts an onus on industry to develop strategies and, in some cases, think long-term rather than in short-term fixes. The recent criticism of the newly released Dairy Industry strategy by both the Prime Minister John Key and Agriculture Minister David Carter about the lack of serious comment on environmental issues in their strategy is not a good sign.

Under the original "Fast Forward" scheme, funding was committed for at least 15 years. In the "Primary Growth Partnership", funding (which builds to \$140 million a year in 2012/13) is specified for only four years. It is stated that funding will be ongoing, but no details are given. The Minister has stated that projects will generally be "BIC", which may imply that they could run for a number

of years so that funding beyond four years will be required.

There were other good signals in what was inevitably a "bleak" budget. Effectively the Government remained committed to an increased investment in science and innovation. Increased funds for the capability allowances to CRIs to enable them to do more "core" science; increases in the Marsden Fund and Health Research Council research and the appointment of Peter Gluckman as Chief Science Advisor to the Prime Minister all delivered on the National Party science manifesto. The commitment to reducing transactional costs in the science system by both FRST and MoRST so that scientists could spend more time at the bench or in the paddock was very welcome as a response to complaints over many years.

But it remains to be seen if this commitment will continue. There is no doubt that there is still a job to be done by the sectors and the science community to persuade parts of the Government and Treasury, that our productivity will not improve without a large increased investment in science and innovation in future years. ☒

This is a shorter version of an article that was published in the Farmers Weekly.

Science gets a champion in the Beehive

Prime Minister John Key has appointed distinguished scientist Professor Peter Gluckman to be the first Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor, a newly created part-time role.

"Professor Gluckman will provide me with a direct line to advice when I need it," he said.

"He will be an independent voice that will complement existing channels of advice such as government departments and the Royal Society."

But Professor Gluckman will not be involved in science funding processes. That will remain the responsibility of existing government agencies.

Professor Gluckman will step down from his role as Director of the Liggins Institute but will remain employed by the University of Auckland.



Fast Forward is dead – long live the

A year ago, on Budget Day, Agriculture Minister Jim Anderton issued two media statements: the important one, for scientists, reiterated the Budget investment in the Fast Forward Fund.

The Clark Government would commit – up front – a hefty \$700 million to be used in the new research, development and innovation fund, which was promoted as a major new investment in a plan for the future of New Zealand's pastoral and food industries.

The fund was expected to grow with interest to about \$1 billion during a 10 to 15-year lifespan.

Seven industry groups were soon committed to being cornerstone investors with at least \$10 million each in the fund during the next five years.

New Zealand Fast Forward was set up to decide how to spend the money and Bill Falconer, director of a raft of companies, in August was named its chairman.

But Fast Forward was doomed never to survive a change of government.

Almost like a reflex action, National had denounced the fund from the outset. It declared it would scrap the scheme.

Fast Forward could not simply be scrapped, however, because it was widely welcomed. Business New Zealand said "the Government and partnership industries involved are to be congratulated for this bold move". DairyNZ's chairman, John Luxton (a former National Cabinet Minister) said it represented a significant commitment to maintaining the profitability, competitiveness, and sustainability of New Zealand's pastoral and food industries.

The investment was similarly welcomed by Zespri, Fonterra, the Meat Industry Association, Meat and Wool New Zealand, PGG Wrightson, Horticulture New Zealand, Crop & Food Research, Federated Farmers – and scientists.

In light of that support, National's posture became the stuff for political point-scoring.

Michael Cullen, then Minister of Finance and deputy prime minister, was asked a patsy question by a party colleague in Parliament: "What calls has the Minister seen for further investment in agriculture research and development?"

He delighted in responding: "I have seen a report concerning a National Party policy paper that called to 'boost research and development, especially in agriculture.' I have also seen a call to scrap the Fast Forward fund, which came from the leader of the National Party, Mr John Key."

