

Beyond Reasonable Drought;

Starborough-Flaxbourne soil conservation project



In 2004, a meeting of farmers from the Starborough-Flaxbourne area, concerned at reducing rainfall, increasing erosion and falling profitability, set up a soil conservation group. The meeting was arranged by the NZ Landcare Trust, which worked with the local community to design a project, apply for research funds and seek help from specialists.

Four years later, the group is upbeat. Techniques trialled are seen as pointing the way for farmers throughout New Zealand experiencing what's widely regarded as the effects of global warming.

Farming in the brown spot

The Starborough-Flaxbourne area of South Marlborough is predominantly taken up by pastoral farming, with some cropping on the better soils and an expanding viticulture industry on river terraces.

Since 1997, farms in the area have received about 15% less rainfall than the long-term average. Lack of rainfall is exacerbated by westerly winds, leading to soil erosion particularly on northern faces of hill country. Farmers have coped with drought by measures including de-stocking, but the long-term impact has been economic hardship for the district.



Beyond Reasonable Drought field day pack

- "Variability and trends in the climate of South Marlborough" - Alan Porteous, NIWA.
- "Seeking the high ground ... before we are forced to" - Dave Pearce, NZ Wine Company.
- "Just add water; Future proofing rural communities" - Stuart Ford, The AgriBusiness Group.
- "Making more from less; Bonavaree Farm, an overview" - Doug, Fraser and Wendy Avery.
- "Soils; the problems" - Richard Hunter, Marlborough Research Centre Trust.
- "Plant solutions for drought-prone saline Soils at Bonavaree" - Barrie Wills, Central Environmental Services.
- "Farm systems adapt to dry, at Bonavaree" - Graeme Ogle, Ogle Consulting.
- "Lucerne; grazing management for production and persistence" - Professor Derrick Moot, Lincoln University.
- "Natural capital grows resilient farm landscapes in Starborough-Flaxbourne" - Paul Millen, Millen Associates Limited.



NZ Landcare Trust
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Starborough-Flaxbourne soil conservation project summary

Findings of the Starborough-Flaxbourne soil conservation project will be summarised into a booklet, to be released in July this year.

The booklet will cover;

Soils

Climate

Dryland plants

Farming systems

Lucerne

Landscape options

A dryland community's story of resilience

Copies may be downloaded from The New Zealand Landcare Trust, Marlborough District Council and Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry websites.

www.landcare.org.nz Look under, 'What's hot'.

www.marlborough.govt.nz/enviromonitoring/awards.cfm

www.maf.govt.nz. Click on funded projects. Click 'search for all sff projects'. Type in 05/132. Push enter. Click 'view project details'.

For those without internet access, hard copies are available from the Marlborough District Council, 03 520 7400 or;

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**Sustainable
Farming Fund**
www.maf.govt.nz/sff

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