

SUBMISSION



To: Roger Smith, Chairperson of Kauri Dieback Programme Governance Group,
PO Box 2526, Wellington

By email: kauridieback@mpi.govt.nz

Submission on: Kauri dieback disease consultation document

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SUBMISSION TO KAURI DIEBACK PROGRAMME GOVERNANCE GROUP ON THE KAURI DIEBACK DISEASE CONSULTATION

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Federated Farmers of New Zealand (Federated Farmers) welcomes this opportunity to submit to the Kauri Dieback Programme Governance Group on the Kauri Dieback disease consultation.
- 1.2. Federated Farmers takes a keen interest in matters of biosecurity. Any new weed, pest or disease has the potential to impede or restrict a landowners ability to remain a productive part of the New Zealand economy and may place restrictions on our burgeoning trade and tourism markets. Farmers are caretakers of large areas of biodiversity, including forests and wetlands and therefore take a keen interest in any consultations which may affect these areas.
- 1.3. *Phytophthora agathidicida* (PA) is a pathogen which causes kauri dieback disease in kauri forests throughout the upper North Island. While it was discovered in New Zealand in 2009, anecdotal evidence suggests that it may have been introduced at some point over the last 100 years. The main vectors of the spread of kauri dieback is through the movement of contaminated PA soil spread by wild animals, people and machinery. There is no known cure for PA, but the intention is to restrict access to contaminated areas so that it will halt the spread of kauri dieback.
- 1.4. Kauri dieback has been the focus of a voluntary partnership management programme since 2009 led by the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) with support from Auckland Council, Bay of Plenty Regional Council, Northland Regional Council, Waikato Regional Council and the Department of Conservation. It is now clear that the voluntary approach needs regulatory backing which is intended to be provided by the National Pest Management Plan (NPMP) in accordance with the Biosecurity Act 1993. Even with regulatory backing, the NPMP will still need to rely on voluntary mechanisms if it is to succeed.
- 1.5. The draft NPMP establishes a goal, primary and secondary objectives, and 13 core rules which set clear requirements to restrict the spread of kauri dieback and potentially contaminated material. Federated Farmers interest in the NPMP relates to the restriction of soil movement, potential for stock exclusion on farm land which may be identified as a kauri forest and designation of zones or high risk areas for managing and/or restricting the spread of kauri dieback.
- 1.6. Federated Farmers is broadly supportive of the NPMP, but has some concerns about the provisions in the NPMP and how they may relate to farming activities.

2. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. Federated Farmers supports the obligation to report kauri dieback on land when detected or suspected.
- 2.2. Federated Farmers recommends that any stock exclusion rule is implemented in a way that minimises the impact on farming operations.
- 2.3. Federated Farmers prefers Option A which will establish disease zones and prevention zones for managing kauri dieback.
- 2.4. Federated Farmers prefers the establishment of a not for profit company as the agency for managing the Kauri Dieback NPMP.

3. GENERAL COMMENTS

- 3.1. Over the last 18 months, MPI and stakeholders have engaged in a number of high profile biosecurity incursion responses which have helped to bring the importance of biosecurity to the forefront. Federated Farmers encourages the proposed Kauri Dieback Management Agency and the existing Kauri Dieback Governance Group to utilise the current goodwill towards biosecurity to improve outcomes for the Kauri Dieback NPMP. It is vital that public support and buy in for the measures outlined in the draft NPMP is gained to help make the programme a success.
- 3.2. Kauri dieback has been managed as part of a partnership programme led by MPI with support of Auckland Council, Bay of Plenty Council, Northland Regional Council, Waikato Regional Council and the Department of Conservation. A regulatory approach is now being adopted by Government to restrict the spread of kauri dieback and funding required to support this programme will be immense. We understand that Auckland Council remain committed to managing kauri dieback on its own land with \$300 million budgeted for the natural environment over the next 10 years targeted towards that end. Funding from other sources will be key to ensuring the objectives of the draft NPMP are met.
- 3.3. The draft NPMP draws together a set of rules that are aimed at restricting and preventing the spread of kauri dieback. Federated Farmers views with caution any rules which may relate to stock exclusion and we are pleased that in the supporting material (National (Kauri dieback) Pest Management Plan proposal – Working Plan, pg. 19) it is clear that stock exclusion is only being considered in areas with confirmed kauri dieback and/or if necessary areas which may be at a high risk of kauri die back.