David Carter, then National's agriculture spokesman, tried to claw back lost ground by reminding the House about the Bolger

Government's record on science funding. He asked Dr Cullen: "Can the Minister confirm that AgResearch is New Zealand's largest agricultural research centre and that it received more money under National in 1999 than it currently receives under Labour in 2007-08, and is this not just another case of rhetoric around this issue because it is driven by desperation around the polls?"

Dr Cullen responded: "I can confirm that for many years Governments have tended to switch the priorities in research and development funding out of the agriculture area. What is now clear is that we need a vast boost in funding into agriculture research, not least for sustainability reasons given the pressures that agriculture faces."

Just how vast the boost should be would become the critical point of difference between the two major parties.

By the time of the election, National had promised a \$315 million boost to funding for research and science over three years. The policy will be funded by cutting that same amount out of Labour's planned research and development tax credit for businesses.

National's promises included \$20 million a year for an international centre of research dedicated to the reduction of on-farm greenhouse gas emissions; a total of \$50 million a year for primary and food sector research; and \$1 million a year to fund Prime Minister's Prizes for Science.

Labour's Fast Forward Fund would be scrapped for primary and food sector research to help pay for National's plans.

The electorate accordingly signed the death warrant for Fast Forward when it voted at the election for a change of government.

A year on, Mr Carter is Minister of Agriculture in a National-led Government and he had just one media statement to release on Budget Day: the Government would come up with funding of \$190 million over four years for a new scheme, the Primary Growth Partnership. When fully operating in 2012/13, the Government will be investing \$70 million annually in primary sector innovation through the partnership.

The Government's commitment will be matched dollar-for-dollar by industry, leading to a total investment of up to \$140 million a year.

"This initiative is a clear demonstration of the Government's bid to boost productivity across the economically vital primary sectors," Mr Carter said.

The Minister, meanwhile, was polishing his next announcement, to be delivered a few days later in a speech to Canterbury business people.

He told his audience that new initiatives in Budget 2009 included increased Research, Science & Technology funding, now up to



Wayne Mapp



Grant Robertson



Jim Anderton

Primary Growth Fund

\$743 million per year, and he said the Government will establish a Centre for Agricultural Greenhouse Gas Research by early next year.

Perhaps more important, for science, was Prime Minister John Key's announcement a week earlier that Professor Peter Gluckman had been appointed the first Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor.

Labour MP Grant Robertson was among those to register his approval of that decision.

"Sometimes science is not the sexiest subject in the world," he wrote.

"Certainly for those of us subjected to reciting the periodic table and lectures about turning off Bunsen burners it did not come to life. But in New Zealand we have some terrific scientists who have the ability to bring to life their subject area. One of those is Peter Gluckman.

"As such there is a lot to applaud in the government's announcement that he will be acting in a part-time capacity as a Science Advisor for the Prime Minister."

Mr Robertson's caveat was that Professor Gluckman will not be involved in discussions about funding.

Research, Science & Technology Minister Wayne Mapp – in his Budget Day media statement – said the Budget recognised the critical role science and technology will play in the economic recovery "through substantial extra funding." (See Page 7)

But Dr Paul Callaghan, Alan MacDiarmid Professor of Physical Sciences, Victoria University of Wellington comments, disagreed. He was disappointed, describing it as "an extremely disappointing budget for science and technology."

The \$9 million per annum increase in the Marsden Fund was welcome, but overall, New Zealand's per capita GDP investment in R&D was unchanged at around 0.52%, far below that of Australia, the OECD average, and small economies like Finland, Singapore and Denmark, all of whom have built prosperity from innovation.

Dr Jeff Tallon from the MacDiarmid Institute, Industrial Research Ltd and National Science Panel, regarded the appointment of a Chief Science Advisor to the PM as the most important of the announcements – it "lifts the profile of science in government and sets in place a process for change. We desperately need change of cultural attitudes to research and science – in politics and business."

The PM's science prize was "probably a good move, as it will help lift the whole profile of science in New Zealand (and may help keep science on the political agenda)."

