Ministry for the Environment
Manatū Mō Te Taiao

LAND

Did you know?

- New Zealand's land is valued for its scenic, recreational, historical, and cultural significance.
- Land cover in New Zealand has changed over recent years. Between 1997 and 2002, the total area in pasture has decreased slightly and exotic forest cover increased by about 8 per cent over that period, while horticultural land area remained constant.
- Human settlements have increased by 2.5 per cent in recent years. Urban expansion can often result in highly productive, versatile soils being covered by artificial surfaces.
- About 10 per cent of New Zealand is classed as severely erodible. In recent years, there was a reduction in pasture on erosion-prone hill country, with over 36,000 hectares converted to exotic forestry or left to revert to scrub.
- Agricultural land use has intensified; the area of land in dairy pasture has increased, leading to increased fertiliser and water use and greenhouse gas emissions. The national dairy herd has grown by 24 per cent since 1996.
- Soils under horticultural and agricultural land are generally in poorer condition than soils under other land uses, with higher levels of compaction, nitrogen and phosphates, and lower levels of carbon.

What can you do?

- Visit **www.landcare.org.nz** for information about sustainable land management and biodiversity initiatives in rural communities.
- Planting trees removes carbon from the atmosphere, filters air, and prevents soil erosion. It's best to plant trees native to your area that don't require heavy irrigation.
- Composting kitchen and garden waste reinvigorates soil. Composting serves as a kind of carbon sink, storing carbon in the soil instead of in the atmosphere.
- Avoid the use of pesticides by using plants which are naturally resistant to insect pests. If you do use pesticides, use herbal or pyrethrum-based sprays to reduce unwanted pests and insects. Check at your local garden centre for more information.
- Fence off streams and river banks to help protect our waterways. Planting native vegetation or other plants enhances water quality by filtering sediment, faecal bacteria, and nutrients from surface water run-off.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION about land see *Environment New Zealand 2007* at **www.mfe.govt.nz**

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