

Rangitikei farm business helps further tackle erosion – while lifting bottom line



Location: Rangitikei
Farm type: 312 effective hectares
Farm business goal: environment



Key measured changes



Increase in tree planting and cost

\$520/ha/p.a.



Carbon income over 35 years

^ \$2,405 p.a.
 ^ \$7.50/ha/p.a.



50% of annual EBITRm increase attributed to involvement in their Action Group

Erosion is a major issue for a couple farming sheep and beef on a Rangitikei farm with extensive steep-sided slopes and moisture-retentive clay soil.

Becoming part of a Red Meat Profit Partnership Action Group focused on sustainable farming, has helped them to learn more about planting to stabilise their land and farm sustainably - and the potential subsidies and income streams from tree plantations, related to their individual property and farm plan.

They also found that the size of the group, with nine farm business members, meant everyone became comfortable with each other quickly and farmers were not afraid to ask questions and share their existing knowledge.

This has really driven the success of the group and helped those members take advantage of specialised speakers. Together, the members have helped to identify areas of opportunities and strengths within the area they all live and farm.

The slopes and challenging soil make up forty per cent of the couple's 312 effective hectare property. Moderate hills and poorly drained foot slopes make up a further forty per cent. The remaining land is divided between some elevated, slightly better-drained rolling hilltops and alluvial flats adjoining the streams on the property.

Every spring, their tracks require maintenance for access. Restricted access to areas on the farm due to slips over the tracks during lambing and calving poses both animal health risks and health and safety concerns.



As a result, they were keen to focus their work with the group on stability and establishing a more robust farming system that would best suit their land and climate to farm sustainably now and for the next generation. This included ensuring they had “right tree, right place, right purpose” and looking at the whole farming area collectively, including the various soil types, terrain, aspect, and erodibility and what has worked from previous generations planting.

They have been strategic about using trees to protect infrastructure, targeting the protection of tracks from slips. This has reduced time and money spent repairing and maintaining tracks as well as reducing animal health risks and health and safety concerns.

A major goal in joining the group, launched in 2018, was also to learn how other environmentally sustainable forms of income could be integrated within their current farming system and co-exist.

A vast variety of trees had already been planted on the farm, over a number of years, as a process of land stabilisation. However, the access to subject matter experts through the Action Group provided significant learnings about potential subsidies and how they could link existing trees together to meet the Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) forest definition.

As well as the benefits that the trees provide to stock, in terms of shade and shelter, and to soil stabilisation, they found there were benefits that could contribute to the business’s profitability. A key learning was how additional poplar pole planting could be used to develop areas to fit the requirements for the ETS.

They have identified the benefits of the ETS and planting trees for soil stabilisation as the ‘bigger ticket’ items for protecting their land and providing income to their bottom line. This includes identifying further areas that could be planted to join existing plantings and qualify areas for the ETS while proving positive for soil structure. This environmental development is now a work in progress. Using their Action Group learnings, they are developing a farming system which addresses their business values around sustainability, enhancing biodiversity and protecting their soils and landscape for future generations.

Projected income from the poplar poles being eligible for the ETS and the stabilisation of farm tracks is forecast to create a \$4,810 lift in annual Earnings Before Interest, Tax, Rent and Managerial Salary (EBITRm).

As they were already actively planting trees, they attribute about fifty per cent of this increase - \$2,405 - directly to their participation in the Action Group.