He suggested it should only be awarded every few years; otherwise its elite status could be degraded in time.

Dr Tallon said the Primary Growth Partnership would be welcomed by those who lamented the loss of the Fast Forward initiative. "But again we need to be looking beyond our primary sector and investing in the sector of high-value, advanced technology products. We have only to look at emissions and future fuel costs to see that big changes are needed here."

Dr Andrew West, Chief Executive of AgResearch, said the increase in Capability Funding and the creation of the Primary Growth Partnership were "most welcome especially at this time of constraint in government spending."

But the Government wasn't paying much attention to the reaction from scientists. It was posturing, much the same as the Labour-Progressive Government had done a year earlier.

Taranaki/King Country MP Shane Ardern asked Mr Carter a parliamentary question to which – obviously – he knew the answer: "What recent major initiatives has the Government announced to support primary sector innovation?"

Mr Carter told him the Budget had confirmed "a significant, enduring, and transparent investment by the Government in primary sector innovation through the Primary Growth Partnership."

The partnership would see the Government investing \$70 million annually in innovation, and in research and development, in the primary sector industries. When matched dollar for dollar by industry, it would be investing \$140 million a year.

The initiative was "a clear demonstration of the Government's commitment to boosting productivity across our economically vital primary sectors, and it has been warmly welcomed."

So why has the Government made such a significant investment in primary sector innovation in this challenging economic environment?


Mr Carter said Budget 2009 was about putting our economy back on to the road to recovery. "The primary sector will lead that recovery, which is why it is so important that the Government invests in

boosting the sector's productivity," he said.

Shane Ardern: "What other reports has the Minister seen on the Primary Growth Partnership?"

Mr Carter: "I have seen a large number of reports on the Primary Growth Partnership that welcome it and praise the Government's support. At last count, 14 different organisations – from Zespri to Fonterra to Science New Zealand to the Seafood Industry Council – all welcomed the Government's significant investment.

"The only people who have not welcomed it are Labour members and Mr Anderton, who are clearly out of touch with New Zealand's primary sector."

And so – just one year after the introduction of Fast Forward – the political boots were very much on the other foot for each of the major parties. 



