

## Better data will help us do a better job - Federated Farmers

18 April 2018 - Federated Farmers - The Environment Aotearoa 2019 report released today will help all New Zealanders, not just farmers, identify the priorities for action.

But we can only manage what we have information on, Federated Farmers environment and water spokesperson Chris Allen says.

"Our message during the last central government election campaign, when various candidates and commentators were putting the boot into farmers for environmental impacts, was that all Kiwis were in this together. This new report underlines exactly that.

"There's grim reading on many of the biodiversity, pollution, water quality and greenhouse gas indicators but they're across the board - rural and urban, industry, manufacturing and all primary sectors, right down to the individual choices people make about their transport, water use, waste disposal and so on."

At the launch of the report this morning, New Zealand's Secretary for the Environment Vicky Robertson made mention of a "huge increase in momentum" not just around environmental awareness, but also communities and sectors taking action.

"The primary sector is stepping up," she said, "there are many, many great examples of on-farm changes."

This backs up findings in the April 2019 Neilsen report for the Ministry for Primary Industries as part of the Sustainable Land Management and Climate Change Research Programme, which said 92% of farmers had taken action over the past five years to make their farms more environmentally sustainable.

These include riparian/shelter planting, waterway control, improved fertiliser management and more efficient irrigation systems. This was up considerably from 78% in 2009.

The significant gaps in data and the current inability to more precisely tell farmers about the positive impacts their considerable efforts and expenditure have on key environmental markers, makes setting priorities harder.

"Just to single one issue out, the report acknowledges we lack monitoring data for erosion, and how well interventions are working. MBIE is currently funding a major sediment investigation project which will inform what mitigations we could put into action," Chris says.

"The task now is to identify what information we're still missing, and to make sure we focus on the environmental tasks where we can make the biggest difference.

"And that's likely to mean catchment by catchment, targeted solutions, not more broad-based regulation and taxes. Our policy responses to this report need to be considered, and take into account all the work already going on."