

28 April 2020

Dear Minister Sage

A farmer led solution integrating conservation and food security to enhance the protection and establishment of native reserves across New Zealand

We are writing in response to last week's \$1b Green's Proposal to create nature-based jobs

50 Shades of Green share similar concerns we are currently faced with. We have been thinking how to turn the economic disruption on a scale we have not seen in generations. With communities under increasing stress in response to rising unemployment as the wage subsidy comes off and some business finding they are no longer viable, we see potential for an enduring opportunity that will support the need to reduce our footprint on the land, our waterways and our climate.

Until your proposed policy was announced the economic stimulus options seem to be heavily weighted towards critical infrastructure projects and direct support for individuals and business. These options struggle to address the challenge of restoring our natural world, nor do they mitigate our impact on it in any significant way

We see a significant opportunity for the \$1b funding to engage farmers and farming.

As the government considers policy to influence land use, freshwater management and indigenous biodiversity in a way which emissions are accounted for earned and how liabilities are paid for it has become obvious its led to a heavy dependence on the private sector to sequester carbon on behalf of emitters. 50 Shades of Green has often highlighted these outcomes come at the expense of our rural communities and are commonly recognised as a short-term reprieve. One that does little to deliver a New Zealand for future generations nor policies that reflect NZ values.

While this model may successfully bring about rapid sequestration over large areas of New Zealand, it also brings with it significant social, economic and environmental consequences. Additionally, Covid19 has seen the tourism sector sail into uncharted waters with significant headwinds to face, yet the economic foundation provided by farmers and growers will be the much needed in the road to recovery.

Post Covid19 presents an opportunity to adopt a different future in our drive to deliver jobs and our pursuit to Net Zero Carbon

The Proposal

A collective effort led by Central Government to bring rapid transformation of our landscapes, biodiversity and ecosystems, on farm and across the Government estate.

Objective:

To see the skills of the service sector redeployed in project management roles within catchments across New Zealand, identifying suitable land, securing contracts and managing the workforce needed to bring about **protection** and **establishment** of native reserves across all New Zealand. Those being redeployed could also fulfil roles in pest control, nursery operations and planting.

The **key focus** of the program is to produce synergies across the environmental spectrum, providing for better water quality and reduced stock access, more and better biodiversity habitat and enduring stands of native bush which will provide sequestration benefits for one hundred years.

Project Goals

- Identification of native or nursery tree species which are durable and have some pest tolerance in order to be planted at scale with minimal follow up required.
- Establish catchment management teams able to co-ordinate the identification of sites, management of fencing grants and oversee the sourcing, planting, and establishment of trees
- Initiate a widescale program of regeneration in conservation land, land owned by Local Government, Central Government and in urban areas.

Project time scale: 5 years

Why will it work?

While committed to Kaitiaki of the land, farmers are typically time poor and cash poor. These two factors limit their ability to invest in environmental restoration

projects which are not closely related to production, even when this is a stated goal of the landowner.

The average hill country farm has between 15 and 25 percent 'ineffective areas' which are not considered as 'productive' but represent a significant cost to protect or regenerate. In addition, few farmers have an appetite for managing the application process associated with currently available grants, which is why the project management role is deeply critical to the success of largescale uptake and progress.

The large-scale forestry projects undertaken in response to the Great Depression were successful in stimulating employment and redefining the forest sector from one based on milling native logs, to a plantation model.

This generation is faced with a similar challenge –we have an opportunity to reinvent our brand as a producer of the best quality food in the world, maintain our ability to diversify into the future and enhance our sense of national identity while propelling ourselves forward into a more resilient future.

Minister, this is a win-win chance for New Zealand, a significant project accelerating what many on farm are working to achieve already. Biodiversity, integrated plantings, cleaner waterways and best land use. It can't get better than that.