





## Perceptions of the Forestry Industry

*Report 19<sup>th</sup> March 2019*





## Executive summary

1

Over 7 in 10 respondents (71%) stated that the forestry industry was *very* or *extremely important* to New Zealand. Concerning *Social Licence to Operate*, Forestry shares a similar profile to that of Sheep and Beef farming and Aviation, with Horticulture and Viticulture garnering the most positive profile

2

*Creating income, providing jobs* and *environmental advantages* are the most commonly mentioned unprompted positive associations with the forestry industry; however *environmental impacts* in general are often mentioned as a negative connotation with forestry along with *health and safety* issues and issues associated with *post-harvest waste*

3

At the prompted level, *wood as a desirable building material with a promising future in the construction industry*, *tree planting being vital for NZ to meet climate change goals* and forestry creating *economic benefits* for New Zealand are the aspects concerning forestry that people most strongly agree with

4

*Health and safety of workers* as a priority, *carbon offsetting*, *economic significance*, and *fire alerts, awareness and control* as a priority are the most important factors that shape people's opinion of the forestry industry, particularly for people not associated with primary industries

5

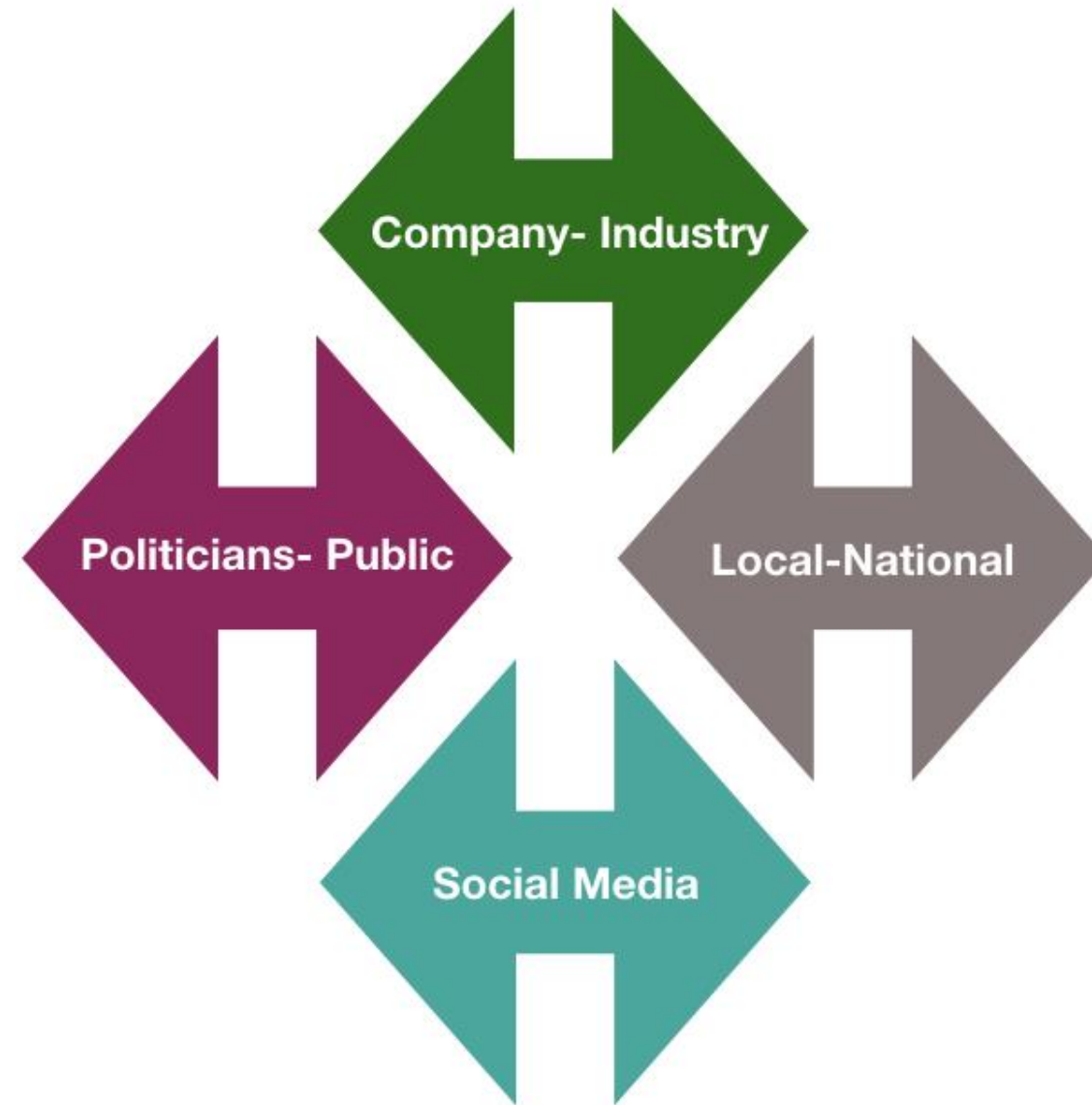
The *economic benefits* of forestry and its *positive impact on the environment* have the greatest level of influence on people's perceptions about the importance of forestry to New Zealand at the overall level and for urban residents. *'Giving back' to local communities*, *planting trees that assist land stabilisation* along with *positive impacts on the environment* have the greatest impact on people's perceptions about the importance of forestry to New Zealand among rural residents

