

# MEDIA RELEASE

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15 April 2010

## Environmental issues here to stay

Environmental issues associated with farming are here to stay, and farmers need to act now to prevent further government regulation, senior Ballance Agri-Nutrients' speakers have emphasised at Ballance Farm Environment Awards events around the country.

'Be it climate change, clean streams, or maintaining New Zealand's clean, green image – the environmental impact of farming has never been so important as it is today, and it is going to play a large role in farming for tomorrow's generations,' said Ballance Chief Executive Larry Bilodeau.

'The New Zealand Emissions Trading Scheme remains a huge challenge for us – firstly to understand and implement, and also to see where we will stand relative to our international competitors. One of the key issues New Zealand faces is how to provide New Zealand farmers with the right mechanisms to mitigate their emissions in a sustainable and profitable way.

'With regards to the agriculture sector, we are disappointed to see the point of obligation for the NZETS being placed with processors at a manufacturing level. While this offers a simplistic solution compared to the challenge of placing obligation at the farm gate, we believe it is the easy way out, and will not offer our farmers the chance to adapt and be innovative with the mitigation technologies available to earn carbon credits and reduce costs.'

He said the 121 farmer groups who entered the Ballance Farm Environment Awards (BFEA) this year demonstrated that New Zealand farmers continue to be ingenious and adaptable, and are ready to respond to an economic driver.

'Most farmers are using all of the tools currently available to reduce their environmental footprint, and I am certain they would be open to the uptake of new technologies as they become available if they can do so without impacting profitability.

'A lot of scientists are working hard to mitigate emissions, and while there are no silver bullets, the fertiliser industry can assist with compliance via the Overseer Model, which Ballance is currently doing.'

Mr Bilodeau said that the government is talking about moving the point of obligation to the farm gate in the future, but he is worried that the wrong system will have become engrained and be hard to shift.

'Farmers need the chance to offset their carbon emissions. New Zealand farmers are innovative, and would readily adopt new ways to reduce their environmental footprint if given the chance.'

All BFEA winners go on to host Open Days on their farms so other farmers can learn from their environmental initiatives. Farmers in Otago (16 April), Northland (21 April) and Wellington (22 April) have the opportunity learn more about what farmers in their region are doing to reduce the environmental impact of their farming businesses at the remaining BFEA awards evenings.