



NUFFIELD
NEW ZEALAND
FARMING SCHOLARSHIPS

Global vision,
leadership and
innovation

The Home Paddock

A strategy for values-led redesign
of the domestic food system



A programme delivered by:



Daniel Eb
The Home Paddock



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NEW ZEALAND
FARMING SCHOLARSHIPS

**Global vision,
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Exec Summary

A fracturing social licence to farm.

Recruitment.

An authentic provenance story.

These are our sector's most entrenched challenges.
At their roots, they are about culture, values and perception.

They are homegrown, non-market problems confronting a sector that has optimised to win in the global marketplace. We can't rely on our traditional strengths to produce, R&D or market our way out of them.

There is a tacit acceptance that the way forward is to shift from designing for volume and market value, to systems that also include social and environmental values.

To support that transition, this report imagines what a values-led food & farming system in Aotearoa New Zealand might look like. It's built around an analogy, what if food & farming was more like healthcare and education - a public good. The analogy helps us to compare systems designed to sell to consumers, with those designed to more fully meet the needs of people. It helps us to see the challenges in values-led systems (like complexity, stakeholder collaboration and empathetic design) and their benefits (like trust, engagement and local prosperity).

In addition to the public good analogy, this report looks to examples in Kaupapa Māori, proposes a 'cheat sheet' for values-led innovation and explores five forms of values-led food & farming operating at the edges of the sector.

It concludes with something concrete. A strategy for values-led redesign of the domestic market focussed on scaling local food & farming economies.

It's a strategy to realise the untapped value in our domestic food system - our home paddock. It calls for enabling some farmers to look inwards and participate directly in their town's local food economy. It's about designing around our values and practices that Kiwis increasingly want to engage with - like connecting to nature, learning & healing on farms or farming-based sustainability solutions. It proposes a framework for action on food insecurity and health, two fundamental barriers to developing the 'food & farming culture' we need to rebuild social licence, recruit Kiwis and tell a provenance story to the world.

At its core, this is a strategy for building meaningful, everyday touchpoints with urban New Zealanders.

Because values matter across every kitchen table, community hall and boardroom - this report concludes by covering the potential roles of each sector player in a values-led domestic system.

We're a trading nation, and we're good at it. But we need to front-up to the fact that under the current export-dominated model, Kiwis feel increasingly disconnected from food & farming.

To meet these entrenched social challenges, we need to have the courage to do things differently - to lean into our values and redesign our home paddock, for local food & farming economies to thrive.

Here's how.



Introduction

We have a social licence problem because a fifth of Kiwi kids are hungry in a food & farming nation.

We have a recruitment problem because people don't see the meaning & purpose of a life in farming.

We lack a truly unique export proposition because we aren't developing our food & farming culture.

In survey after survey, the same three entrenched problems rise to the top – the fracturing social license to farm, recruitment and a high-value export story. We're struggling to solve these problems because they're new to us. We've spent decades optimising to excel in the marketplace and now we're faced with challenges that our traditional strengths can't easily solve.

There is a tacit acceptance that the way forward is to shift from designing for volume and market value, to designing our systems for social values.

WE ARE HERE

Volume to value to values

Credit – Chris Parsons, Nuffield Primary Sector Insights Report 2020

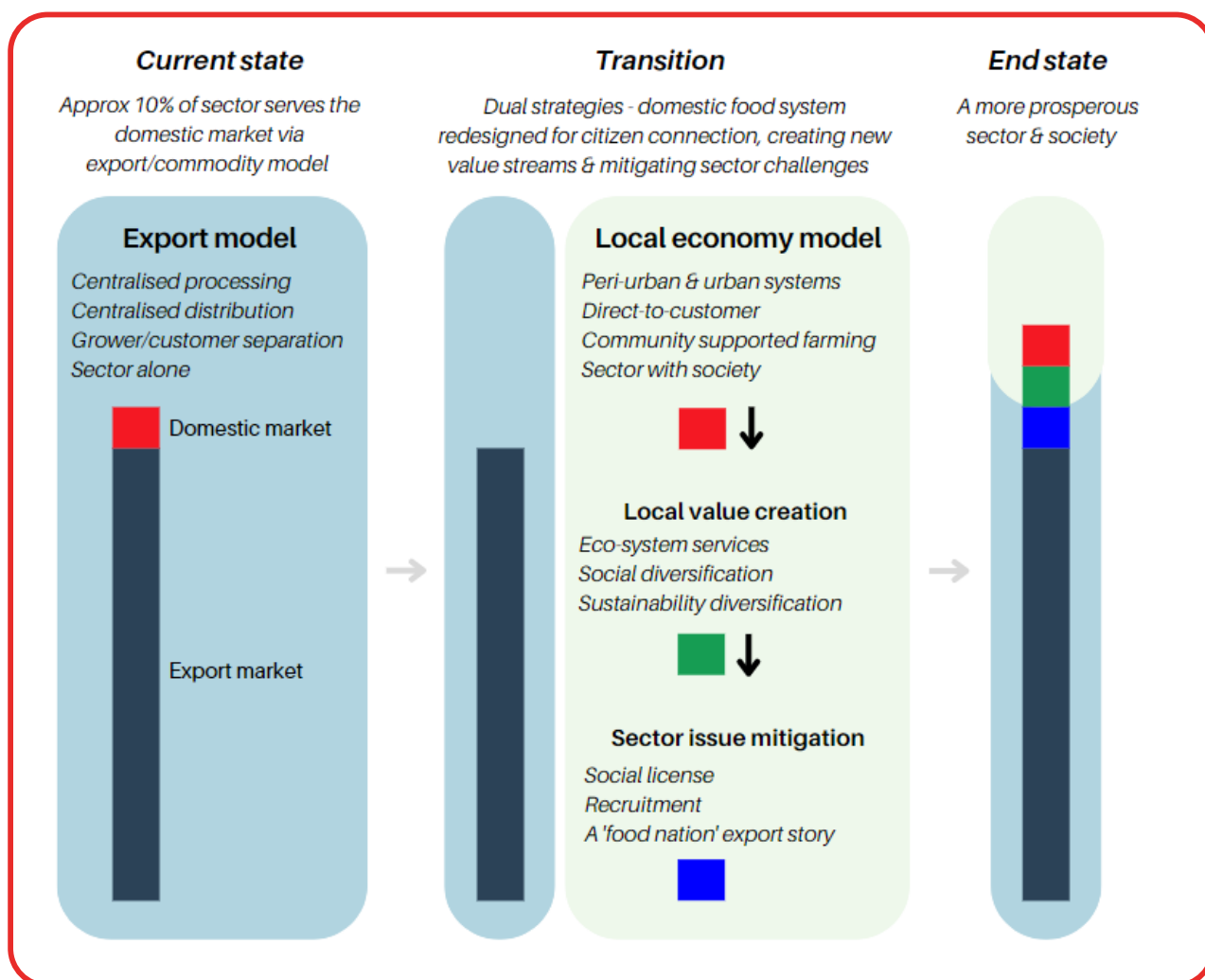
But 'values' are hard to design for. They're intangible, mean different things to different people and don't fit easily into our existing institutions and systems.

But that doesn't mean they are impossible to design for.

This report imagines what a values-led food & farming system in Aotearoa New Zealand might look like. It's built around an analogy – what if food & farming was more like healthcare and education – a public good. Grounding the report in the differences between market goods (shoes & supermarkets) and public goods (schools & hospitals) helps us 'get' how some systems are designed to sell to consumers, and others are designed to meet the needs of people. The analogy helps us to recognise the challenges of a more values-led, public good inspired system (like complexity, the need for wide & deep collaboration across society, empathetic design) and its advantages (like trust, engagement, local prosperity and wellbeing).

This report is also about making the intangible, tangible. It builds on the conceptual framework of food & farming as a public good, with a real-world strategy – redesigning the domestic food system for local economies to thrive.

This report is a call to 'think global, act local' to solve our sector's most entrenched problems. It's about complementing the export model with a strategy that realises the untapped value in our domestic food system – our home paddock. It calls for supporting those farmers (particularly those close to urban centres) who want to look inwards and participate more directly in their town's local food & farming economy.



It's about acknowledging that when 84% of Kiwis live urban lives¹ and 60% of them don't visit any rural friends or family², it's up to farming to redesign parts of itself to fit around them, and not the other way around.

That means building meaningful, everyday touchpoints with urban New Zealanders.

In our values-led design process, we'll need to focus on aspects of food & farming that our existing model largely ignores - like cultivating a 'food nation culture', connecting people to nature, seeing farms as community spaces for learning & healing or taking responsibility to fix the moral and market failure that is food insecurity.

