

Agribusiness



Primary Industries Minister Nathan Guy gets up close with his portfolio. Meat and wool exports have grown to \$8 billion.

Farming still the backbone

A booming sector means we will need more skilled workers says Minister **Nathan Guy**

In the past 12 months we have seen a boom time for the primary industries. Overall exports have reached a record high of \$37.7 billion, with dairy and forestry having strong growth in both prices and production. Meat and wool exports have grown to \$8 billion, which is a great achievement considering last year's brutal drought. All of this is a positive sign for achieving the Government's goal of doubling the value of primary exports by 2025. This is an ambitious target that will bring both challenges and opportunities. To get there we'll need to work smarter, producing higher-value products and making the most of new technology and innovations. We'll also need more workers – a lot more. Recently I released a report showing that employment in the primary industries will need to increase by 50,000 to reach this export double goal by 2025. This will cover a whole range of careers – from manual jobs like fruit picking, right through to food scientists, environmental planning, IT and marketing. Over half of these extra workers will need a Tertiary or Level 4 Qualification. Businesses are likely to be larger, more complex, use more technology and require more professional support. The challenge for all of us now is to promote the diversity and breadth of careers in the primary industries. Last month saw an important first step as industry, Government and the education sector came together at a

workshop in Wellington to plan the way forward. We need to ensure those who advise and support people making career decisions – teachers, parents, career advisors – have access to the best and most relevant information. One small but important example is the Enterprising Primary Industries Career Challenge (EPIC) which was launched recently. This is an interactive competition for Year 10 students to come up with novel marketing plans to attract other 15-year-olds into these careers. Having enough suitable workers will be a major challenge, but it's a good challenge for New Zealand to have. This growing demand for workers just reinforces to me how the primary industries are still the backbone of New Zealand's economy. Around 350,000 people work in farming, forestry, horticulture, viticulture, fishing and supporting industries. This accounts for one in six jobs, and in some regions the figure is as high as one in three. Clearly, any plan for regional development has to be strongly focused around the primary industries and helping them succeed. This is why we're investing in irrigation and water storage projects. We only capture and store around 2 per cent of the rain that falls in New Zealand, with the rest running out to sea. There are major potential benefits from capturing and using this precious resource. NZIER estimates irrigation could create thousands of new jobs and boost exports by \$4 billion a year. Water storage projects have real environmental benefits too, because it takes the pressure off ground water aquifers and gives the ability to maintain decent summer river flows. In the Budget this year an extra \$40 million was allocated for investment into irrigation, on top of \$80 million last year. Along with this opportunity comes challenges. It's crucial for our reputation around the world, and for

ourselves, that we balance this economic growth with environmental sustainability while protecting our borders. In July the Government announced the introduction of national standards for fresh water in New Zealand. This means, for the first time, rivers and lakes will have minimum requirements for water quality that must be achieved. We're also investing hundreds of millions of dollars into freshwater clean-ups, and there is lots of work going into understanding how nutrient management technology can help improve water quality. This will mean changes to some of our farming practices, but I know farmers are up to the challenge. My number one priority as Minister is biosecurity, because we're never going to double our exports if we don't protect our borders from pests and diseases. This is why we have trained around 125 new quarantine inspectors in the past 18 months, and have 12 new x-ray machines at our international airports. A new biocontainment laboratory will be built, and we are investing in preparedness, training and planning. Industries now have the chance to be directly involved in this work through Government-Industry Agreements (GIAs). Increasing our trade access to markets overseas is another major priority. Our two-way trade with China has now reached a massive \$20 billion, years ahead of forecasts. Though it is a hugely important market for us, it's worth remembering there are plenty more countries with great potential. The Trans-Pacific Partnership involves 11 other countries including major markets like Japan and the US. These countries take around 45 per cent of New Zealand's trade. Progress has been slower than New Zealand would like, but the potential gains are enormous from a comprehensive

agreement. We also have trade deals at various stages of negotiation with other important markets. Investing in research and development is also a top priority for both industry and Government. More than \$700 million is being co-invested into 18 projects through the Primary Growth Partnership (PGP). Some of the most exciting projects include getting more value from red meat products, more efficient use of fertilisers, and a new net design that enables fish to be selected and caught alive. This last project has the potential to open up new opportunities for the export of live, high-value fish and improve sustainability at the same time. A report by NZIER estimates the benefits to New Zealand could be as high as \$11 billion a year by 2025. And this doesn't take into account wider benefits like health, safety and environmental efficiency. Clearly, the old image of farming as being dirty, low-tech and unskilled is completely out of date. Today's producers are environmentalists and sophisticated business operators whose product ends up feeding around 40 million people in 200 countries. The challenge – and opportunity – for all of us now is to communicate this message to the wider public. This annual feature on agribusiness by the *NZ Herald* is a good start and I want to congratulate them again for this feature. ● Nathan Guy is the Minister for Primary Industries



