IRRIGATION
NEW ZEALAND

2023 Election Manifesto

#WaterForFood #WaterForFuture #WaterForAll #WaterForRivers
#WaterForFun #WaterForFarms #WaterForDrinking #WaterforLife




















New Zealand produces some of the most nutritious, delicious, and sought after food in the world.

While meat and dairy account for about 80% of our food exports, the vast majority of other food produced in New Zealand is consumed in New Zealand. We import about 20% of our food.

Irrigation is a key component for growing food. The more reliable the supply of water, the more cost effective growing is. This leads to better prices in the supermarket.

To ensure New Zealanders can access fresh New Zealand-grown food at a reasonable price the Government must take a strategic view of water and have enabling policies in place.

New Zealand has the opportunity to be a world leader in water management – for well-being, the environment, resilience, self-sufficiency, to support trade, and for climate change mitigation and adaptation techniques.

- Reliable and available freshwater is key to growing food for New Zealanders.
- Fresh locally-grown food is a right all New Zealanders should be able to expect. Keeping food affordable in New Zealand requires water availability, and policies that enable food production.
- Reliable access to water for growing food is currently hindered by restrictive policy and a lack of investment and support.
- Up to 90% of fruit and vegetables grown in New Zealand rely on irrigation, whereas less than 20% of animal agriculture is supported by irrigation.
- Irrigation uses a tiny amount of New Zealand's freshwater.
- 80% of applied irrigation water evaporates from plant leaves to become cloud and fall as rain.

Water for food

Irrigation is important, and often essential, for growing healthy food in New Zealand.

As much as 90% of our fruit and vegetables rely on irrigation to grow, including the majority of wine and beer ingredients. About 26% of New Zealand's milk-based products rely on irrigation, as does 10% of our meat production.

To grow all of this food we use only 5.4% of farmland and less than 5% of annual freshwater. Interestingly, the total irrigated land area for dairy has decreased when most recently measured from 2017 to 2019.

While meat and dairy account for about 80% of our food exports, the vast majority of other food grown here is consumed here. We supplement this by importing about 20% of our food, in particular fruit and vegetables.

This year New Zealanders have faced huge increases in the price of food, particularly in fresh fruit and vegetables, which are up 22%.

We need to ensure that we can grow healthy and tasty food locally, at prices everyone can afford. This requires reliable access to water at the right times in the growing cycle of plants, whether it be for growing vegetables, grains, or grass to feed livestock.

In New Zealand it does not always rain at the desired time in the growing cycle. Rainfall is becoming more and more erratic due to changing weather patterns. NIWA (National Institute of Weather and Atmospheric Research) has clearly stated that floods and droughts will become more common.

In order to safeguard our ability to grow food as the climate changes, our population grows, and our global trading partners demand more of our food exports, we need to capture and store water so that it is available when needed.

The infrastructure for capturing, storing, and distributing water is complex, expensive, and takes a long time to set up and build.

At the moment there is no comprehensive strategy for developing this infrastructure to protect New Zealand's ability to grow food. It is very hard to get regulatory approval for this infrastructure. This regulatory uncertainty makes it very difficult to secure investment.

We need change.

Water for all

There is enough water in New Zealand for everyone, especially if we make efficient use of what is available. This means increasing our capture and storage of water when it falls or melts so that we can use it at times when it's naturally scarce.

Reliable stored water has many benefits beyond growing food. Water security enables a variety of other positives, including:

- production of green electricity
- providing communities with drinking water
- allowing businesses and industry to run and to plan for the future, both of which enable local employment
- farmers reducing their emissions by changing their land use via irrigation
- creating opportunities for inclusive economic development by unlocking the potential of iwi-Māori-owned land which has not had access to water
- maintaining river health, ecology, and biodiversity, and the recreational and cultural values of rivers by releasing stored water in dry months

Water security and availability will be a key enabler for New Zealand as it seeks to protect and grow its communities in the face of imminent climate change impacts. It is also a vital means to support a productive, sustainable, and inclusive economy.

There is enough water to share with all users. We need more investment in capture and storage so we can all benefit.

To ensure we have secure and available water we need to build appropriate water capture and storage infrastructure.

Water for future

New Zealand is under intense pressure to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions and has committed to achieving zero emissions by 2050.

Irrigation is key to enabling farmers to change their land use as part of reducing emissions.

Almost all methane emissions in New Zealand are from livestock. Farmers want to reduce emissions for the good of the environment and their business. This can be done without reducing herd sizes by using scientifically proven methods to reduce emissions per animal. Many farmers are looking at reducing emissions by changing how they use their land.

If a farmer wants to change from ruminant agriculture to crop-growing or horticulture they must have access to reliable water. Reliable water and irrigation also underpin diversification to high value specialist food for export.

Water storage and irrigation are currently not sufficiently recognised in policy as key enablers for these changes.