4. PROPOSED NATIONAL PEST MANAGEMENT PLAN RULES

- 4.1. Federated Farmers will make some comment on:
 - the obligation to report;
 - restrictions on the movement of soil;
 - approved risk management plans for earthworks;
 - stock exclusion zones;

- the development of high risk zones or areas; and
 - designated sanctuaries.
- 4.2. Federated Farmers is supportive of the proposed rule in the NPMP around obligations to report kauri dieback on land whenever it is detected or suspected. It is important that the management agency for kauri dieback creates an enabling and trusting environment for reporting suspect detections. A lack of trust and a fear that properties will be shut down has in the past prevented landowners from contacting the relevant authorities if they have seen a suspicious weed, pest or disease on their property. The Kauri Dieback Management Agency will therefore need to create a trusting environment for reporting of any suspected PA contaminated trees. For Federated Farmers, this means working with and developing a relationship with farmers.

Federated Farmers supports the obligation to report kauri dieback on land when detected or suspected.

- 4.3. To manage the threat posed by contaminated soil, the draft NPMP proposes that no soil or host material can be moved into areas that are defined a risk, while those moving out of areas will need to remove soil from items which may come into contact with PA contaminated soil. In some cases it is not practically possible to remove every last trace of contaminated soil from risk goods; while at other times there is no way to manage runoff and/or contaminated material on site. It is clear then that there is a fine balance to be struck between managing the spread of kauri dieback, while enabling those day to day activities which still need to occur. As noted in the working draft of the National (Kauri) Pest Management Plan proposal, the Minister has the ability to issue an exemption which would enable groups (such as the primary industry) to develop certification standards to manage the risk of kauri dieback spreading. There is a plethora of material detailing best practice for machinery wash down and good hygiene and Federated Farmers encourages the Kauri Dieback Management Agency to consider this approach. If required, Federated Farmers would engage with the Kauri Dieback Management Agency on this matter.
- 4.4. The draft NPMP poses a rule which will enable the Kauri Dieback Management Agency to enable stock exclusion from kauri forests where appropriate. A kauri forest is defined as:
- “One or more kauri trees in an area of uncultivated land along with all the land between such trees. If a kauri tree is at the edge of uncultivated land, the kauri forest extends to at least 3 times the maximum radius of that tree”.
- Feedback from our membership indicates that there are some individual kauri growing throughout farms and kauri forests developing in areas of cultivated land. The Kauri Dieback Management Agency will need to consider how these areas will be covered in the NPMP and how the stock exclusion rules would apply to these areas. If required, Federated Farmers would engage with the Kauri Dieback Management Authority on this matter.
- 4.5. Federated Farmers understands that there are a number of farmers in the Auckland region who have kauri dieback on their farms and have adopted best practice to prevent its spread within the farm; while others have adopted best practice to try and prevent kauri dieback coming onto their farms. Individual kauri can be found scattered throughout their farms,

while others have grown next to key farm infrastructure such as laneways, dairy sheds and other sheds. Federated Farmers is therefore encouraged that if the management authority identifies an area of kauri forest requiring stock exclusion that feasibility of exclusion will be considered. Federated Farmers recommends that any stock exclusion rule is implemented in a way that minimises the impact on farming operations.

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4.6. The public consultation document proposes a draft rule which will require the Kauri Dieback Management Agency to establish a disease and preventative zone (option A), or an area of high risk (option B). Once these zones are defined then the Management Agency will be able to establish rules for these areas which will provide a lot of certainty for landowners and the public about what their obligations are. Based on feedback from our membership, it would be our preference that Option A is selected because it enables a clear management plan for managing PA.

Federated Farmers prefers Option A which will establish disease zones and prevention zones for managing kauri dieback.

4.7. In principle, Federated Farmers is supportive of the concept of a Kauri Sanctuary as proposed by draft rule 13. It is our expectation that these will largely be found in areas of existing forests and few farms, if any, will be subjected to this NPMP rule. If any proposed Kauri Sanctuaries were to fall on farmland, Federated Farmers requests that the Management Agency work with the landowner(s) to balance the requirements between those of Kauri Dieback Management and the need for farmers to have operational farms.