"Not so fast Minister" – Damien O'Connor outlines Labour's Agribusiness Priorities, page F12

The numbers

Primary sector revenues forecast to reach \$37.7b (June 2014 year). Export values projected to reach **\$40.7b** by June 2018, an 8% increase relative to year ending June 2014.

DAIRY 5.6% compound growth between 2001 and 2013. Particularly strong in June 2014 year, export revenues expected to grow 31% billion to **\$17.6b** due to high international prices and lift in production. Will fall in June 2015 year, but forecast to reach **\$18.4b** by June 2018. Dairy exports to China grew from 2.6% in 2001 market share to **35%** in June 2014 (\$0.2b export revenue to \$6.1b). Product mix changing, with 'Other' category (mostly higher value, consumer-branded dairy) having the highest compound growth rate; **13.6%** between June 2001 and 2013.

MEAT AND WOOL Value of meat and wool exports expected to increase by about **22%** over the next five years, from \$8.1b forecast in 2013/14, to **\$9.4b** by 2018. Stock numbers will recover in 2014 following 2013 drought, but numbers will then decline with conversions to dairy. Productivity improvements will see beef production relatively stable and lamb production slowly increasing.

FORESTRY \$5.1b at end of June 2014. Log harvest is at record levels, and Chinese demand driving growth of sector. Exports forecast to be **\$5.0b** in June 2018 year. Forest harvest volumes are expected to reach a record 30.1 million cubic metres in June 2014, a **55%** volume increase over 5 years.

HORTICULTURE Horticulture export revenue forecast to increase 5.2% to **\$3.83b** in June 2015 year. Wine comprises 36% of this total, and is set to increase to **220m** litres of exports (\$1.45b total export value) in June 2015 due to the record vintage of 2014. Export values of kiwifruit fell **22%** to \$817m in June 2014 year, with Psa virus affecting orchards and falling gold kiwifruit prices.

SEAFOOD Seafood exported expected to total **\$1.44b** (June 2015 year); rising to **\$1.64b** in year to June 2018.

AGRIBUSINESS 2014
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Agribusiness

Milk scare a missed opportunity



Some small businesses have paid a heavy price over the baby formula botulism debacle, writes **Michael Barnett**

Almost a year ago a second quality scare in the dairy industry halted the exports of infant milk formula from New Zealand to China, placed at risk the businesses of a number of small and medium exporters and damaged the reputation and brand of New Zealand in China.

Some of those exporters are now out of business, some have had to face significantly reduced turnover and margin and many have had to invest heavily in the China distribution sector just to retain a presence in this market – money that could have been invested in growing market share and building their export businesses.

Small and medium exporters scrambled to help themselves, visiting China in a bid to save their businesses and the millions of dollars they had invested in this market. They also called for Government support, which occurred in varying degrees. It's worth looking back 12 months on, in the knowledge that both individual businesses and New Zealand have paid a heavy price.

That price is millions of dollars in exports and business investment, the potential of future plant closures in New Zealand and the knowledge that in the same period of time Europe went from having a 15 per cent tariff into China on infant milk formula to

5 per cent, Switzerland signed a free trade agreement with China and New Zealand hasn't responded with a cohesive "in market" strategy to compete.

Government agencies were quick to suggest that the sector was aware the Chinese Government had them on watch and intended to impose change so should not have been surprised – and technically they were correct. The Chinese domestic market was undergoing change and the Chinese also wanted change for New Zealand but our Government agencies chose to play down the threat to our exporters and respond to suit our largest trading partner.

An alternative strategy should have been for our Government agencies not to view themselves simply as a regulator, but in a partnership role for the good of business and New Zealand. There was an opportunity to bring the whole of the New Zealand industry together and ensure there were standards and codes of practice that were being complied with and that track-and-traceability technology was a fundamental component for the future.