More money into priority areas

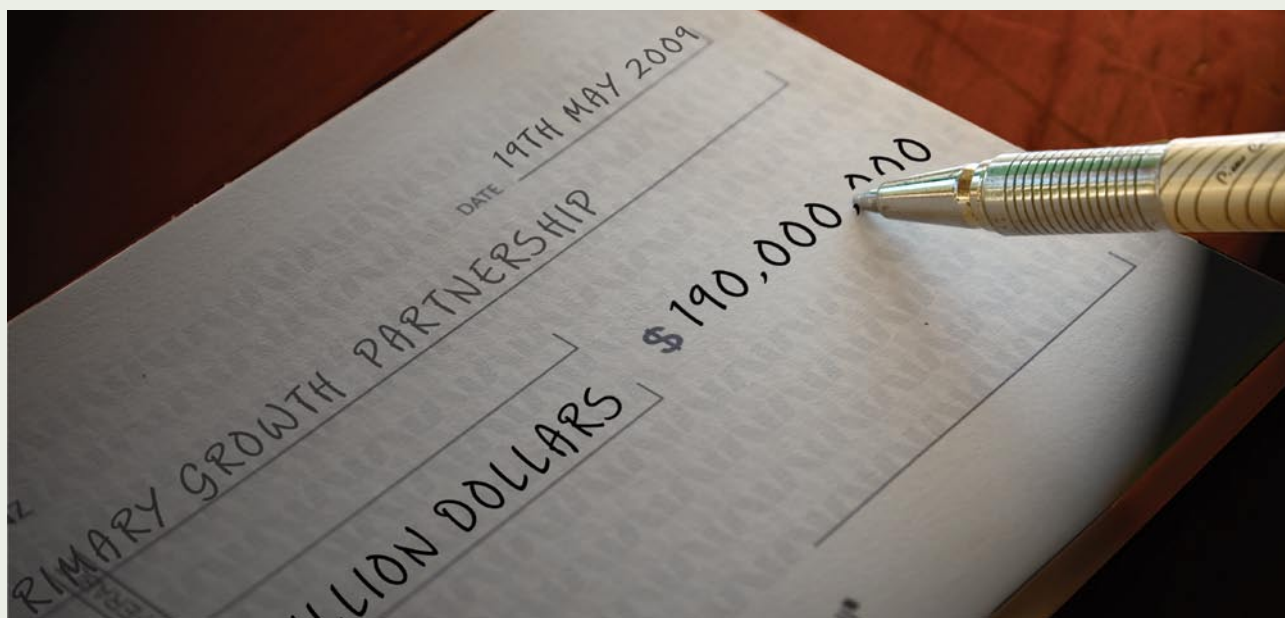
VOTE RESEARCH, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY				
DETAILS OF ANNUAL AND PERMANENT APPROPRIATIONS				
	2008/09		2009/10	
	Budgeted \$000s	Estimated actual \$000s	Budget \$000s	Percentage
Departmental Output Expenses				
Contract Management	1,089	1,089	1,089	0.0
Policy Advice	13,477	12,977	12,702	-5.8
Total Departmental Output Expenses	14,566	14,066	13,791	-5.3
NON-DEPARTMENTAL OUTPUT EXPENSES				
Cross Agency Research			2,254	
Engaging New Zealanders with Science and Technology	6,448	6,298	7,071	9.7
Environmental Research	100,014	100,014	102,569	2.6
Global Technology Partnership	401	401	400	-0.2
Health Research	62,955	62,955	70,955	12.7
International Science and Technology Linkages	3,767	3,267	3,227	-14.3
Maori Knowledge and Development Research	4,867	4,867	4,867	0.0
Marsden Fund	37,878	37,878	46,878	23.8
National Measurement Standards	5,764	5,764	5,764	0.0
New Economy Research Fund	69,833	69,833	73,019	4.6
Research and Development Facilitation and Promotion Service	4,000	4,000	5,000	25.0
Research Contract Management	22,456	22,431	21,834	-2.8
Research for Industry	206,040	206,040	214,263	4.0
Social Research	5,860	5,860	5,860	0.0
Sustainable Energy Development	3,822	3,822	4,178	9.3
Total Non-Departmental Output Expenses	534,105	533,430	568,139	6.4
Total Non-Departmental Other Expenses	135,510	135,010	161,403	19.1
Total Departmental Capital Expenditure	454	454	730	60.8
Total Non-Departmental Capital Expenditure	4,630	4,630	1,000	-78.4
TOTAL ANNUAL & PERMANENT APPROPRIATIONS	689,265	687,590	745,063	8.1

Research, Science and Technology Minister Wayne Mapp said the Budget rewarded leading and emerging scientists and supported excellence in research.

Claiming "a substantial funding increase" had been provided for areas of the research science and technology budget identified by the Government as priorities, he highlighted:-

- An extra \$40 million over four years to the Crown Research Institute Capability Fund. This reinforces the ability of CRIs to maintain and develop their nationally significant research.
- Funding of \$36 million over four years to the Marsden Fund to provide for investigator-initiated excellent research.
- \$32 million over four years for health research. The investment covers innovation in health delivery, research into targeted areas of health, and funding to sustain current health research investment.
- New funding of \$4 million over four years for the Prime Minister's Science Prizes. The prizes will provide a funding boost for the winning scientists and put the spotlight on excellence in science.
- A \$16 million capital injection in 2010/11 for the Kiwi Advanced Research and Education Network (KAREN), to enhance New Zealand's high-speed telecommunications research connectivity. ☒

SOURCE: THE ESTIMATES OF APPROPRIATIONS 2009/10



PGP – a boost for productivity

Budget 2009 provides \$190 million of Government funding over four years for the Primary Growth Partnership. It will start at \$30 million this year; go to \$40 million next year; \$50 million the year after that; rising to \$70 million per year ongoing from 2012/13.

