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The Government's no test for forestry conversions is Destroying the Provinces

Lobby group 50 Shades of Green prediction that regional New Zealand will be covered in exotic pine is coming to fruition before our very eyes. The wholesale removal of productive land for exotic forestry continues at pace as sales of farmland to forestry move into new parts of the country.

"Coming to a region near you" is now a reality as both Wisp and Hazeldean stations in Otago add to recent hill country farms sold. The many thousands of tourists who visit the Caitlins do so to enjoy the diverse landscape, iconic tussock land and native bush reserves, they don't visit it to drive through a sea of exotic pine.

While it might be a short-term sugar hit for carbon, these policies bring more problems with them than what they solve. Focusing solely on carbon we are losing the bigger picture, the one that is destroying regional communities, economies and environments.

It's true, 50 Shades of Green has changed the conversation, but while the conversation is topical and front and centre, policy has not been changed and regional New Zealand pays the price for emitters behaviour, there is no mechanism to stop the sales, and the Government sits idly by

This Government's legacy will be one that ripped the heart out of rural communities, their policies are not panning out as intended, it certainly isn't right tree right place and the ETS clearly isn't fit for purpose.

We remind the Government; New Zealand survives largely off its agricultural receipts. Taking land out of production now for trees means it earns nothing for at least 28 years and as the Parliamentary Commission has pointed out, planting *pinus radiata* will not help get our carbon footprint to zero by 2050

What we have now, is the next carbon farm bought is the next farm up for sale. We urge the Government to hit the pause button and put a mechanism in place to stop the carnage increasingly happening across the country

The question the Government needs to ask, is this policy driving the outcomes that are in New Zealand's best interest, we say no, and it's not just farmers, we are now joined by environmental groups, the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment and the Climate Change Commission. It is of substantial concern to growing numbers of New Zealanders who see the snowball gathering speed.

For more information

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