Those are strong values. If we choose to design for them, farming can step-up and become more than an industry, but a genuine pillar of society akin to health or education.

But this process won't come easy to the sector. It means talking about non-market solutions to non-market problems, in a sector that was forged through a painful crash-programme of free-market economics. I fully expect words like 'utopian' and 'socialist' to get thrown around. That's fine - I have my rebuttal ready.

But I want to make it clear that this report comes from a place of love for farming. A long spell on the family farm helped me through a difficult time in my life, orienting me towards a path of purpose. There is no dollar value I can apply to that experience. When I look around our society, I see many Kiwis who need to feel farming as a force for good too. I hope this report, and the values-led redesign of our domestic food system it supports, gives them that chance.

This isn't new

Māori enterprises.

Community-centric business is innate to many Māori enterprises. Where Pakeha often rely on recent, western frameworks to name and explore the value of relationships (Social Licence to Operate being the foremost), Kaupapa Māori includes multiple principles that directly address the practice. In line with Kaupapa Māori and collective ownership models, Māori agribusiness systems are often purpose-built to deliver on social benefits, community capacity building, access to land and environmental protection. Visions extend hundreds of years into the future to balance the needs of the next generation with the needs of today.

It is a shortcoming of this report to not tautoko (advocate for) these longstanding Kaupapa Māori frameworks. Much of this research is a case of re-inventing the wheel – a reflection of my limited grasp of Kaupapa Māori. In leaning more into Taiuiwi (foreign) concepts, an opportunity has been missed to ground the research in the context and uniqueness of Aotearoa New Zealand. That said, I hope the western framing proves accessible to other Pakeha, and helps to develop the kind of ethos, aspirations and practices expressed in the likes of **Tauutuutu**.

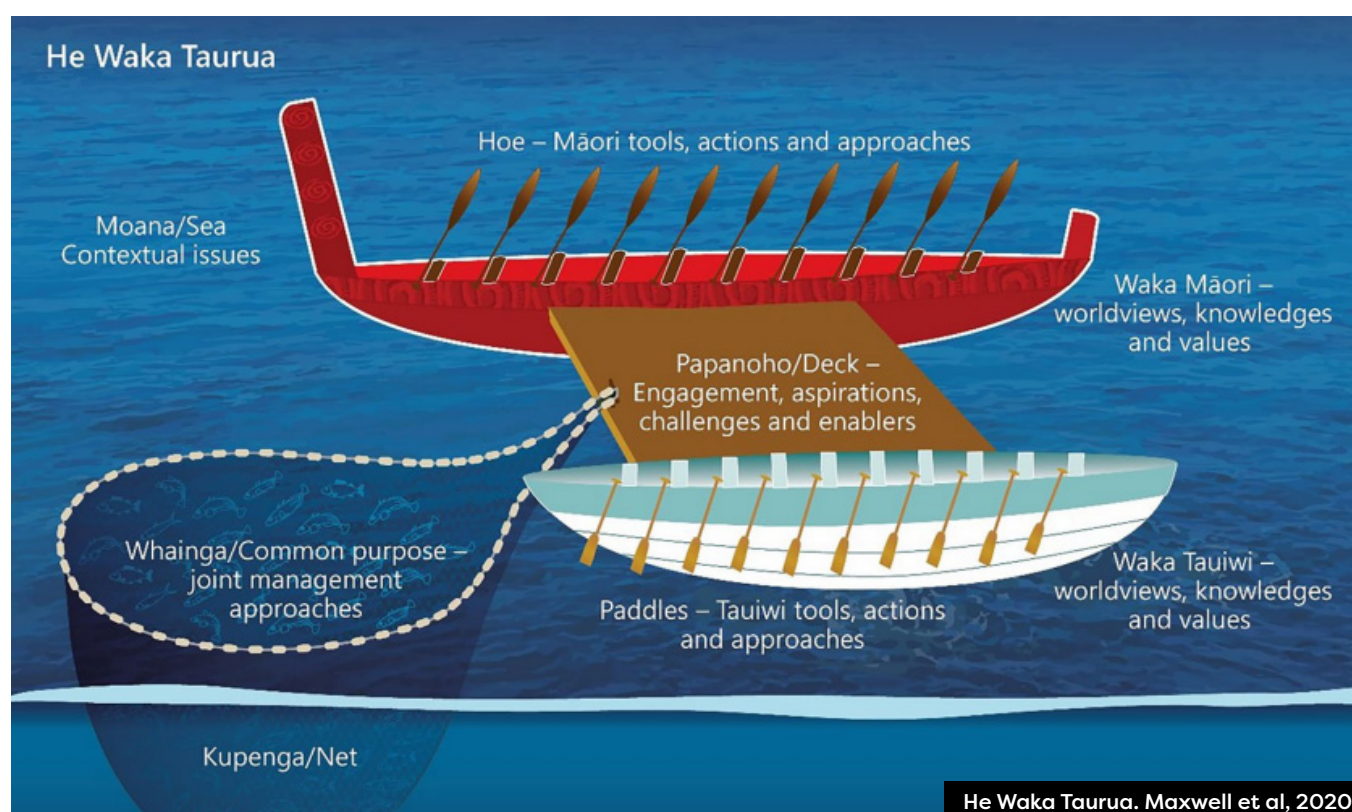
Ultimately, I hope this work manifests into action aligned to the He Waka Taurua (double hulled canoe) framework, whereby Waka Māori and Waka Taiuiwi local food system builders are able to share a papanoho (deck) to achieve shared visions of citizen-connected food & farming in Aotearoa New Zealand.³

Tauutuutu

Tauutuutu is an ethic and practice that obligates people to make investments that enhance the mana (dignity) and mauri (vitality) of other individuals, families and the natural world – with the expectation that these investments will be returned with equal or greater value in the future. Personal mana is associated with creating a 'cycle of escalating exchange' – distributing the fruits of productivity in ways that support others to drive further productivity, innovate and collectively secure the group's future.⁴



Wakatū Incorporation based in (Whakatū, Nelson) represents more 4,000 owners descended from four iwi – Ngāti Koata, Ngāti Rārua, Ngāti Tama, and Te Ātiawa. Wakatū works to a 500-year intergenerational vision that focusses on whānau (people), pūtea (building value), ngākau hihiko (agility and innovation), papa whenua (preserving whenua and taonga) and taiao (practicing kaitiakitanga). Alongside a high-value food & beverage brand (Kono) and natural health foods brand (AuOra), the incorporation run multiple community & environmental initiatives to realise their vision and drive future prosperity through community investment. Initiatives include youth development programmes, internships, biodiversity corridors, a project to map regional taonga species and food sovereignty programmes, among others.



He Waka Taurua. Maxwell et al, 2020

Why public good?

Public goods are ‘system enablers’ - designed to help society to function and flourish. We engage with them every day.

The foremost examples in our society are publicly funded education, healthcare, infrastructure and law & order. Public-private goods are best understood on a spectrum:

- ✓ **Full public goods** - all citizens benefit from these all the time e.g. national security, the COVID campaign.
- ✓ **Partial public goods** - are designed for society-level benefits and widespread access, but can underserve some citizens through factors like distance, or include a fee/donation.⁵ Examples include our public-private education system, healthcare system or museums. When it comes to defining ‘partial’ public goods, context and timing matters. This report positions food & farming in New Zealand as a ‘partial’ public good – sometimes free, sometimes user-pays, sometimes supplied by government or civil society, sometimes by a business.
- ✓ **Private goods** - user-pays e.g. cosmetics, electronics.

Public goods have the potential to generate high-levels of citizen engagement. Where citizens primarily engage with private goods through a one-dimensional market context as consumers, public good engagement is often grounded in active participation where outcomes are shaped together e.g. Parent Teacher Associations, Community Policing.

Public goods generally share five key characteristics:

1. Designed for mass citizen accessibility
2. Recognised as ‘system enabler’ services necessary for a thriving society
3. High levels of citizen engagement
4. Often run by groups of citizens or local/central government
5. Can exist on a spectrum – from full to partial to private – depending on context and timing



Education

What is a school? From a private good perspective, it’s an educational service that enables students to secure tertiary study and a good job. But most citizens innately understand that schools provide several layers of additional value. The bake sale, sports day, swimming pool, parent groups, voting centre and community hall all build local cohesion and solidarity. There is a reason why small communities fight to keep their schools - these places matter to people.

