

CASE STUDY



Rob Buddo (left), Farm owner and operator, Kinburn Farm, Hastings

FARMAX CONTRIBUTES TO BUSINESS GROWTH

For more than 100 years the Buddo family have run sheep and beef at Poukawa, south of Hastings at Kinburn Farm - profiting from quality soils and an intimate knowledge of summer dry farming.

Since his great grandfather bought 232ha in 1912, Rob Buddo and his family have increased the farming business to its current 825 hectares (effective), wintering 13,000 hoggets and 900 cattle over five blocks, including three full-time staff.

GROWING THE FARM

Looking back only six or seven years ago and Kinburn has more than doubled from 371ha, with stock numbers more than triple the 3,500 hoggets and 700 cattle owned in 2006.

Rob said this growth was due to challenging the status quo and making a number of good decisions about the best use of his land and pasture - which he couldn't have confidently done without the support of his FARMAX decision support software.

"This farm has good soils so we can do anything from cropping to running a Limousin stud, which we did for 25 years. We'll always use the land to its best potential and I'm prepared to change to any land use within reason - but only with a well considered compelling case," said Rob.

"We aim for five per cent growth year on year, and with the use of FARMAX, on average we always achieve it. Without a doubt FARMAX has helped us increase our financial return per hectare in the past 10 years by more than 50 per cent."

FARMAX GUIDING THE WAY

In the past few years, Rob has seen the value of moving out of cash crops and changing the use of some land to lucerne as an alternative forage.

"Using FARMAX to model lucerne in our farming system really challenged the financial return of cash cropping in terms of the best use of that land.

The model showed that financially lucerne could realise close to the same financial return and included other benefits such as being less resource intensive and more sustainable over time. Subsequently we have achieved those results on the ground in the last financial year."

He said FARMAX isn't a panacea - but it is an extremely powerful planning tool that, when used correctly, will provide the guidance and confidence to farm to your properties production and financial potential.

"We benchmark our business against the FARMAX plan which is re-worked each year. That provides us with the template to achieve a predetermined performance and financial result."

He said the trick was embedding the use of FARMAX across your entire farming system.

"We saw a quantum leap in production when we first started using it, and then it settled down to help us achieve exponential growth year on year."

After gaining a degree from Lincoln, working in London, and as a field

officer for Unilever, Rob returned to the family farm in 1990.

NO TWO SEASONS ARE THE SAME

Today, even after twenty-three years on the farm, Rob said no two seasons are ever the same - so resting on his laurels and expecting to do the same thing with the same result every year is simply not an option.

"To put all the factors together that will affect our farm's performance is really difficult because it is such a complex biological system. And that's where the

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powerful modelling that sits behind FARMAX is so superb.

“It pulls together a range of factors such as pasture type and growth rate; supplementary feeding; stock type, weight, numbers and breeding policies, and it shows you the outcome, or forecast, of different scenarios when you change what you are doing - there’s just no way that you could do these calculations yourself to understand the best return and fit for your farming system.”

Rob said FARMAX was to be congratulated for cleverly using the knowledge and data that was collated during the 60s, 70s and 80s - when the Government put a lot of investment into researching and understanding the pastoral farming system - and developing it into a practical farm management tool.

WORTH THE TIME

Being the primary FARMAX user on Kinburn, Rob said he doesn’t find the software hard to use - but he is an avid user for which he makes no apologies.

“When I am working on the farm my time is worth around \$20 an hour to the business, but when I’m working in FARMAX, it’s worth \$200.”

He said many farmers let their consultants drive their FARMAX support, but that is not Rob’s style.

“...We simply wouldn’t have grown in the same way without the help of FARMAX...”

“I have done the consultants FARMAX training because it is a complex tool and you need to know how to use it properly to get the best out of it. But I still believe that two heads are better than one, so I consult with my professional advisor - but I’m the one crunching numbers and using FARMAX all the time.”

LONG-TERM GAIN

Among other things Rob said FARMAX was currently helping him align his five farm blocks to work in sync so that he could get production up to its maximum potential and get the best financial returns across the entire farming system.

He said a lot of the decisions that FARMAX can quantify in the current season can have benefits in the long-term such as being able to lift lambing performance, wean earlier and get higher conception and lambing rates in the following year.

“When we first started using FARMAX we had huge gains - and more than a decade later we wouldn’t be without it. We use FARMAX as a strategic tool, to analyse different scenarios and

challenge them against the status quo.

We are still improving, with incremental growth - but we simply wouldn’t have grown in the same way without the help of FARMAX.”