

Report No.	13-29
Decision Required	

SUSTAINABLE DAIRYING: WATER ACCORD

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. This report is to inform Members about the *Sustainable Dairying: Water Accord* (the Accord), which is under development by the dairy sector to replace the *Dairying and Clean Streams Accord*. The dairy industry is seeking Horizons' support for the Accord's expectations and commitments by becoming a 'Friend of the Accord'. The Regional Sector Group (RSG) has decided that as a whole it would support the Accord in principle, but that each Council needs to make their own decision on whether to sign up.

2. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council:

- a. receives the information contained in Report No.13-29 and Annexes;
- b. agrees in principle to support the *Sustainable Dairying: Water Accord* and agrees to join as a 'Friend of the Accord'.

3. FINANCIAL IMPACT

- 3.1. There is no additional financial impact associated with this report.

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- 4.1. At present, community engagement around the Accord is the responsibility of the Dairy Environment Leadership Group. If Horizons becomes a 'Friend of the Accord', engagement with the dairy industry to develop regional programmes would be required.

5. BACKGROUND

- 5.1. The *Dairying and Clean Streams Accord*, which came into effect in May 2003, set targets up to 2012. This agreement was between Fonterra Co-operative Group, regional councils, and the Environment and Agriculture and Fisheries ministries.
- 5.2. The new Accord is being developed under the oversight of the Dairy Environment Leadership Group, which is comprised of representatives from the dairy sector, central and regional government, iwi and the New Zealand Fish and Game Council. There will be three types of parties signing this Accord:
- 5.2.1. Accountable Partners – DairyNZ, six dairy companies and the Dairy Companies Association of New Zealand. These parties will have specific responsibilities and accountabilities for delivering, monitoring and reporting on commitments.
 - 5.2.2. Supporting Partners – Irrigation NZ, Fertiliser Association of New Zealand, Institute of Primary Industry Management and Federated Farmers of New Zealand. This group makes commitments to the outcomes, to support the accountable partners.
 - 5.2.3. Friends of the Accord – Iwi Leadership Group, environmental non-governmental agencies, regional councils, Local Government New Zealand and government agencies. The Friends will support the purpose and contribute through collaboration.

- 5.3. The proposed new Accord retains a focus on the effects of dairy farming on freshwater but is somewhat different in approach. Its main purpose is to “enhance the overall performance of dairy farming as it affects freshwater” by committing to an expectation of good management practice on farm, and providing assistance and encouragement to achieve this.
- 5.4. The Accord’s high-level vision is that “our waterways continue to provide for the full range of values and interests enjoyed by New Zealanders”. The associated broad commitments by the dairy sector are focused on continuous improvement, partnerships with iwi and other stakeholders, reducing the impact of existing dairy farms and ensuring new dairying implements good practice.
- 5.5. Progress towards specific ‘expectations’ (unenforceable goals) and ‘commitments’ will be monitored and reported. These expectations and commitments fall under five headings: riparian management, nutrient management, effluent management, water use management and conversions.
- 5.6. A copy of the draft document, dated January 29 [2013], and summary sheet are attached as Annexes A and B.

6. DISCUSSION

- 6.1. The Dairying and Clean Streams Accord has been somewhat controversial. During its development there was debate about how appropriate regional council involvement would be and whether the Accord’s objectives would be in conflict with Horizons’ policy and regulatory priorities around fresh water management. Horizons’ involvement was contingent upon the Accord being a voluntary initiative. Regardless of these concerns, considerable progress towards achieving its goals has been made by farmers with the assistance of partner organisations. For example, Horizons has provided funding (grants) and advice to over 150 farmers in the region over the last five years (plus advice without associated funding to numerous others), and has worked with other groups to develop tools for education and advocacy.
- 6.2. The proposed new Accord is a significant improvement on the Dairying and Clean Streams Accord. It will be considerably more inclusive as it will encompass a much wider range of parties. It is also broader in approach, identifying and updating more of the key areas that impact on water quality, including water use management and dairy conversions. Previous ambiguities have been clarified, with specific and detailed commitments listed under each key area.
- 6.3. On balance, it would be a positive step to join the proposed Accord as a friend. Nothing in the Accord would detract from regional policy statement or plan provisions. Where a regional council’s regulations and programmes are more rigorous than the Accord, it is suggested that the council work with the accountable and supporting partners to develop a programme that would bring the Accord’s targets into alignment. If Horizons were to join as a friend, it would involve a commitment to:

“engage with the dairy sector in the development and implementation of regional programmes of action to identify specific opportunities for co-coordinated [sic] and mutually beneficial action targeted at shared goals.”
- 6.4. Joining the Accord as a friend would give Horizons an opportunity to work collaboratively with the dairy industry and other stakeholders. This is consistent with our approach to implementing the nutrient management provisions of the One Plan. Government and the Land and Water Forum have also set out a strong preference for collaborative approaches to improving water quality and the Accord would demonstrate Horizons’ willingness to participate in these processes.

7. TIMELINE / NEXT STEPS

- 7.1. It is expected that the final draft of the Sustainable Dairying: Water Accord will be released to farmers during February.

8. SIGNIFICANCE

- 8.1. This is not a significant decision according to the Council's Policy on Significance.

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POLICY ANALYST

ANNEXES

- A Draft Sustainable Dairying: Water Accord (29 January 2013)
B Summary of the Sustainable Dairying: Water Accord