On a broader level, schools help to build a society’s future – nurturing employment, entrepreneurship, personal health, democracy, reduced poverty rates, environmental sustainability and social equality.⁶

We believe education is fundamental to a thriving society, so we design our education system primarily along the principles of a public good – namely mass accessibility and high levels of citizen engagement. What if we applied the same principles to food & farming?

The public good innovation framework

10 principles, trends and strategic frameworks powering a public good food & farming system in Aotearoa New Zealand.

- | | | |
|----|-----------------------------------|--|
| 1 | #Citizenshift | A mindset shift from 'consumer' to 'citizen' that opens up new possibilities for engagement, collaboration and purpose-led business. |
| 2 | Path dependency | A tool to question whether or not strategies reinforce an increasingly irrelevant status quo. |
| 3 | Red ocean, blue ocean | A value creation strategy where product differentiation makes competition irrelevant. |
| 4 | Living systems design | A design method focussed on applying the principles of natural systems to human projects. |
| 5 | Boundaries and networks | A framework for evaluating the resilience and social-connection potential of farms. |
| 6 | Food sovereignty | Supporting people and communities to exert power and choice in their food system. |
| 7 | Farming as counter-culture | Farming as a source of hope in art and culture. |
| 8 | The trust gap | The collapsing influence of institutions makes space for purpose-driven businesses and local networks. |
| 9 | New social values | Post-materialist values and why we need to design for them. |
| 10 | Product-market fit | Why 'telling our story' isn't enough to overcome big issues like the rural-urban divide. |

1

#Citizenshift

Designing for citizens, not consumers

#Citizenshift is a framework grounded in the contrasting identities of ‘consumer’ and ‘citizen’.⁷ The concept argues that how we frame people matters. While the ‘consumer’ mentality has contributed to unprecedented human achievement, it has limits. Namely a narrow focus on self-interest and the misplaced belief that our choice to ‘buy or not buy’ is the primary way we can influence positive change.

In contrast, framing ourselves and others as ‘citizens’ opens up a range of more complex relationships, responsibilities, freedoms and opportunities to collaborate. As citizens, we start with the expectation that we can play an active, creative role in shaping outcomes.

Examples of the #Citizenshift framework include participative democracy (e.g. citizen assemblies), collective decision-making software, local economy initiatives, B corporation registration, crowdfunding and purpose-led investor activism.

Organisations that are capable of building participatory, purpose-led initiatives grounded in the needs of the citizenry, can expect unprecedented levels of engagement, social licence and trust.



2

Path dependency

When your stainless steel, mandate or org chart makes decisions for you.

Path dependency is the tendency of institutions to become committed to a rigid development path characterised by inertia and caution, due to infrastructure or strongly-held beliefs, values and experiences.⁸

In the New Zealand farming context, we could argue that the neoliberal changes of the 1980’s set in motion a dependency on market-based principles, reinforced by commodity body leadership structures and decades of pushback on challenges to the path e.g. environmental regulation. There is a case that the New Zealand farming system meets the three key indicators of path dependency:

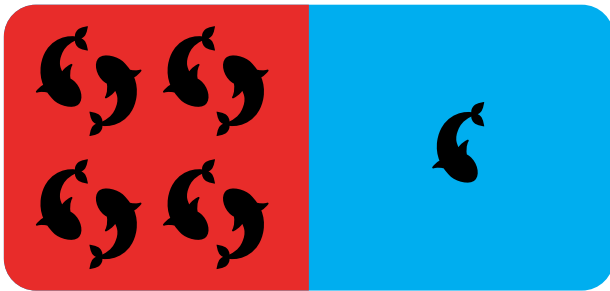
Path Dependency Indicator	New Zealand Farming Context
1. Contingency or emergency situation	Dramatic free-market changes cause widespread trauma, rapid change and formation of a new model. A ‘crucible moment’.
2. Insulation from change	Siloed leadership commits to the new normal, focussing on scale/productivity & disregards challenges to the path (e.g. environmental and social licence damage).
3. Examples of possible change	Alternatives to the path challenge establishment thinking e.g. high-value low-impact production, regenerative agriculture, eco-system services and local food systems.

Path dependency helps us evaluate whether new strategies and tactics reinforce the pathway, or challenge the status quo. It serves to check institutional bias, question long-held assumptions and have hard conversations about the relevancy of core beliefs and structures in a rapidly changing world.

3

Red ocean, blue ocean

Rather than competing with Welsh, Argentinian or American producers, we should create new spaces where competition is irrelevant.



Using the vivid analogy of two oceans – one dyed red by the blood of multiple competitors struggling against one another, and a clear blue ocean inhabited by a sole player – this framework encourages strategies that create uncontested market space.⁹

In a blue ocean market, the rules of the game are set through the actions of the enterprising organisation and demand is created rather than competed for. The strategy is grounded in the kind of profound product/service differentiation that makes competition irrelevant – lifting the organisation out of zero-sum competition.

In the context of the New Zealand farming model, we should ask if existing and emerging strategies are red ocean or blue ocean thinking. Strategies that focus on provenance marketing NZ food (e.g. Beef & Lamb NZ's 'Taste Pure Nature' campaign) or production & efficiency are commendable, but arguably offer relatively thin margins of value capture in a global marketplace contested by dozens of high-quality food producing nations – some with richer food cultures (e.g. Argentina and meat). In contrast, this report argues for differentiating agriculture through collaboration with local citizens, creating new forms of demand that cannot be replicated due to geography or inherent uniqueness. Blue ocean strategies for NZ might also include eco-system services, farming experiences, indigenous ingredients, the use of Kaupapa Māori as a brand asset and food tourism.

4

Living systems design

Using nature principles to design human projects.

The living systems framework (also referred to as a regenerative design) focusses on applying the core principles of natural systems in the design of human organisations, systems and communities.¹⁰

The key principles include:

- Prioritising health, resilience and equity over extraction, output and growth (e.g. a business that prioritises employee wellbeing targets over production targets).
- Focussing on understanding and facilitating the relationships between component parts (e.g. better integrating marketing with sales, R&D and accounts vs making marketing more effective).
- Nodality over centralised decision-making (e.g. localise power in department teams over head-office boardrooms).
- Principles and values, over practices and prescriptions (e.g. make the customer happy vs fulfilling terms and conditions).

In the context of this report, several of the suggested activations express living system design principles, particularly localism.



Boundaries and networks

Farms that do many things and connect with lots of people are better placed to pivot in crisis

In 'Farming Inside Invisible Worlds' New Zealand sociologist Hugh Campbell introduces the concept of farm boundaries and networks ¹¹ – a framework that connects social innovation ideas expressed in this report, with the realities of on-farm systems.

In this framework, a farm's boundaries are a measure of its complexity and diversity – what the farm is and does. Networks are a measure of its relationships and connections outside the farm. The concept is explained through a comparison of two Canterbury farms.

Farm 1 – Strong boundaries and weak networks

A high-performing intensive dairy farm

BOUNDARIES

The focus is on production efficiency through the homogenisation of natural systems (tree removal, standardised pasture mix, single animal species, irrigation), reliance on off-site inputs and decision-making by a technical formula (referred to by one interviewee as 'spreadsheet farming'). Defining what this farm is and does is straightforward. It is very good at producing one output in one way – and so is defined as having **strong boundaries**.

NETWORKS

This farm has relationships with a local university, suppliers, advisor, a processor and an emerging water care group. This farm has **weak networks** with the society around it.

Farm 2 – Weak boundaries and strong networks

A diversified farm

BOUNDARIES

Defining what this farm is and does is difficult. Multiple varieties of stock and crops rotate, there is an on-farm composting system, dedicated wildlife spaces, water and wetland restoration projects, accommodation and DIY farm equipment. A broad range of skills and context-specific decision-making (e.g. soil types, rainfall) drive this farm. Because of this diversity of systems, this farm has **weak boundaries**.

NETWORKS

As a result of the diversity of systems on this farm, it has developed **strong networks** beyond the farm gate. Produce is sold direct-to-customers, Woofers (Workers on organic farms) visit regularly, the farm hosts open days and school visits, trout fishers enjoy the stream, researchers from several institutions visit often and the farmers participate in collective environmental restoration efforts.

Public good food & farming needs weak boundary & strong networks farms. These farms are places that citizens want to come to and engage with, simply because they are nice places to be.

Looking more broadly, the model helps us to understand the resilience of strong boundary farming models. Diversity necessitates a wide range of skills, production systems, connections and landscape health – there is always something to fall back on. While highly productive in their given context, how do single-output farms pivot when their model becomes untenable (e.g. external inputs become too expensive, biosecurity outbreak, extreme weather or social regulatory change).