We need change.

Let's change the narrative

There is a misconception that irrigation equates to intensive animal agriculture, especially dairy, and results in dirty rivers. This is not only incorrect but overly simplistic.

This narrative is preventing New Zealand from taking a strategic, future-focused view on how water, in particular water capture and storage, can support our communities, environment, and economy.

Irrigation is key to food production in New Zealand, which supports jobs in rural communities and bolsters the national economy.

What is needed from the Government

- To be willing and able to support water capture, storage, and use
- A Minister for Water
- A strategy for water capture, storage, and use that puts climate change adaptation and mitigation at the centre
- Certainty regarding water capture and storage
- Creation of enabling policy
- Promotion of innovation
- Support of investment
- Demonstration of flexibility
- Sharing of information and promotion of education

IrrigationNZ is calling on an incoming Government to consider the following:

Prioritise the creation of a cross-agency water group to design a long-term strategy for freshwater in New Zealand, led by a Minister for Water. This should be underpinned by research to: improve freshwater outcomes at a catchment level, increase the resilience of food production, lift productivity, and develop climate resilient and adaptive infrastructure.

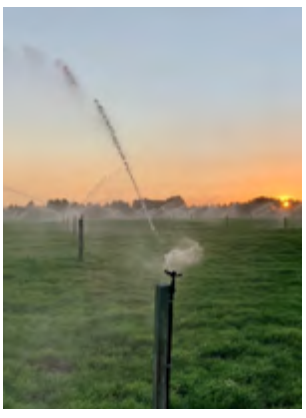
Integrate all aspects of freshwater management into one holistic plan and approach, including but not limited to freshwater farm plans, drinking water regulation, wetlands, biodiversity, integrated farm management, and dam safety legislation.

Enable climate adaptation by ensuring infrastructure for water capture, storage, and distribution is correctly prioritised in long term planning strategies. This must appropriately take into account changing weather patterns and drier or wetter regions which need reliable water to sustain food and fibre production.

Look at land use change opportunities across New Zealand, taking into consideration our highly productive soils, and match reliable water planning to ensure long term improvements of environmental outcomes.

Ensure resilience by facilitating water capture and storage opportunities. Develop a check-list of criteria for regionally significant water storage and distribution projects to ensure they provide multiple benefits for the community. These benefits include drinking water, local hydro-electricity, environmental allocation, unlocking the productive potential of iwi-Māori-owned land, enabling land-use change, and growing new food/product groups linked to export markets. For approved projects, facilitate a fast-track consenting or designation pathway.

Support investment by creating a fund for feasibility studies and financial bridging (loan) support for community projects that meet established criteria.


Demonstrate flexibility by reviewing regulation and policies impacting freshwater, thus ensuring food producers can continue to prioritise the growing of food and fibre as the climate changes. This can include consistency in the approach for setting freshwater farm plan actions by using a risk-based assessment set using catchment or watershed objectives and priorities. Work at a local catchment level to strike the correct balance between environmental protection, social and cultural objectives, and the use of freshwater for producing food and fibre.

Reduce uncertainty by providing long term consent options for water storage projects in order to attract and retain investment in infrastructure. This relates not to big dams, but appropriate, community-based water harvesting, storage, and distribution.

Ensure the community is given a voice in planning processes along with regional councils and iwi-Māori when establishing catchment priorities and making spatial planning decisions.

Promote innovation by driving the efficiency of all water uses as part of catchment level freshwater outcomes. Use effective education campaigns and programmes to reinforce messaging and enable the wider adoption of minimum competency standards where required.

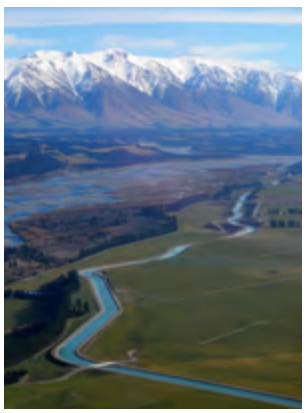
Review and, where necessary, reset water use efficiency targets, especially in over-allocated catchments. Take into account the opportunities presented by further water capture, storage, and distribution. Monitor and report on all water uses where this is still required and incorporate data with catchment modelling to inform freshwater management decisions. Where appropriate allow the transfer of water consents within local catchments.

Share information and promote education by measuring and reporting on farmer and grower environmental improvements and behaviour change.

Commission a report on the national economic and social benefits of irrigation.

Measure and report on catchment objectives including economic, well-being, and environmental contributions/outcomes. Support education on land-use change, and water and nutrient efficiency.





IRRIGATION
NEW ZEALAND
WATER | FOOD | FIBRE | LIFE

#WaterForFood #WaterForFuture #WaterForAll #WaterForRivers
#WaterForFun #WaterForFarms #WaterForDrinking #WaterforLife