Instead China imposed a limited audit on New Zealand restricting the number of manufacturers and brands that could be a part of the supply chain to China.

Some of the approved manufac-



turers also imposed a restriction on the brands they would do business with, placing some exporters further at risk. Some manufacturers who have not been approved now face the risk of closure, if the approval process is not accelerated.

The irony of all of this is while the Chinese markets were beating up New Zealand for a botulism scare that did not exist and tidying up their own market, critically in need of upgrading – they are building export plants in New Zealand (one in South Canterbury and one in Pokeno) which will combine Chinese and New Zealand product that will be exported for Chinese consumers – probably under that trusted New Zealand brand.

We need to acknowledge that in the Ministry for Primary Industries there has been some leadership change which has been positive. New Zealand Trade and Enterprise have been outstanding with their support and the PM's office responsive and constructive. But we also need to do some things differently. History will show that elements of this experience are a repeat of what has happened in the meat industry and we need to ensure it isn't repeated for other sectors and emerging opportunities.

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● Michael Barnett is Chairman of the New Zealand Infant Formula Exporters Association.

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Agribusiness

Keeping the fish bowl clean

Ian Proudfoot

The contribution that the primary sector is making to the economic wellbeing of New Zealand is greater than ever. Strong returns for our dairy, beef, kiwifruit, timber and wine output has seen the value of exports grow significantly, generating income that ultimately helps pay for the schools, roads and hospitals that we expect as New Zealanders.

However, our discussions with industry leaders highlight a significant concern that the industry is currently losing a critical battle; the ability to convince the country's wider population that farmers are committed to balancing the needs of their business with the requirement to preserve the environment for the future in a sustainable way.

There is real concern that the perception of the industry has been downgraded in the minds of many urban New Zealanders. The effective work of environmental lobby groups has meant that the overriding messages most of the population receive about the sector are negative; leaving many people worried about farmers' stewardship of the environment. Allegations of dirty dairying, water quality degradation, damage to native flora and fauna and animal welfare abuse tend to proliferate in mainstream media stories about the primary sector.

The traditional links many urban New Zealanders had to a family farm have eroded with the growing diversity of our urban populations. As a consequence, the understanding people have of the realities of farming have progressively reduced, leaving

many with unanswered questions on whether we really do have the world class operating practices the industry claims. These concerns are driving the regulatory framework the sector will be required to work within; with regulations being introduced in response to widely held perceptions that will restrict the industry's ability to continue to grow and contribute to the future of New Zealand.

Industry leaders recognise the industry is operating under intense public scrutiny; some suggesting it feels like they are constantly farming in a fish bowl. This makes it more important than ever that every farm operator does the right things on their farm all day, every day. The industry needs to be clear about what is expected and prepared to take action against operators who fail to meet the standards; this must include in the most extreme cases excluding them from participating in the industry.

Historically, the most significant constraint on investing in improved environmental outcomes on-farm has been the lack of a payback on the investment. Price premiums for a sustainably sourced product are rare, which has made it difficult for many to justify an investment with no direct link to enhanced returns. However it has become clear that though customers are not prepared to pay more for a sustainable product, they are increasingly unlikely to buy a product that has not been sustainably produced; particularly customers in the premium market segments the New Zealand industry targets.

The industry is getting a clear and consistent message from the wider community, regulators and its cus-



Ian Proudfoot says farmers must get out and tell their own stories.

tomers that it is expected to deliver sustainably produced products to the market. The conversations we have with industry leaders suggest that this message is clearly understood and being acted on by the majority of business owners. However the significant investments that are being made are not well understood by the wider population or regulators and the industry is being given little credit.

It is up to the primary sector to explain what it is doing to meet the expectations that have been placed on it. It is not the Government's or mainstream media's role – the obligation falls squarely on the industry to get out and tell its stories in a compelling and interesting way so the wider population are prepared to

engage and improve their understanding of the contribution the industry makes to the country and how this is being derived.

Recent debate surrounding the proposed development of the Ruataniwha Dam in Hawkes Bay has highlighted clearly the perception challenges the industry faces.

The dam has the potential to create significant value for the wider community through increasing production, creating new jobs and unleashing investment that the risk of drought has constrained historically. Though the benefits have featured in the discussion, there has also been a strong undercurrent in the debate that when water becomes available to farmers this will directly

lead to production intensification and environmental degradation.

