

8 October 2015

MEDIA RELEASE

Expert group supports Landcorp in putting environment first

Landcorp is bringing strong, independent environmental leadership to its management table by establishing an advisory group of environmental experts.

The Environmental Reference Group (ERG) will guide Landcorp's environmental focus, taking a leading role in implementing sustainable agricultural strategies that put environmental best practice first across all of Landcorp's operations.

The group comprises six of the country's leading primary sector experts across a range of fields – Nelson-based environmental strategy expert Guy Salmon (chairman), sustainable farming adviser and veterinarian Dr Alison Dewes (Cambridge), water quality scientist Dr Mike Joy (Palmerston North), agricultural economist and Maori agribusiness consultant Dr Tanira Kingi (Rotorua), primary sector marketing expert Dave Maslen (Christchurch) and inventor and entrepreneur Angus Robson (Matamata).

Landcorp chief executive Steven Carden says the ERG, which had its first meeting in July, is advising senior management on environmental activities with absolute independence.

"The members of this group have outstanding credentials in environmental management. That expertise will be invaluable as we continue moving our business to a new model characterised by higher value products, sustainable earnings and environmental best practice.

"By bringing independent environmental experts to the management table, we're giving them the opportunity to challenge us. The ERG is helping us think about how we can drive environmental rejuvenation and future proof our farming activities while enhancing our profitability."

Mr Carden said the group demonstrated a new model for the primary sector, with environmental leaders collaborating in business decisions. The ERG will directly advise the Landcorp board and Mr Carden, helping Landcorp think about how it can change its farm systems and adopt new technologies in some of the country's more sensitive farming regions. One project the ERG is assisting with is a review of the Wairakei development on the Central Plateau.

"With the right thinking, science and technology, we believe we can get good business outcomes and good environmental outcomes. Those things aren't mutually exclusive. As we develop new customers in niche markets offshore, we are finding that their expectations of our farming practices continue to increase. We need to be ahead of them."

Dr Dewes, a vastly experienced and respected agribusiness expert with more than 25 years of farming experience in New Zealand and Australia, said Landcorp's establishment of the group was a first in New Zealand.

“As New Zealand’s largest farmer Landcorp is a hugely important organisation and one with huge potential. I’m keen to be able to be a leader in helping develop environmentally sustainable and profitable agricultural strategies for New Zealand.

“This will also encourage greater transparency, collaboration and co-operation across the primary sector. What Landcorp is doing is to be applauded – they are genuinely committed to doing the right thing. I feel privileged to be involved because I’ve long been advocating for this sort of boldness, to get more environmental expertise around the decision-making table.”

Dr Dewes said establishing a sustainable balance between the needs of farming and the environment was key.

“We, as a country, should have pride in agriculture. We’ve got a great story to tell but we have to do that legitimately.”

Fish & Game chief executive Bryce Johnson also praised Landcorp’s establishment of the ERG.

“Landcorp clearly recognises that there are environmental impacts from farming and that, as an industry leader, it has a duty to address those impacts to achieve environmentally sustainable best on-farm practice.

“Internationally, New Zealand’s unique point of difference centres around our natural environment. We stand to lose a lot as a country without that reputation and recognition, so it’s important we work together to make sure it’s genuine and provable.”

ENDS

Contact: John Mitchell, 027 975 4094

Notes for editors:

About Landcorp

Landcorp Farming Limited is a leader in New Zealand agriculture and strives for best practice in dairy, sheep, beef and deer farming, for sustainable use of resources and continuous improvement in livestock genetics and farm systems. Landcorp is a State Owned Enterprise and one of New Zealand's largest farming organisations, with 140 properties. Landcorp's Pāmu brand simply means “to farm” and reflects the provenance and quality of Landcorp’s products and its commitment to productive partnerships.