Hello,

This submission isn’t about the content of the proposed fresh water plan, but rather the delivery and timing of submissions.

The timing of realising one of the biggest pivotal documents in New Zealand’s history has quite frankly been a massive disappointment for rural New Zealand. Whether intended or not, the perception is that by doing it when farmers are under the most seasonal pressure, will be to cabinets’ benefit. Add to that local council elections and a very short submission time frame. It seems the submission process is more of a procedure than a tool to strengthen and ensure the desired outcomes of the proposed policies. The way this process has been delivered strongly goes against 2 of the 3 core values Ag Proud NZ stands for.

These are:

1) To promote and create awareness of mental wellbeing of New Zealand’s Agricultural sector.

By putting extra pressure on top of seasonal workloads shows little regard and contradicts this current government’s value around wellbeing. For the last 6 weeks many members of the rural community have compared the current mood amongst our rural sector of that similar to the 80’s hardship. When you talk to those who lived through that time and hear of the financial strains and in some cases the personal loss of loved ones, I struggle to see how this will motivate individuals to do their part to protect New Zealand’s environment. The rural sector is a ticking time bomb for the mental health sector and although the farming community has shown (and probably been underestimated) the huge mental capacity and capabilities needed to survive in small to medium size rural businesses. Everyone has a breaking point and there are so many getting pushed closer to it with the manner of this proposal.

2) To strengthen the relationship between Rural and urban communities.

The fact that farming has been singled out in this proposal automatically lays blame. Every person in rural communities wants to do the right thing but needs to be walked along side of rather than being singled out and find their own way to the desired destination. The rural sector has had to make a lot of noise to get their concerns heard. This has distracted from the fact that the urban communities are largely in the dark as to what this means for them. Timing around Local council elections has pretty much eroded any ability for the bodies to efficiently put together their submissions. For New Zealand’s water quality to improve this document has to make sure that every person in this country feels part of the solution.

3) Promote positive Farming practices.

We congratulate you on having proposed policies that illustrate this and the sector has already been doing many of these voluntarily. Let’s make sure the message is one of encouragement which will keep the kiwi ingenuity culture strong to deal with our ever changing issues.
Our final request is that New Zealand is given more time to digest and work together on how best to achieve what ALL our communities want and allow sufficient time to insulate social, economic and environmental assets.

Regards,

Jon Pemberton
Trust Chairman

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