6

Around a tenth of respondents recall any messaging regarding the forestry industry from the past month with fire risk, health and safety and tree planting dominating recall and these messages were primarily communicated via TV. TV commercials are also believed to be most effective channels to communicate messages about forestry

# SOCIAL LICENSE TO OPERATE





# SOCIAL LICENSE TO OPERATE - NZ Forest Industry



## LOSS OF SOCIAL LICENSE

means foresters can't, or are limited in their ability, because of public opposition and consequential legal restraints, to;

Invest, plan, plant, manage, fertilise, spray, monitor, control entry to and engineer their forests and then, harvest, transport, sell, process, disinfest and export their logs

## ACHIEVEMENT OF SOCIAL LICENSE

means foresters can responsibly, because of public support and consequential legal enablement, to;



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## TOUCH WOOD

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Shane Jones v farmers & conservationists





# OUT ON A LIMB?

Shane Jones' megaphone diplomacy in the cause of his Billion Trees has run smack into the still-controversial decision to rely heavily on carbon-sink forests to mitigate the country's greenhouse-gas emissions. **by JANE CLIFTON**

**R**egional Economic Development Minister Shane Jones is openly surprised to find himself somewhat backfooted on what initially looked like an almost-cornily good-news policy: more trees.

Concerted earbashing from farmers during this June's Mystery Creek Fieldays, about the growing trend in premium farmland being sold for forestry, and the widespread impression that it's the result of state subsidy, has already triggered a backtrack.

Jones, who is also Forestry Minister, and Agriculture Minister Damien O'Connor immediately called a press conference offering conciliatory changes and promising more monitoring of farm sales.

Jones' forestry officials have had to go back to the drawing board to reconsider the parameters of his One Billion Trees programme, and he may yet have to make a pitch to Cabinet colleagues for changes to the Climate Change Response (Zero Carbon) Amendment Bill and its emissions trading scheme (ETS) about rules for carbon-sink forests.

"That's the tiger I've got by the tail," he says, wincing. "What we thought we were doing

[with the Billion Trees] was encouraging the investment in forestry in those parts of the landscape that really need to go back into trees – right tree, right place."

The policy, and the ETS, he now says, "might be a bit undercooked".

Jones' megaphone diplomacy in the cause of more forestry has run smack into the still-controversial decision to rely heavily on carbon-sink afforestation to mitigate the country's greenhouse-gas emissions. Billion Trees is not the same policy and has a different purpose –

regional jobs and growth and better land use, rather than greenhouse-gas mitigation. And foreign investors in carbon-sink forestry cannot get grants or subsidies through the Billion Trees programme. But there's enough in the middle of the Venn diagram between the two categories of forest to

have generated quite a storm.

The immediate political peril is that the incentive to carbon farm through forests will become so great – the Productivity Commission's low-emissions report envisaged carbon pricing at \$200 or more a tonne, and other expert projections as high as \$300 – that productive land will increasingly be turned over to *Pinus radiata*. The ▶

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1. Damien O'Connor. 2. David Parker. 3. Nathan Guy. 4. Julie Collins. 5. James Shaw. 6. Eugenie Sage. 7. Todd Muller. 8. Craig Little.

commission predicted "marginally profitable" farmland would be converted. The farm sector worries that we're beyond the margins already. New lobby group Fifty Shades of Green, formed to contest the Government's forestry push, estimates 30,000ha of farmland has been sold into forestry in the past year.