This has resulted in the scheme receiving approval but with some significant constraints that may make it uneconomic. The progress of the Ruataniwha proposal has highlighted the need for the industry to really focus on engaging with the wider community to ensure it has the ability to expand into the future.

The industry needs to ensure it is open and honest in communicating with the community. Primary production, by its nature, involves the consumption of natural resources and it is important that this is recognised at the same time as the benefits of a development are highlighted. The Ruataniwha proposal has highlighted that getting the best outcome for New Zealand relies on a balanced discussion that provides an objective assessment of the benefits and impacts of a proposal and mitigates some of the more extreme claims that may be promoted by single issue lobby groups.

If the primary sector wants to effectively influence its future it must make real and substantive progress in informing and engaging with the urban population. It needs to tell the story about how it operates, the progress it is making in enhancing its sustainability, the contribution it makes to the economy and the areas where more progress is needed. The industry must recognise it must keep its fish bowl clean and constantly look to do things better; it cannot afford to keep swimming in the same old circles.

● Ian Proudfoot is KPMG Global Head of Agribusiness

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Agribusiness

Dairying in a different country

Setting foot on a Chinese farm for the first time will feel like a foreign experience to even the most experienced New Zealand farmers.

The vast range of temperatures experienced in China (-25 to +35 degrees Celsius), means cows are kept in barns year round. The facilities have far more of a factory feel to them than New Zealand farms, with cows furnished with their feed as opposed to grazing freely in green-grassed paddocks.

What immediately stands out is how eerily quiet Fonterra's farm is. For 3500 cows, there's not a peep or a moo to be heard. It's a factory environment and everything's pure business at all times, although we're assured that "quiet cows are happy cows". Cows are milked three times daily in milking parlours. With 34 litres of milk produced from the average cow daily, each single farm has the capacity to produce nearly 120,000 litres a day.

In contrast to New Zealand, milk is sold by volume instead of milk solids weight. Cows brought to China are selected genetically on the basis of high-volume producers. All the milk produced in Fonterra's Chinese farms is destined for third party producers at present, with Fonterra's Kelvin Wickham saying, "eventually we want to use the milk for our own brands first, in addition to providing key customers with milk they are confident to use".

That local processing potential in the future is contingent on a stable and reliable milk supply locally, something which would require at least two fully operational farm hubs.

"Our overarching plan is to produce one billion litres of milk by 2020

Alexander Speirs visited Fonterra's farm in Hebei to find out how dairy farming Chinese-style differs from New Zealand



from our own farms in China, and that's right on track," says Wickham. "We will build another four farms this calendar year, and as we continue to build competency we'll start to see the snowball effect there."

Fonterra finished its first farming hub in Hebei Province at the end of last year. Made up of five farms, the hub is on track to have 15,000 milking cows next year which would produce an estimated 150 million litres of milk as production ramps up. The Hebei farming hub cost around \$250 million to build and employs around 500

people, the majority of whom are sourced locally.

"We learn something new every time we build a new farm," says a Fonterra spokesman. "We've been able to standardise our design now and we know what works well. We're always looking for improvements though – how to better exploit economies of scale, how to make our processes more efficient, how we can better interact with locals."

Fonterra is under way with its second farming hub in China. The farms are being built in Ying County,

Shanxi Province – about one hour's flight from Beijing – and will consist of two double farms and one single farm.

The farms will bring Fonterra's headcount to 30,000 milking cows in China, with production at the second hub expected to begin later this year.

Fonterra has signed land agreements for the second hub of five in Shanxi Province and is looking to have four farms operational there by the end of this year.

"We are able to roll out faster and on a larger scale at this stage because

we've got the model largely right. We've got the animals lined up, we've got land, we've got business licences," says the Fonterra spokesman.

"We've been working in Ying now for fifteen months on all of the due diligence – technical, water, power, soil, topography, design work – and then working with the local government officials".

At the moment Fonterra is stocking its new farms with animals imported from New Zealand. New cows born on Chinese farms will gradually be used to stock new farms, but at present the majority are earmarked for replacing aging cows on existing farms.

Self-sufficiency is planned for the near future, with 2017 targeted and the aim to be able to stock newly built farms with calves born in China.