Food is power: Food Sovereignty

When food choices are made at the community level based on things that matter to people, like health and local economies. As opposed to food choices made in boardrooms based on things that matter to shareholders, like market share and earnings.

A guiding pillar of many local and international food access/equity movements, Food Sovereignty is about designing systems around the right of people and communities to influence their food choices. It stands in stark contrast to the neoliberal model of food systems - where agri-business, traders and retailers make those decisions instead.

Food sovereignty is often linked to the health of indigenous communities and culture. Control of food production is fundamental to rebuilding these people's connections to place, traditional knowledge and each other. Those traditional connections are often broken by the market model and its reliance on foreign plants and livestock, western food products, distribution models that separate grower & eater and imported (often nutrient poor) food.

Considering whether or not Food Sovereignty exists in any given situation forces us to ask where power gathers in that food system - and whether that power is actually being used to drive good outcomes for people.



Hua Parakore

Hua Parakore works to put Māori people and wisdom at the centre of their food systems.¹² The movement centres on six kaupapa that speak to characteristics of food & farming largely ignored by the western, industrialised model.

Whakapapa: Acknowledging that heritage is closely connected to the natural environment - e.g. seed saving and reclaiming rights around Māori kai.

Wairua: Peace and safety - acknowledging the spirituality, calm and beauty of growing kai.

Mana: A vehicle for justice - the autonomy and strength that comes from personal food security.

Māramatanga: A source of enlightenment - acknowledging the māra (garden) as a place that sparks creativity and insight.

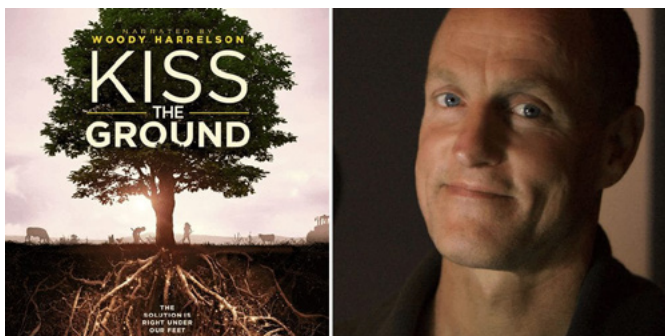
Te ao Tūroa: Maintaining the natural order - focussing on the balance and connections of the natural world.

Mauri: Enriching the health of soil, plants, animals and people - e.g. building life and vitality in the soil through composting.

Farming is counter-culture

Farmers as heroes in art, media & storytelling.

As environmental breakdown and rising inequality spur louder calls for system change, new types of cultural heroes are emerging. Best illustrated by US movement Kiss the Ground's feature-length film on regenerative farming and carbon sequestration, there is increasing scope to position farming as a force for good. In addition to mainstream media, farming is being channelled through art and storytelling forms that envision future societies built around renewable energy, agriculture and organic design.



Jessica Perlstein / Matt Zeilinger

Solarpunk

Solarpunk is a new eco-futurist, fiction genre in which humanity has reintegrated with nature, moved to steady-state economics and uses technology for positive human and natural outcomes. The genre leans heavily on urban and citizen-connected food production.

The trust gap

Institutions fall, impact business & local rises.

The nature of trust in society is changing. Key trends of the Edelman Trust Barometer (a global measure of trust) over the last decade include:¹³

- Trust has decreased across most of society's major institutions (government, media, NGOs, business) - with government performing the worst by a significant margin.
- Filling the trust gap are localised trust networks. Respondents report increasing trust in 'people like me' and 'my employer'.
- Trust in business is mostly stable or rising. Trust in business is increasingly earned through adherence to purpose and the willingness to enter the social arena - 68% of people believe that CEOs should step-in to fix societal problems.

The trust gap should be viewed as an opportunity for grassroots and impact-orientated organisations to exert influence. This is clearly demonstrated in the New Zealand farming context, where arguably the most dynamic contemporary farming movements are Quorum Sense (the regenerative agriculture accelerator network) and Groundswell (a grassroots protest movement to block or change environmental regulations). Both organisations embody the type of peer-to-peer structures that are best placed to fill the trust gap.

New social values

Gen Z are here.

As technology, culture and lifestyles change, so do society's values. One way to frame this shift is from the materialism to post-materialism values set.¹⁴ As the Millennial and Z Generations rise to demographic prominence, their value set will become increasingly dominant:

	Materialist (<i>Boomer, X generations</i>)	Post-materialist (<i>Millennial, Z generations</i>)
VALUES	Need for economic & financial security Societal stability Personal safety Law and order	Political freedom & participation Self-actualization Personal relationships Creativity Care for the environment

For those that are dismissive of the power of values, it's worth remembering every turning point in human civilisation was powered by a change in value sets e.g. religiosity, nationalism, liberalism, scientific rationalism. Value sets often build-up over time, before abruptly replacing the status quo when business-as-usual becomes untenable during crisis.¹⁵

When designing for the future of food & farming in NZ, we should put emerging value sets at the centre of strategy-making, e.g.

People acquisition – campaigns should focus less on sector economic output and more on the relationships, purpose and impact of a life in agriculture (e.g. akin to Police or Defence force messaging).¹⁶

From social licence to participation – evolve from reputation mitigation to re-designing farming systems to enable direct, regular citizen engagement.

Leadership – ensure decision-making is not captured by those holding materialist value sets.



Generation Z

Generation Z (born from the late 90's to early 2010's) are now the most numerous generation on earth. In a global study¹⁷, key characteristics of the Gen Z value set were found to be:

Health – less risky activity and a focus on emotional, mental and financial health (NB 2008 financial crisis and Covid-19 are formative experiences for this generation).

Care – purpose professionals (e.g. doctors, scientists) are highly trusted and tangible care (e.g. peer-to-peer) is valued.

We – value collective activism, from global to local issues. 90% want their brands to commit to social causes.

Product-market fit

“Stop marketing. Start innovating.”

Product-market fit is a marketing ethos that prioritises going all-in on customer insights and designing products that perfectly fit people’s needs. The intent is that the product is so good, it markets itself.¹⁸

In the context of food & farming in NZ, the ethos forces us to question the long-told industry mantra to ‘tell our story’. This approach leads to marketing and comms tactics like on-farm stories, farmer-centric brand campaigns and experiential programmes like Open Farms. These content-led comms projects compete amongst the 4,000 – 10,000 marketing messages we see a day and on social media platforms with a 0.25 second window to engage users.

Following the product-market fit ethos would see the sector go back to citizens and ask broad questions about their lives and needs. Fact finding wouldn’t be limited to their food or fibre product needs (e.g. packaging, shopping habits or product traits) but the multitude of problems in their lives that food & farming has the potential to touch e.g. connection to nature, mental health, healthy food.

Choosing to design to those genuine issues would necessitate a rethink of entire farming and regional systems. But in the long-run, lasting solutions to entrenched issues like social licence and recruitment can only come through customer-inspired innovation, not ads.

“Good companies obsess about beating the competition. Great companies obsess about what’s best for the customer.”

Shane Parrish



The public good innovation cheat-sheet

Synthesizing the 10 trends and models into a set of core principles that underpin values-led design in food & farming, leaves us with:

1

Start with the needs of citizens,
genuinely listen and design for them

(See #Citizenshift, Food sovereignty & Product-market fit)

2

Design to connect with diverse stakeholders across society

(See Living systems design & Boundaries and networks)

3

To do new things, build new organisations

(See Path dependency, The trust gap & Red ocean, blue ocean)

4

Design to leverage cultural capital

(See New social values & Farming as counter-culture)

What will food & farming as a **public good** look like?

There are five broad areas of the food & farming landscape that fit into a wider public-good framework. These are presented below by a rough rate of adoption. The first feel relatively tangible - start-up organisations are scaling and making impact. Others are more at the margins of the sector and society – existing as reports, pilot programs or volunteer/community efforts at home and abroad.

Regenerative
Agriculture

Food as
Commons

Regulating
Services

Sustainable
Development

Mental
Health

Scaling —————> Theoretical

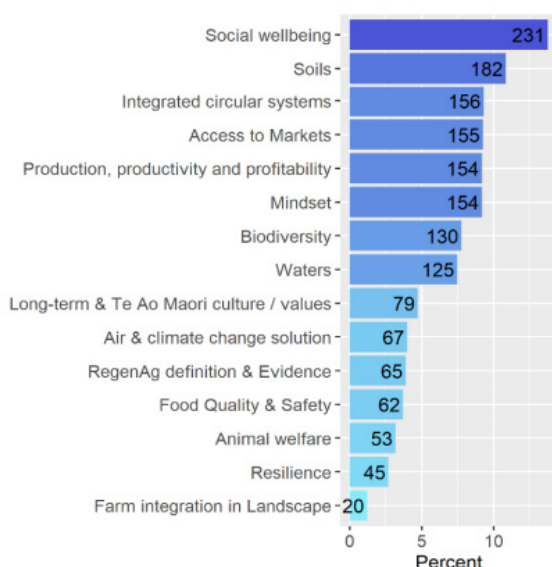
Regenerative Agriculture

The foundation of a public good food & farming strategy – but with limitations.