5. COMPENSATION

5.1. The consultation document seeks feedback on the parameters for compensation as part of the Kauri Dieback NPMP. Unlike other National Pest Management Plans such as the American Foulbrood National Pest Management Plan, it is not possible to recover costs from any industry to help fund the pest management plan and/or compensatable activities. It is therefore worthwhile considering whether “compensation” is the correct terminology for all instances. Feedback from our membership indicates that payment of compensation is appropriate where farmers need to fence off productive areas of their farms or reroute a farm lane or track away. Federated Farmers advocates for the continued provision of compensation in these instances. In other instances, such as the requirement to fence off areas which may have Kauri dieback or present as a high risk, then the Kauri Dieback Management Agency should fund the cost of fencing.

6. NATIONAL PEST MANAGEMENT PLAN OPTIONS

6.1. The consultation document seeks feedback on the agency which should be responsible for managing the Kauri Dieback NPMP as either a government department or a not for profit company. Given the breadth of material provided in the consultation documents, it is clear the preferred option is for a not for profit company to be responsible for managing the NPMP.

There are certainly a number of benefits of being able to leverage funds to financially support the NPMP. One benefit of this would be there is less of a financial burden falls on government and taxpayers as a whole.

Federated Farmers prefers the establishment of a not for profit company as the agency for managing the Kauri Dieback NPMP.

- 6.2. Whatever option is selected by the Minister, the entity should be free from political interference and solely focused on reducing the effects of kauri dieback by preventing the spread of PA on kauri forests and minimising the impacts on culture, communities and the economy. Federated Farmers is concerned that the stock exclusion rules, for example, may be used for some other gain.
- 6.3. Federated Farmers does not have a preference for the Management Agency responsible for the Kauri Dieback NPMP.
- 6.4. It is our view that those community members with the most appropriate knowledge, expertise and governance skills are those best placed to be on any advisory or governance boards. There should be a particular emphasis on appointing those with practical experience with biosecurity matters, kauri dieback and the land, especially farmers.
- 6.5. The consultation document seeks feedback on how the Management Agency should work and support regions and communities. The Management Agency will be working to the principle that delivery will be at a localised level in so far as logistically possible by those who are best placed to do the work. Through our experience in recent responses, it is often those who are best known to those in the community that are able to gain the most traction and achieve outcomes in a response or long term management situation. We are however concerned with the possible creation of a multitude of committees, stakeholder groups and regional management units which could be created to manage kauri dieback and the impact that this will have on funding the kauri dieback NPMP and the on the ground initiatives. It is our view that this would unnecessarily divert much needed NPMP funds from restricting the physical spread of the response to funding the management of these groups. Federated Farmers encourages the Management Agency to consider whether the establishment of all of these groups is absolutely necessary.

7. DRAFT IMPACT STATEMENT FOR KAURI DIEBACK

- 7.1. Federated Farmers wishes to note the Draft Impact Statement is much more detailed than the Kauri Dieback Public Consultation document.
- 7.2. The consultation document also seeks feedback on whether any significant groups or impacts of the NPMP may not have been considered. Federated Farmers notes that in the NPMP Working Draft Appendix 2: Breakdown of likely exacerbators and associated level of risk and residual risk, beekeepers are considered to be at a low risk of spreading PA. Federated Farmers considers that beekeepers do still carry some risk of spreading PA and should be identified as such in the draft impact statement. Consideration should also be given to other groups and individual that can present a risk to spreading PA, for example, agricultural contractors, network utility operators and others.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1. Federated Farmers welcomes this opportunity to submit to the Kauri Dieback Programme Governance Group on the kauri dieback disease consultation documents.
- 8.2. Federated Farmers is supportive of the intent of the proposed NPMP to restrict the spread of PA, but is concerned with the potential application of the proposed stock exclusion rules in the NPMP.
- 8.3. Federated Farmers looks forward to continued engagement with the Kauri Dieback Programme Governance Group on this issue.

9. ABOUT FEDERATED FARMERS

- 9.1. Federated Farmers of New Zealand is a primary sector organisation that represents farmers, and other rural businesses. Federated Farmers has a long and proud history of representing the needs and interests of New Zealand farmers.
- 9.2. The Federation aims to add value to its members' businesses. Our key strategic outcomes include the need for New Zealand to provide an economic and social environment within which:
 - 9.2.1. Our members may operate their businesses in a fair and flexible commercial environment;
 - 9.2.2. Our members' families and their staff have access to services essential to the needs of the rural community; and
 - 9.2.3. Our members adopt responsible management and environmental practices.

Ends