Funding will be increased as industry shows capacity and the need to spend even more.

With a matching commitment by industry, up to \$140 million will be invested annually.

"It is an enduring commitment from central Government," said Agriculture Minister David Carter.

The PGP is a government-industry partnership that will invest in significant programmes of research and innovation to boost the economic growth and sustainability of New Zealand's primary and food sectors, including forestry.

Mr Carter said the partnership would have "a transparent and accountable funding structure that is focused on results, not red tape." He also said it is "an enduring commitment by the Government to New Zealand's primary industries."

Major primary industry representatives were closely involved in its development.

Investments will be "market-driven", Mr Carter said, and will focus on delivering economic growth and sustainability across the primary sectors, from producers to consumers. A government-industry partnership will lead the strategy and delivery.

The Minister said innovation in the primary and food sector industries would be essential for New Zealand's long-term economic growth and improved environmental performance, and the PGP initiative "will build world-class expertise in these sectors."

Investments will focus on initiatives that deliver significant economic growth and sustainability across the primary sectors from producer to consumer and will cover the whole of the value chain, including education, research and development, product development, commercialisation, market development and technology transfer.

The process for allocating funding is:

- An independent Investment Advisory Panel, appointed by the Minister of Agriculture, will call for expressions of interest and assess proposals for investment programmes. The panel will be chaired by Bill Falconer, an experienced company director with "an unrivalled knowledge of the primary sector" (who was the chair of Fast Forward).
- Successful expressions of interest will be developed into full business plans by a Programme Steering Group of co-investors (industry and government) for further consideration by the IAP.
- The IAP will assess business plans and make recommendations to the Director-General of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, which may approve programmes for Government investment.
- Once approved, Programme Steering Groups will arrange for contracts to be entered into through existing investment mechanisms (such as FRST). The Programme Steering Group will also be responsible for oversight of the programme.
- The IAP will monitor and evaluate approved programmes on

an ongoing basis and may recommend adjustments to investments.

Discussing the partnership with Canterbury business people Mr Carter said New Zealand is the world's largest dairy and sheep meat exporter and a major player in the world trade of horticultural products.

Those industries generate 64% of the country's merchandise export earnings. "They are the only major industries in which we have sufficient scale, market share and supply chains to be truly competitive in international trade."

But New Zealand no longer is the world's lowest-cost producer, and "for 20 years we, as a nation, haven't invested enough in primary sector research and development."

Many of the recent productivity increases we have achieved on-farm are as a result of research done almost 30 years ago.

Mr Carter said the former Agriculture Minister, Jim Anderton, should be acknowledged for his vision for pastoral and food sector research and development with his promotion of the Fast Forward Fund.

But Fast Forward was funded "through a nebulous capital fund that was to be drawn down over a period of 15 years", whereas the Primary Growth Partnership is funded through "an ongoing, annual government appropriation that will be matched by industry."

Based on the many statements of support from primary industry organisations Mr Carter has received, he is confident this will be easily achieved.

Funding will start this year at \$30 million because "we believe projects will need time to be developed and assessed," he said.

There will be five sections of funding, each of them proportioned a dedicated amount. This year it will be \$2 million.

The sections are divided up into:

1. pastoral (including wool) and arable production;
2. horticulture;
3. seafood (including aquaculture);
4. forestry and wood products; and
5. food processing (including nutraceuticals).

In addition to the five sections, \$5 million will be proportioned for Greenhouse Gas research and development.

The remaining \$15 million in year one will form a contestable fund open to any sector to bid for. If the dedicated \$2 million for any of the sectors is not used, it will transfer to the contestable fund.