Fonterra must plan its livestock pipeline three years in advance. This ensures the right cows are being bred at the right times to meet the demand of the new farms.

Cows are carefully selected and genetically chosen semen is used to produce the best results for China. These calves are then reared and impregnated in turn when they're 14-15 months old.

They're then inspected and should leave New Zealand when they're 20 months old, enough time to acclimatise in China and get used to the farm before they calve.

"We have our heifers ready to leave New Zealand for Shanxi already," says the spokesman.

They're currently in isolation and will leave in mid-July to come up here. It's about a 10-day trip up here on the boat, after which they then go into quarantine for six weeks before moving to the farms."

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Agribusiness

Building on a household name

Fonterra is looking to build its presence in Latin America. **Brierley Penn** talks to managing director Alex Turnbull

Fonterra is looking to leverage off key brands in the Latin American market to build their regional presence, and move further up the value chain into less commodity-based goods.

Of their seven strategic platforms, Fonterra is focusing on the potential in Latin America to grow and leverage their brands in everyday nutrition, and to exploit their foodservice potential.

The region offers significant potential to the company, particularly in the development of "everyday nutrition" products, branded consumer dairy, which can generate significantly higher returns than the core ingredients business.

"Obviously ingredients are critical, it's still half of our global EBIT on average, but we need to turn the wheel and drive our brands in consumer business where we get much better returns," says Alex Turnbull, Managing Director Latin America at Fonterra.

"For us, everyday nutrition in Latin America is represented by Soprole, which is the absolute number one market leader in terms of volume and value in everyday dairy categories in Chile. We want to drive that Soprole model right through Latin America."

Brand power is crucial in a market characterised by very strong regional brands. Soprole is Fonterra's oldest offshore investment, and a household name in Chile.

Brazil also offers significant potential for Fonterra, with the company's joint venture with Nestle giving brand power in a highly populated market.



Fonterra is making good use of JV projects in Latin America, says Alex Turnbull.

Nestle is rated as the second most recognised brand in Brazil, and Fonterra's 51 per cent stake in the joint venture will allow the company to use technology and protein innovations to move up the value chain. Turnbull is confident the recent overhaul of the joint venture will allow both companies to move further up the value chain, and achieve their aligned strategic goals.

"Brazil's going to need a bit of a reset in terms of getting more foreign investment after the World Cup and Olympics are over," he says.

"But there's still an enormous middle class population, and dairy consumption rates are still well below World Health goals and Brazilian government goals.

"We've already got a consumer group with a huge penchant for milk and dairy, so it's basically all about us leveraging some of our successes in other markets, particularly Chile, understanding what the key trends are in Brazil, and leveraging that joint venture through the Nestle brand to bring those to market."

The Fifa World Cup in Brazil is one

example of where the Nestle brand has been able to add value to Fonterra, with Nestle one of the key food sponsors of the event. "Our brands in Brazil are all Nestle, so everything they do from a Nestle corporate perspective obviously rolls straight into the brands we use in DPA.

"That's the power of leveraging two parents with their own relative skills and capabilities."

As Fonterra further refines its strategy in Latin America, the company has bought back its Venezuelan business, and divested in Ecuador.

Turnbull says Venezuela is currently a challenging market, but their strong legacy strength in the country, and continuing role as a larger supplier of basic solids to the Venezuelan industry will position Fonterra well to exploit everyday nutrition opportunities when the market rights itself.

"My number one priority now is stability," Turnbull says. "Making sure the integration works in the next 90 days, and then we can start to roll out our key global marketing platforms, which we are going to run across the regions to leverage the success we have had in other markets."

The Latin American business offers incredible opportunity, with combined GDP of \$6 trillion, and population of 450 million.

Turnbull is confident of Fonterra's long-term prospects, building on a 45-year platform of involvement in the region.

"We're talking about a business now, that when you add it all up on a consolidated basis is already close to NZ\$3 billion, so it's about focus in key emerging market regions."

Involvement in a range of export regions can assist Fonterra, as the company can draw on international resources to promote its global brand. "The great thing is that the underlying innovation platform and the brand propositions are extremely similar, which is where we get to leverage." With a global R&D budget of just \$100 million, for instance, Turnbull considers this leveraging of both brand and innovation to be crucial to Fonterra's success in a range of emerging markets.

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