Regenerative agriculture is foremost a mindset shift. Linking together various on-farm practices (like multi-species cropping and minimal soil disturbance) is a holistic approach where soil, eco-system and community health drive decision-making. Often this new mindset replaces more extractive practices (like monocultures and a reliance on external inputs).¹⁹

The movement fosters the ability to see farms as complex, connected systems e.g. the health of one element, influences the health of all elements. This breadth is explored in recent NZ research from the Our Land and Water National Science Challenge.²⁰

Most popular regenerative agriculture themes



By re-imagining farms as places of environmental restoration, circular systems and mental health and wellbeing – the regenerative mindset is the foundation of a values-led food & farming system. Indeed, that vision is impossible without it.

That said, regenerative agriculture is only part of the roadmap towards a more citizen-connected food & farming system. Four potential limitations to the movement are:

A lack of social wellbeing indicators. While social factors (e.g. farmer wellbeing, pride, urban-rural connection) all feature as key regenerative outcomes, the indicators farmers use to measure progress almost all focus on quantifiable environmental or business

data (e.g. nutrient leaching, soil tests, budgets). To fully manage the potential for social regeneration, new research techniques and approaches are needed.

Market capture and the need for new activators.

Explorative regenerative projects by established agri-leadership bodies focus almost exclusively on market premiums. The New Zealand Merino Company ZQRX regenerative brand programme and Beef+Lamb NZ's report into the market potential of regenerative agriculture are two examples. Rewarding regenerative farmers with market premiums is critical to the success of the movement, but zeroing in on this single element of a much wider framework risks undervaluation of, and underinvestment in, other crucial aspects. The reception by industry highlights the need for new, more agile organisations that are better aligned to the public good innovation framework to carry the movement forward.



Quorum Sense

This regenerative agriculture accelerator is a grassroots community of farmers and scientists who use peer-to-peer learning networks in their mission to support regeneration across NZ farms.

Food system power dynamics. The regenerative movement is not currently well-placed to address food equity issues, public health and the concentration of market power. More generative approaches (e.g. new initiatives) are needed for wider social regeneration.²¹

A red ocean play. Regenerative agriculture is a global movement. In the long-term, the value of 'brand regenerative' may be less effective than 'blue ocean' strategies that lean on uniquely New Zealand traits like Māori culture or our burgeoning 'food nation story' – both of which require deeper citizen connection to realise.

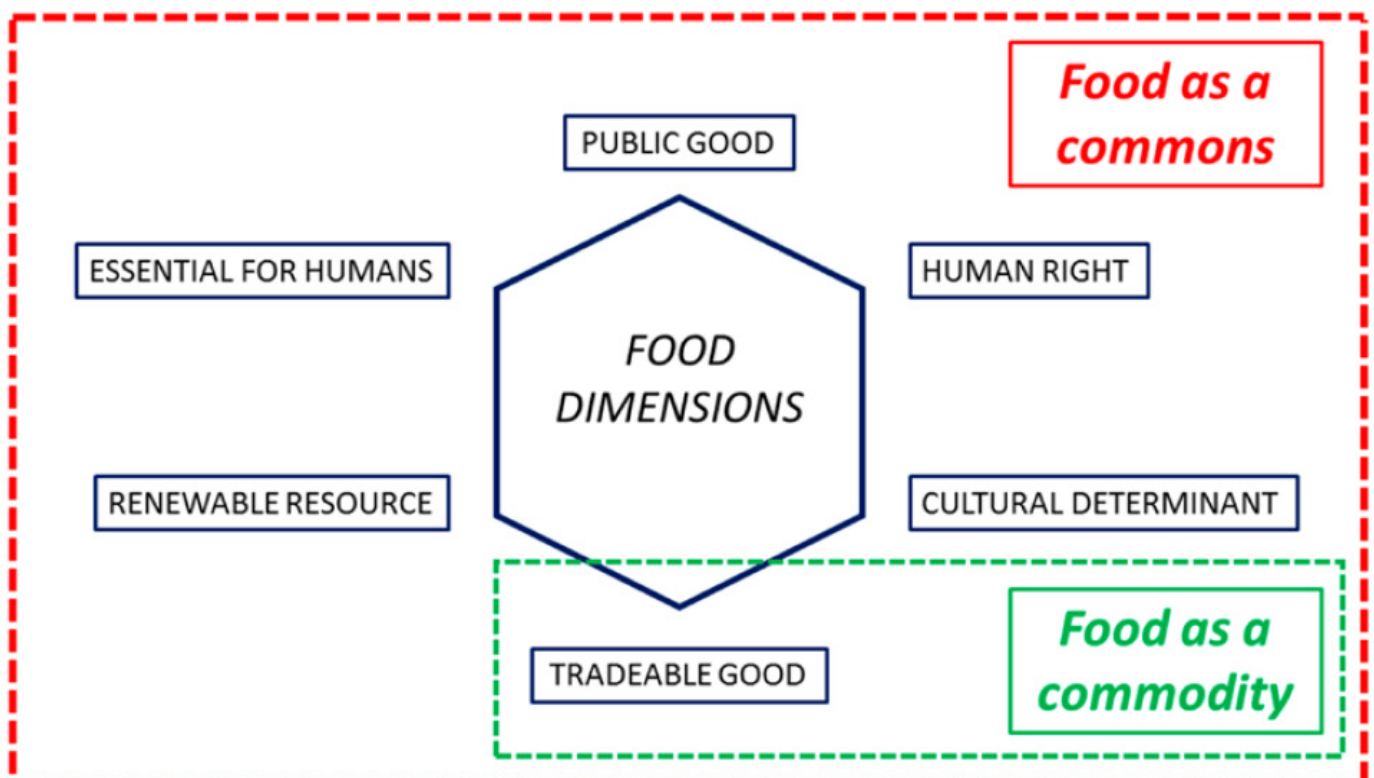
Food as Commons

Some domestic food should be treated as civic resource, rather than a commodity.

Signals of food system failure

- 3rd highest rate of obesity globally (1 in 3 Kiwi adults)²²
- 40% of households experience some level of food insecurity²³
- “A market duopoly” that is “not working well for consumers”²⁴
- New Zealand does not have a food security strategy

The food as commons theory is about designing for the multi-dimensional nature of food - refusing to treat it as a monetised commodity alone. It is a departure from the conventional, market-based food system in Aotearoa New Zealand - but offers the potential to upend many of the challenges facing food and farming here (e.g. food security, social licence, talent availability and marketplace power imbalances).



Credit – Vivero-Pol (2017)

THE FOOD AS COMMONS FRAMEWORK *

PRINCIPLES

- **Food justice** – food is a human right, everybody eats healthily regardless of economic position.
- **Care** – design for the health and wellbeing of people.
- **Food sovereignty & localism** – food choices are made by communities.
- **System change** – overcome the pitfalls of the commodification of food e.g. hunger, power imbalances, nutritional deficiency and ecological damage.

FEATURES

- **Agro-ecology** – human scale, low-input production systems.
- **Intensification** of urban and peri-urban food production for population centres.
- **Alternative food economies** – co-ops, community farms/gardens, social enterprises and impact business.
- **Food governance** – representative groups and funding structures that bridge the institutional silos of agriculture, public health, education, development and councils.

OUTCOMES

- **Moral benefits** – living in a country without hunger.
- **Public health** – reduced sickness and increased disease resistance.
- **Ecological sustainability** – circular, local food systems reduce green/packaging/organic waste.
- **Culture change** – replacing consumer culture with deeper connection to nature, care and well-being.
- **Market opportunities (family level)** – a citizenry better able to participate in education and the economy.
- **Market opportunities (sector level)** – a ‘food nation’ and provenance story drives premiums for exported food & fibre products.
- **Food security (family level)** – all people have access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food for an active and healthy life.
- **Food security (society level)** – Food security at the family level increases societal cohesion and resilience under system shocks.