North Island forestry land prices have risen from \$6656 a hectare to \$13,128 in the year to April, a further symptom of carbon-forest investors outbidding farmers.

Just to further steer investment towards good farmland, the Government was forced to effectively "red zone" almost 2% of the landscape against forestry after the Huianga Bay flood disaster last year. Floods from recent forestry-related releases of water from the Huianga Bay dam have created another storm has reached forward through the landscape to create another. The forests were planted as part to remediate the district's serious erosion problems, highlighted by the ravages of Cyclone Bola 30 years earlier. The forestry fix now stands to become an annual problem,

given likely increased rainfall. The Government's solution has been to ban forestry on marginal land, thus increasing the like-

### A hot-button issue is foreign buyers – especially with the loosening of Overseas Investment Office criteria for forestry investment.

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For the Opposition, every day's a field day as it finds more evidence of forestry indiscriminately supplanting agriculture. National's agriculture spokesman Nathan Guy says the Government seems indifferent to the loss of productive land. Aside from the rural community's protest to the economic and environmental "hollowing out" of the countryside, farmers are perma-

working on a National Policy Statement that could potentially prevent some productive land going into forestry – but not, as farmers perceive it, in time to stop an escalating number of conversions already afoot, which the nation could later regret.

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Where there are dairy cows, will there be trees?

than forests. If just four farms go in a district, the consequences can be enough to tip its overall viability; its ability to attract the likes of teachers, vets and doctors.

National's climate-change spokesman, Todd Muller, says the party is hardly opposed to greater forestry. "And it'd be fantastic if we could get to the point of exporting more wood products." But National believes the Government's approach will be damagingly disruptive to the rural economy and fail to give the agriculture sector credit for already being the world's most emissions-efficient.

A further fear is that in a few decades, overseas investors could move on without accountability for land or forest remediation, leaving a sizeable proportion of New Zealand's land saddled indefinitely with tracts of depleted or dying, uneconomic forestry. (See panel, page 18)

Jones says he understands why farmers are telling him it's unfair that their legacy sector will be sacrificed so that the likes of

Air New Zealand and Shell can offset their emissions. "Of course, they are also coming from a position of self-interest. At the same time, the cockies won't want the Government telling them who they can sell their land to. They'll want to get the best price."

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But if Jones wants to recalibrate the Billion Trees' settings, let alone the hard-won coalition decision that forged the ETS, he has to please what is possibly a tougher crowd than the rural lobby: the Cabinet committee that oversaw the policies. Neither Parker, also Labour's Economic Development Minister, nor Green ministers James

Shaw and Eugenie Sage are noted for their receptivity to special pleading from the farm sector in the face of climate-change transitional pain. The fifth member is O'Connor, whose nickname, Jones notes, is "Minister Chainsaw".

Still, reluctant as they might be to soften or change any of the courses they've set in this intensely complex policy area, the political risk is considerable. The farmland-conversion issue is just one potentially perverse incentive that, between Billion Trees and the ETS, could bedevil the Government's best intentions. The trade-offs already made sit badly with many MPs. There is a sinking cap on allowable emissions. Major emitter in the economy – the Major Energy Use Group, which includes Pacific Aluminium, Lion, Fonterra and Ravensdown – thus has a reducing allocation, but say if the carbon and electricity pricing and/or time-frame squeezed too hard, their bosses will simply move what activities they can from New Zealand, but that won't mean they emit. We could get our emissions down that





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ENVIRONMENT / HEALTH

# How hard is it to plant trees for a living? Lisa Owen finds out

From **Checkpoint**, 5:08 pm on 12 June 2019

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The goal is to plant a mix of a billion native and exotic trees by 2028 - to support a low emission economy, protect the environment and create ongoing employment.







# New Zealanders' Perceptions of the Forestry Industry

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## 2016

- 1 Tourism/Aviation
- 2 Sheep & Beef Farming
- 3 Dairy Farming
- 4 **Forestry**
- 5 Oil & Gas





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2019

- 1 Horticulture & Viticulture
- 2 Tourism/Aviation
- = 3 **Forestry,**  
Sheep & Beef Farming
- 5 Dairy Farming
- 6 Commercial Fishing
- 7 Oil & Gas/Mining







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### 2022 Goal

- =
- 1 Horticulture & Viticulture, **Forestry**
  - 3 Sheep & Beef Farming
  - 4 Tourism/Aviation
  - 5 Dairy Farming
  - 6 Commercial Fishing
  - 7 Oil & Gas/Mining

