

'Farmers aren't stupid.' If 'regenerative agriculture' worked, they'd embrace it, New Zealand dairy scientist says

This is a call to make it clear that what is being suggested by environmentalists will limit our ability to contribute to economic recovery.

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Because of the ongoing statements that farmers can 'get rid of 20% of animals and make more money while being better for the environment'.

Some media have questioned the statements with 'surely if they could, they would – farmers aren't stupid?' We know that people in charge of businesses worth millions of dollars live and breathe their responsibilities; we do the calculations all the time – based on pay outs, schedules, interest rates and grass growth. Of course, we aren't stupid.

[Editor's note: Dr Jacqueline Rowarth is the director for DairyNZ.]

But apparently the environmentalists and activists think we are. The misconception has come from specific examples being applied to New Zealand in general.

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There are also statements that 'farmers who cut chemical inputs, introduce longer grazing rotations, and milk once a day can see an increase in organic matter in soil, which makes farms more resilient to drought'. This pushes towards 'regenerative agriculture' and, again, data are not presented with no clue given about the starting point for 'more'.

New Zealand soils have, on average, two to three times more organic matter than America or Australia where regenerative agriculture has been promoted.

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