* As per references ²⁵ ²⁶ ²⁷



PRESCRIBING FOOD

A medical study in Australia provided healthy food and advice directly to 50 people with type 2 diabetes. By overcoming systemic barriers to a healthy diet (e.g. cost, availability, accessibility and education) for just three months, the ‘food prescription’ resulted in significant health and wellbeing improvements. Compared to the downstream health costs (e.g. medications, surgeries) of unhealthy diets, subsidising healthy diets directly is cost-effective.²⁸



FARMS: THE THIRD PLACE

If your ‘first place’ is home and your ‘second place’ is work, your ‘third space’ is where you relax and connect with your community. Characteristics centre on a feeling of inclusiveness, a mix of regulars and newcomers and a conversational setting. Examples include churches, clubs and community halls. Third spaces are critical for social vitality, but have declined due changing work & family trends, car-centric urban planning and the fragmentation of media.²⁹



FRAGILE FOOD SECURITY

In September 2022, Countdown’s new Auckland distribution centre began fully servicing all 150 Countdown North Island stores with fresh produce – up to 300,000 crates per week.³⁰

Fresh kai for approximately 1,130,000 North Island New Zealanders now passes through one building.³¹ In an era of increasing extreme weather and potential social unrest, this bottleneck should be a major concern for national food security.

Innovation at the edges

Innovation is often driven by creative minorities operating on the edge of a system – frequently starting as hobby, volunteering or passion-project. Many food as commons models already operate at the edges of our food system, representing potential opportunities for future social, political and technological innovation. The below top-line domestic food system map flips the traditional focus on volume, in favour of examples from the edge.

food{together}

A national collective of local food-hubs directly supporting community fresh food-box providers with logistics, compliance, marketing etc. Partners include city councils, churches, DHBs and community trusts.

Kete Kai

A bargain meal-kit and recipe service powered by a SAAS (software as a service) platform. The intention is to build decentralised local food networks powered by centralised customer data and logistics software.



This collaborative community food project in Nelson brings together health, environment and community partners to distribute fresh, locally grown food boxes for only \$15.



Longwood Loop

This non-profit trust is building a regional foodscape in Western Southland by connecting small, agro-ecological producers to local customers via electric van deliveries.

Conventional Dominant

Retail duopoly

80%-90% marketplace dominance, supply chain leverage, "lower than expected" innovation.



Happy cow milk

This vertically integrated network of dairy suppliers and community-level distributors use a 'milk factory in a box' pasteuriser/dispenser system to distribute ethically produced milk locally.

Conventional Alternative

Specialist, premium, convenience & kit.



Conventional Challenger

Digital, purpose, model optimisation.



The Freeman family in New Plymouth grow enough food for 50 people per week from their 0.1ha residential property. This regeneratively grown food is sold via the local farmers market and a mid-week food box.

Ooooby

This 'gate-to-plate' platform for local, ecological food supports organic farmers to connect with urban customers via a weekly food box. Marketing leans on health & nutrition messaging.



This charitable trust is making an edible garden accessible to every Kiwi. They have supported 600 whanau, iwi, marae, schools and other community networks to plant their own mara kai (gardens) based on hua parakore principles.

Regulating services

Public money for public goods.

As a sector, we have focussed on optimising the supply of 'provisioning' services – namely food & fibre (see table below). Only now, beset by climate, biodiversity and myriad other crises of 'regulating' services (e.g. climate & water regulation) are we prototyping market-based products designed to protect and enhance these systems. In New Zealand, Calm the Farm best exemplifies this new frontier – blending nature-based pure public goods (e.g. clean water, pollinator health, carbon storage) with existing capital structures.

This is an exciting step for the sector that offers producers new revenue streams – supplying rapidly developing markets for carbon sequestration and other nature-based solutions in the face of collapsing 'regulating' eco-system services.³²

The primary barrier to realising this new frontier is the need to reimagine capital raising and revenue systems.

Already, emerging 'regulating' services marketplaces are largely dependent on ESG (environmental & social good), sustainability linked loans and philanthropy-minded investors. To design for the last set of eco-system services 'cultural services' (e.g. inspiration, recreation & culture), these and other alternative funding frameworks will need to be developed.



Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMS)

This set of three UK policies, designed and funded by government and the sector, pays farmers for a range of actions to improve 'regulating services'. The scheme has hit political roadblocks recently, but includes:

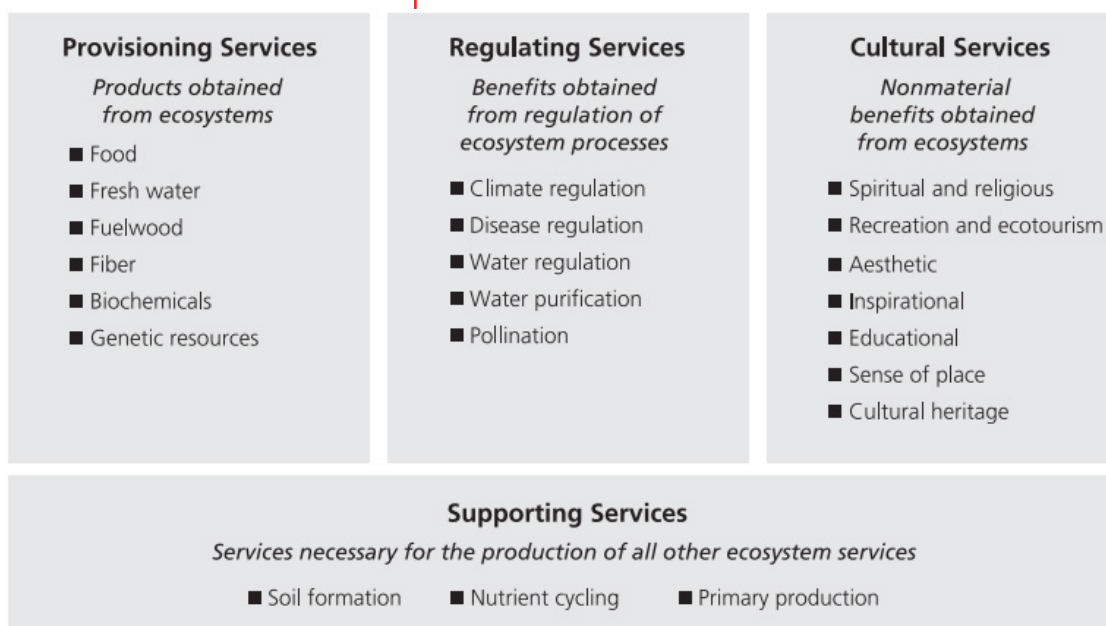
Sustainable farming – farming practice changes like reduced inorganic fertiliser or pesticide use

Local nature recovery – creating spaces for nature within farms

Landscape recovery – whole of farm rewilding projects

Example payments from a similar scheme 'Countryside Stewardship' include planting a Nectar Flower Mix (£579), 4–6m buffer strip on cultivated land (£419) and riparian strip (£480).³³

WE ARE HERE



UN millennium ecosystem assessment

Sustainable development

When we place farming at the centre of urban life, we can both reduce our collective environmental impact and solve some of our sector's biggest challenges.

Signals - Sustainability failure

- 157,000 tonnes of food wasted annually (NZ)³⁴
- 13:1 energy used across production, processing, distribution & consumption for one unit of food energy produced (US)³⁵
- 300% increase in cost of urea (2020-2022)

In our collective mission to de-carbonise our economy and minimise our impact to within planetary boundaries, broad schools of thought are emerging as to the how. These include the likes of green growth (replacing fossil fuel energy and linear economies with renewables and circular economies), nature-based solutions (e.g. rewilding) and de-growth (cultural, economic and political change focussing on reduced consumption).

What about farming-based solutions? Cutting across multiple disciplines, it's about adapting food production to be a platform for sustainable urban development. Two examples are covered below, organic waste and agrihoods.

Organic waste

New Zealand has no organic waste strategy. 20%-50% of our waste-to-landfill is made up of food, garden or other organic waste. While multiple councils are now pursuing organic waste collection services, there remains only 100 composting facilities across the country. While reducing waste at the source is the most effective upstream intervention, composting is a key next step. The big question is around the right mix between decentralised and centralised systems – lots of little sites within communities, or larger plants outside of urban areas.³⁶

Redesigning waste is an opportunity to connect citizens to farming. Small-to-medium composting sites within communities can both recycle waste for food production and be a participatory platform to educate citizens about soil quality, ecological systems and farming. In essence, training future farmers.

Austria

Austria has a highly developed organic waste system, re-purposing 70-80% of all organic waste produced for food production. Key features of the system include:

- Farmer leadership and collaboration – from urban collections to on-farm composting (with support from authorities and community organisations).
- Decentralised composting facilities (one per 20,000 citizens vs one per 50,000 in NZ).
- Effective education (resulting in a contamination rate of just 0.02%).
- Strict quality and best-practice controls.

