



Farming for the Future

Speech by James Shaw

12 September 2020

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY

Check against delivery

Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa.

Thank you very much for coming.

It's only fitting that we're out on this beautiful piece of Canterbury farmland to announce the next major step in our Green vision for Aotearoa.

Right now, we have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to transform the way we grow and produce food and fibre.

Farmers and growers play a crucial role in how we recover from the COVID-19 crisis.

COVID-19 forced many of us to think, perhaps for the first time, about where our food comes from.

Some of the country's best farmers are already leading the way toward climate-friendly practices.

But we must do more to support all farmers and growers to transition away from intensive farming practices which harm our environment.

By making smart decisions now, we can build a thriving farming sector that is good for farmers, good for people and good for the planet.

A sector which produces a long-term supply of sustainable food and fibre, for everyone here; and which we can share with the world.

And in so doing, we can meet our commitments under the Zero Carbon Act, of reducing emissions to net-zero by 2030.

The reality is that the way we currently farm is accelerating climate change.

Agriculture accounts for just under half (48%) of all New Zealand's greenhouse gas emissions.

For decades, successive governments have focused purely on profit, treating farms as factories.

They have ignored the land's status as a precious ecosystem in itself.

And they laid down rules which encouraged the degradation of our waterways and land.

Intensive agriculture has become the norm, even though we know it has dire consequences.

We are dealing with these impacts now.

Our waterways are polluted, and the land, and the animals raised on it, are suffering.

Farmers and growers are facing increasingly unpredictable climates, putting their livelihoods at risk.

If we don't support farmers and growers to become sustainable, we cannot tell our grandchildren we did everything we could to ensure that they have a safe planet to live on.

But if we think ahead, and make smart choices now, we can set an example for the world to follow.

Today, I am unveiling the Green Party's Farming for the Future Plan.

A plan which supports farmers and growers to lead the solutions to climate change.

Which ensures a long-term source of food and fibre, for us, and to sell to the world.

Which allows the land to regenerate.

And which gives people the information they need to shop sustainably.

Farming for the Future will transform how we farm and grow food in New Zealand, by giving farmers and growers the tools they need to lead climate solutions.

And by setting clear rules about what practices are no longer acceptable.

Here's how it'll work.

The Green Party will create a \$297 million dedicated fund to help farmers to move to low-emissions agriculture.

Combined with the funding the government has already set aside to help with freshwater clean-ups, this is a billion dollars of support for cleaner farming.

This fund would provide loans, grants, and other services – to help farmers and growers transition to regenerative farming.

And it would include specific funding for Māori agriculture organisations.

Like in any industry, there are farmers and growers already doing a fantastic job at mitigating their impact on the environment.

There are others in the middle, making an effort.

But then there are some who are not doing enough - and to fix this by reducing harmful practices.

We will put a levy on the destructive use of artificial fertilisers. This equates to about \$1,500 a year for an average dairy farm and \$1,200 a year for an average sheep and beef farm, a small contribution towards the \$297 million fund I mentioned before.

We will phase out PKE as a supplementary feed.

And we will set a limit on Dissolved Inorganic Nitrogen so that our water is truly clean.

Not only will these changes protect our land and waterways - but they will ensure New Zealand upholds the clean, green brand which keeps our products in-demand all over the world.

Our Farming for the Future Plan will also overhaul the Organics Bill currently before Parliament, to create a robust certification scheme for organic growers.

And it would extend country-of-origin food labelling to a wider range of food products.

These changes mean people doing their shopping know they're buying the best, local, sustainable produce.

Here's an example of how it would work.

Tom has a dairy cattle farm in Kaipara and wants to reduce his impact on the land while maintaining profitability.

It's Tom's decision what he does – but thanks to our plan, he can access expert advice about what his options are.

He decides to shift to a mix of crops, instead of just dairy. If he needs new infrastructure to make those changes, he can apply for a grant to help pay for it.

Down the line, Tom decides to go fully organic, knowing he'll get a lot more money for a premium product.

People buying Tom's produce know they're getting the best, local, sustainable stuff – because of our new sustainability accreditation scheme.

People around the world want it too – because they can be sure it's truly clean, green produce.

A decade later, Tom still runs a small dairy herd, but also grows apples, eggs and olives.

He's proud of his farm, and so are his kids – who are excited to keep experimenting to get the most out of their land while protecting the environment surrounding it.

This plan also commits \$30 million in funding over three years for community gardens and composting initiatives – so communities can grow their own sustainable, low-emissions food.

This funding will also be used to boost programmes like Enviroschools and Garden to Table, and give schools the opportunity to visit farms.

To ensure our precious waterways are secured for our tamariki, we will work with tangata whenua to charge commercial companies who make a profit from our water.

Our Farming for the Future Plan supports farmers and growers to be a driving force in the climate-solution.

It recognises that the status quo cannot continue if we want future generations to have a liveable planet.

But it also acknowledges the incredibly important role our growers and farmers play in producing the food we all need.

The responsibility of a just-transition is all of ours.

But it is the Government's responsibility to ensure farmers and growers have the tools that they need to lead the change.

And that we all have access to sustainable, healthy food.

The Green Party supports thriving, sustainable farming and we have a plan to get us there.

Today – we're asking you, once again, to think ahead.

So we can transform the causes of climate change into the solutions.

And protect people and the planet in doing so.

Thank you.