In Mr Carter's mind the \$2 million works like a teaser – every sector has a fair chance. Those industries that propose bigger and more ambitious projects can apply for more from the contestable fund.

Government does not see PGP as 'business as usual'. It is an ambitious project and has an ambitious scope.

"The priorities and strategic direction of PGP will be led by those industries that choose to be involved," he said.



Award winner's passion for wool

Nic Kelland is delighted at being chosen for the NZIAHS Leading Graduate Award for Lincoln University, 2008.

The award topped off a successful but demanding final year of study at Lincoln, researching for her honours project, a master's paper in wool science and papers in animal health, advanced soil management and seed technology.



She now is working at Haddon Rig Merino stud in New South Wales, advancing her knowledge of the practical aspects of Merino wool production, wool classing, sheep classing and Merino stud breeding and genetics.

She is completing a Certificate in Wool Technology through Tectra "and am keeping an eye out for employment opportunities in New Zealand for 2010 which may enable me to utilise my qualifications and the experience that I have so far gained."

During her wool science studies she worked closely with The New Zealand Merino Company, which provided data and support for her work.

She reports:

My honours project investigated aspects of staple strength and length measurement of New Zealand Merino wool over the period from 2002 to 2008.


Staple strength and length are important

determinants of the processing performance of wool, and contribute considerably to the value of the New Zealand Merino clip, particularly that which is less than 18 micron in diameter.

My project investigated the mean staple strength of the New Zealand Merino wool clip, and the contribution that variation inherent within lines of wool, and differences in the test instruments used for staple measurement, make to variation in the results received for staple strength and length. Data from The New Zealand Merino Company relating to the period from 2002-2008 were used to analyse changes in the staple strength of the New Zealand Merino clip in relation to changes in mean fibre diameter. The variation in staple strength and length inherent within lines of wool was investigated through repeated sampling and testing of those lines. Variation in staple measurement between the two test instruments used for strength and length testing in New Zealand (ATLAS and SB2) was also investigated.

I found that the mean staple strength of the New Zealand Merino wool clip appears to have declined at an average rate of 0.9 N/ktex per year from the 2002/03 season to the 2007/08 season. My results also suggest that a reduction in mean fibre diameter may have occurred over this time, although this was not statistically significant ($P=0.15$) until outlying data from the 2003/04 season was removed from the analysis. The two traits were not correlated ($P=0.566$).

I also found there to be considerable variation in staple strength within lines of wool, at a level that was twice that for staple length. There was no significant difference between the ATLAS and SB2 instruments in their measurement of staple strength. However, significant differences were found between the instruments for staple length and position of break.

In my dissertation I discussed potential reasons for the differences observed between instruments, the variation in staple strength within lines of wool, and the decline in staple strength of the New Zealand Merino wool clip. 

New members

We welcome

- Sarah Crofoot (Manawatu)
- Sinead Leahy (Manawatu)
- Janet Reid (Manawatu)
- Stuart Standen (Manawatu)
- Arvind Subbaraj (Manawatu)
- Paul Lobb (Taranaki)
- Moana Mackey (Wellington)
- Steve McArthur (Canterbury)
- John McCallum (Canterbury)
- Hannah Wright (Canterbury)
- Richard Williams (Otago)

Corporate members

- AGMARDT
- AgResearch
- Ballance Agri-Nutrients
- Catalyst R&D
- Plant & Food Research
- Dairy InSight
- Federated Farmers of New Zealand
- Horticulture New Zealand
- Lincoln University
- Massey University
- PGG Wrightson Seeds
- Ravensdown Fertiliser Co-op

THE NEW ZEALAND INSTITUTE OF AGRICULTURAL & HORTICULTURAL SCIENCE INC

National Secretariat

P O Box 121 063 Henderson, Waitakere City
Phone 09 812 8506 Fax 09 812 8503
secretariat@agscience.org.nz

Contributions to the Editor

Phone and fax 04-237-8074
bob.edlin@paradise.net.nz

www.agscience.org.nz

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