Agrihoods

Agri-hoods are partnerships between local government, property developers, local farmers and engaged citizens – who come together to build new suburbs around, or even inside farms. The model features hyper local farmer's market's or food boxes and can be expanded to include family programs, events, accommodation, education and other revenue streams.

In an agri-hood, the output (food production) is less important than the inclusive, participatory process of farming as a community.

In the wake of the 2022 National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land – the model reimagines traditional adversaries as allies and offers peri-urban farmers a pathway to maintain a farming legacy in the face of urban growth.



Mental Health

Farms can be places of healing and personal growth. While irrelevant in the market model, designing systems around these traits is a citizen focussed, low-cost diversification opportunity.

Signals - A society in distress

- 28% of New Zealanders suffer from 'poor' mental wellbeing
- Mental distress amongst New Zealanders is increasing over time
- Mental distress, anxiety and depression is highest amongst 15-24 year olds ³⁷

In a society challenged by myriad mental health issues – from corporate burnout to at-risk youth and loneliness – the ability to effectively deliver wellbeing outcomes is increasingly valuable. Following the Hua Parakore model, this pivot calls for redesign around the intangible traits of food production systems. Deemed irrelevant in the commodity system, traits include the calming effect of working with certain animals, living aligned to circadian rhythm, nurturing biodiversity and nature-sparked creativity. While not applicable to every farmer, diversification into mental wellbeing may be an attractive option for people orientated farmers.



Care farming

Care farming is shorthand for the therapeutic use of farming practices. Farms can be set-up for a range of visitors – children, non-violent offenders, corporate teams, less-abled people etc – and usually dial back production in favour of on-site therapy, interaction with animals, meaningful farmwork and communal mealtimes, often with minimal technology. Reports from the UK cite well-run care farms with turnover of \$800,000 NZD. ³⁸



A way forward

A roadmap to a citizen-connected food & farming system.



System



We need a new, mission-orientated organisation built for society-wide collaboration and pro-social impact.

Designing systems that align to the public-good innovation framework is a big departure from business-as-usual for the sector. It necessitates one hard question to begin with.

Can a citizen-connected food & farming system be achieved by the current mix of sector leadership bodies? I argue no.

While these organisations do great work in their field, they are restricted by strict mandates, levy or membership funding structures that drive a culture of siloed strategy. These factors do not align with the public-good innovation framework.

Similar to 2020 Nuffield Scholar Phil Weir's recommendation for an industry peak body (Ahuwhenua NZ – responsible for supporting farmers to transition as 'whenua managers' as part of the Fit for a Better World strategy)³⁹ and inspired by the unprecedented sector collaboration that is He Waka Eke Noa – building a mission-orientated organisation that spans the sector must come first.

The fundamentals of this citizen-connected farming accelerator should include:

- Collaborative by design – seeking partners from outside the agri-sector e.g. central government ministries, local government, civil society and issue-specific advocates (e.g. food security agencies).
- Hiring for collaborative skill-sets and post-materialist values.
- A start-up culture.
- A focus on first understanding, then empowering proven community-level food & farming projects.
- Measuring success against relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) and globally recognised impact reporting such as the Impact Weighted Accounts Initiative (IWAI) from Harvard Business School.

Models that inspire

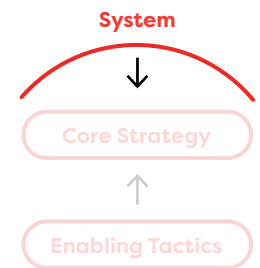


This not-for-profit food movement was initiated in the hospitality sector to better connect chefs and eaters with growers. Recognising the systemic barriers preventing a deeper national food and provenance story (e.g. food insecurity and industrialised supply chains) the group now works across multiple disciplines and sectors to empower local food systems and stories. Projects include an annual hui gathering progressive NZ food & farming voices together, a database of food & farming experiences across NZ and leadership on food waste, among others.



This UK alliance connects progressive food & farming organisations together right across the food system – from growers, to scientists, community level food groups, food policymakers and local government. As of 2022, the alliance was involved in 35 projects – each necessitating a range of food & farming collaborators. Projects include regional foodscapes, action on food insecurity, urban and fringe farming accelerators, a real bread campaign, sustainable farming policy development, a project mapping climate change impacts on UK food production, a platform to recruit people into food & farming roles and a 'right to food' political lobby campaign.

System



We need a new, mission-orientated organisation built for society-wide collaboration and pro-social impact.

Funding

Given the range of stakeholders involved, multiple funding models may be applicable to this organisation, including:

- **Strategic level sector funding** – collective funding (particularly at seed stage) recognising the project as an upstream intervention to meet sector-wide challenges, similar to the He Waka Eke Noa framework.
- **Government & civil society partnership** – government ministries, local government, philanthropic sector and ESG minded corporate partners – potentially arranged as **Social Impact Contracts**.
- **Revenue-generating projects** – e.g. a not-for profit local food brand.
- **Community-level co-operative funding models** – centralised funding is used to empower community-level groups to secure small funds for individual projects. Models range from Kickstarters to **Slow Money**.



Mission economy

Grounded in the example of Apollo moon programme, the Mission Economy framework calls for the state to set a political vision and clear goals, then activate and fund the bureaucracy and markets to get it done. Given the existing Fit for a Better World vision and the imminent release of Mana Kai (a National Food Strategy), food & farming is well placed to be Aotearoa New Zealand's mission.



Social Impact Contracts

A funding model whereby a public sector authority pays for pro-social or environmental outcomes with the downstream savings accrued from that outcome (e.g. reduced healthcare system costs, reduced waste-to-landfill). Investors receive an ROI in-line with the level of audited social impact achieved.⁴⁰



Slow Money

The Slow Money movement supports local groups to form and make 0% loans to aspiring local farmers. Decisions are made through public meetings, on-farm events, pitch fests, peer-to-peer loans and investment clubs. Since 2010, the US based initiative has seen \$79 million flow to 800 local food enterprises. 100% of loans are paid back on time or early.⁴¹

Core Strategy

Scaling local food & farming economies.

In a genuinely sustainable food system, citizens would touch agriculture everyday. Scaling accessible local economies thus centres on:

- **Geographic realities.** 84% of Kiwis living in an urban setting - this means bringing food & farming to them through more urban, peri-urban farming and regional foodscape initiatives.
- **Food sovereignty.** Solutions are not forced on communities, but generated by them with the support of centralised funding, resources, knowledge, partnerships and lobbying power.
- **Community-centric spaces.** Empowering farms to be 'third spaces' in their communities - farmers are supported to be community heroes and connection outcomes are as equally valued as food production.

Potential workstreams to scale local food & farming economies include:

Empowering existing local food economies to scale

There is significant community-led momentum for local food systems across NZ. To scale, these organisations need strategic support, policy change, and substantial investment. By scaling thousands of these organisations, we'll achieve long-term, system-wide change.⁴²



Pā to plate. This project supports marae-based growers across Tai Tokerau (Northland) to provide healthy kai to descendants in towns and cities. Each community is grappling with challenges like historic land loss, depopulation, unemployment and sparse provision of services. While the project has delivered a renewed sense of enthusiasm and pride, designing for these local contexts is critical to scaling these food networks.⁴³

Accelerating Direct-to-Customer supply chain innovation

This workstream is particularly important for locally produced grain, meat, milk and seafood products that require some level of processing and cold-storage.

Provenir. A mobile livestock abattoir and meat products brand in Victoria AUS.

Local grain economy. A collaboration between the Foundation for Arable Research & Eat New Zealand enabling arable farmers and their communities to develop on-farm processing mills to support local grain products networks.

Scaling urban farming

Urban farms are the most direct touchpoint for citizens to engage regularly with farming. Their proximity to communities makes them best-placed to lead social regeneration, act as 'third-spaces', facilitate local organic waste schemes and teach the fundamentals of farming. They should be considered the best tool the farming sector has to recruit new people, educate citizens about food production and repair the social licence to farm - instead urban farming is generally side-lined by the sector, agri-business and local/central government.



Earthworkers. Run by urban farming group 'For the Love of Bees', this educational programme teaches anyone to grow nutrient-dense food using biological farming techniques. The programme positions regenerative, community farming as 'practical optimism' in the face of climate change. 90% of graduates go on to run a food or farming organisation.⁴⁴



Core Strategy

Scaling local food & farming economies.



Piloting agrihoods

Orienting future urban growth around agriculture is the ultimate upstream intervention for citizen-connected local food systems. This workstream positions food & farming in a pro-social leadership role, builds on the 2022 National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land and necessitates collaboration with traditional sector adversaries like councils and land developers.



Conceptualising a NZ agrihood. In ‘Peri-Fusion’ architectural graduate Sarah Morris designed an integrated agriculture and densified housing model.⁴⁵ Compared to an existing, conventional suburb, the concept used several peri-fusion design strategies (e.g. stock exclusion walls, hedgerows, level changes, layered accessways) to:

- Maintain 38% of the land for food production (29% for agriculture, 9% for horticulture).
- Maintain a further 29% of the land for public & private greenspace.
- Increase the number of houses by 131 (NB at ½ the conventional house footprint).
- Decrease the amount of sealed land by 20%.
- Conceptualise a circular water & organic waste model linking housing with food production.

Funding connector farmers

Where farms do engage in community connection activities (e.g. school visits, open farm days and other public relations) – this is almost always done on a volunteer basis, can lack industry body support and often relies on a farmer’s own personal networks (e.g. local schools) instead of where the need for exposure to farming is greatest (e.g. urban schools). These farmers – community minded, good communicators and who are open to being vulnerable – are often asked to participate in multiple community good projects, while running a farm. Anecdotal evidence suggests that burnout amongst these farmers is high. A sector wide strategy to properly find, fund, train and support existing community engagement efforts is needed to scale the good work already happening.



LEAF education & demonstration farms.

This purpose built offshoot of the UK’s Linking Environment & Farming network provides farmers with training, support and a clear progression pathway to community engagement. Most farmers start with ‘Farmer Time’ a regular, virtual connection to a classroom, before progressing through certified training on effective teaching in a farm setting. Farmers then join ‘Countryside Classroom’ a database of farms and resources teachers use to integrate on-farm experiences into their curriculum. ⁴⁶Under the UK’s ‘Countryside Stewardship’ scheme farmers receive direct funding for providing educational access (£309).

Enabling Tactics

New farmers, mission-media and crazy experiments.

To support the core strategy for citizen-connected food & farming, several supporting workstreams should be considered. Either run by the purpose-built accelerator noted above, or as cross-sector projects, they include:



Expanding the definition of 'farmer'

There is a noticeable backlash within the farming community whenever country calendar features a small, urban or alternative agriculture farming family. The notion that 'real farming' can only happen at scale, in traditional systems and in a rural setting is self-defeating when the majority of Kiwis live urban lives. The identity of 'a farmer' shouldn't be protected, but rather extended as far as possible across society. This shift makes farming feel more accessible to all New Zealanders and forms the foundation of a national food & farming story (akin to the 'team of 5 million' narrative). Action on this tactic includes focussing on 'broad-church' missions (e.g. regenerative farming, local food economies), developing identities that create space for all types of people to participate, layering accessible language into existing projects (e.g. "come and be a farmer, find your farm" used by Open Farms) or simply heroing alternative farmers and food system actors alongside traditional farmers.



Kiss the Ground 'Soil Advocate'

Kiss the Ground's mission is to mainstream regenerative agriculture. The movement invites anyone to become a 'soil advocate' through participation across one of four community sub-groups and aligned programmes - farmer, lifestyle, activism and business. Everyone has a valued place in the mission.

Food & farming mission stories

Due to the fragmentation of leadership bodies across the sector (and increasingly divergent sub-communities of farmers), there is no cohesive strategy or platform to proactively tell farming stories or provide progressive comment on current issues. Media engage with farming either from a production perspective (e.g. DairyNZ for dairy, Beef + Lamb NZ for sheep & beef) or Federated Farmers (either at an organisational level or from individual regional leaders, the latter often for a more 'hot take'). This system creates duplication within industry body comms teams, forces comms teams to compete for 'good story' media bandwidth and ignores the voice of smaller farming sub-groups with good mission orientated stories to tell (e.g. community heroes, biodynamic farmers) that would benefit the sector as a whole.

A joined-up media and narrative strategy across the sector might include:

- A database of media trained farmers and their relevant interests.
- Regular farming-familiarisation programmes for journalists (critical for overcoming churn in newsrooms).
- Cross-sector panel reactions to current issues for journalists to better understand nuance across the sector.
- Positive narrative-building training for sector comms teams.
- Ability to pitch positive, regular 'on-the-farm' beats in mainstream media.
- Amplifying mission orientated stories from the sector.



Science Media Centre (SMC)

The interface between science and the media, the SMC aims to amplify the voice of scientists, increase accuracy in media coverage and better inform the public.

The centre uses a database of scientists available to comment on their area of interest, a course teaching scientist to communicate clearly and a proactive regular round-up of science news sent to mainstream NZ media.

Enabling Tactics

New farmers, mission-media and crazy experiments.



10% crazy

Inspired by Wairarapa farmer Mark Guscott, the 10% crazy philosophy is about dedicating a small workstream to exploring wild ideas that may (or may not) pay-off in long-term success. Potential pilot projects include:



Care farming on conventional farms

Cultivate Christchurch

"These veggies change lives." Cultivate Christchurch is an urban farm in the red zone that uses farming to empower young people. Their multi-focus programme covers horticultural education, environmental sustainability, personal development, employability training and job seeking support – all set against the backdrop of a market garden. The farm has an 81% success rate in transitioning at-risk youth into employment or further training.



World tree planting record attempt

Ethiopia

In 2019, Ethiopia set the world record for the most trees planted in a single day at 350 million (population 115 million). A collaboration bringing together farmers, government ministries, environmental groups (e.g. trees that count) and indeed all New Zealanders could see us beat that on a per-capita basis – planting 15 million trees in one-day across the motu.



Alternative land ownership structures

Ecological Land Co-operative (UK)

To make farming more accessible to new entrants, this UK based cooperative has developed a model to re-populate farming landscape. The group buys dis-used small farms, builds low-impact dwellings and infrastructure and leases the land to up to three 'Steward' families who farm the site collectively and contribute to a local food system.

Conclusion

I broke the first rule of a Nuffield report –
‘don’t write for everyone’.

But in choosing to research and write about values – something fundamental to decision-making across every kitchen table, community hall and boardroom of the sector – it was hard not to.

That said, I think every type of player in our sector can take something from this work.

Farmers. I have never met a farmer that doesn’t like the idea of feeding their local community. Many of you also see your farms as ‘third spaces’ where people can come together. Lean into this. Ask why your meat, milk, fruit, veg or grain can’t go to locals, or why there is limited support for your public engagement activities. If your neighbours are taking a punt on a direct-to-customer model, participating in Open Farms or otherwise working to connect people to farming – support them. Recognise that the parts of farming that aren’t currently valued in an economic sense, are still valuable. Push your representatives to support efforts that make these into realistic diversification options for you.

Agri-business. I acknowledge the risks inherent for many of you in this framework. I too would think about the possibility of job-losses on meat processing lines or threats to existing partnerships across the supply chain. But I encourage you to recognise the opportunities in disruption too. Rising local economies will need new micro-processing systems, new farmers will need start-up capital, more complex farms will need a new generation of advisors, regional foodscapes will need logistics. A local economy model will need you too.

Sector leadership. We need more He Waka Eke Noa, not less. The big three entrenched challenges demand a cross-sector strategic response. Our approach shouldn’t operate at the edges of these problems – better marketing, a few open days or recruitment drives aren’t going to fix what are entrenched, generational problems. We need long-term system change designed to pull food & farming closer to urban Kiwis. While the values and social good potential of farming mean the sector doesn’t have to go it alone, we do have to lead.

Government. Aotearoa New Zealand is a food & farming nation. Our farmers already lead the world in food & fibre production, but what’s next? The missing piece of the Fit for a Better World mission is our ability to pioneer citizen-connected food & farming systems. In a time when our environmental and social challenges demand new approaches, we need to lean on our fundamental strength and recognise that a redesigned domestic food & farming system can be the cost-effective, society-wide enabler framework we need. Articulate the mission, clear the bureaucratic roadblocks and fund it to win.

There’s a phrase that’s making its way around the sector. “What got us here, won’t get us there”. It’s about acknowledging that new challenges necessitate new approaches. That, no matter how effective, models and systems have to adapt when the world changes around them. This report has explored one possible avenue of adaption for food & farming in Aotearoa New Zealand. In addressing our entrenched problems – social licence to farm, recruitment and a compelling export proposition – it’s looked to the edges of the system for the solutions, and found them in the social start-ups, farms and communities that design their little piece of food & farming, to be a force for good.

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