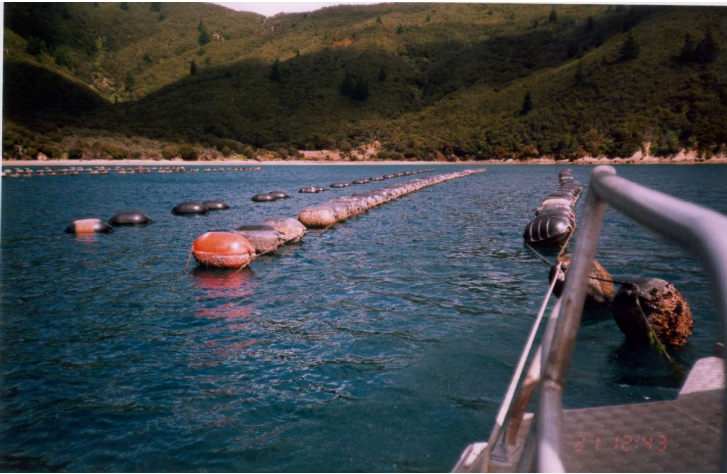


New Zealand's freshwater farm plans being phased in

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New Zealand Cabinet has confirmed the freshwater farm plan regulations, which are part of the Government's Essential Freshwater package, to improve freshwater health and management.

Freshwater farm plans to help farmers improve local waterways will be progressively phased in across the country, Damien O'Connor, Agriculture Minister and David Parker, Environment Minister said.

"Freshwater farm plans will be phased in region by region over the coming years to ensure they are practical, starting in parts of the Waikato and Southland on 1 August. This step provides farmers certainty, and they will have 18 months to prepare their first plan after the regulations take effect in their region," Damien O'Connor said.

"Freshwater farm plans will allow for flexibility and variability within farming systems, rather than a one size fits all approach.

"We've listened to and acted on the concerns of the sector around how to make a system workable on the ground and roll it out in a way that gives farmers time to make the necessary preparations.

"Demonstrating our sustainability credentials is critical for future export growth and this is a key part of that story."

Over time, farmers and growers will need a freshwater farm plan if they have 20 hectares or more in arable or pastoral use, five hectares or more in horticultural use, or 20 hectares or more in combined use.

Legislation enabling freshwater farm plans was passed in 2020 as an amendment to the Resource Management Act. There has been extensive consultation with farmers since then, including successful piloting and on-farm testing across the country.

“Industry businesses and groups such as Fonterra and Beef + Lamb New Zealand, along with regional councils, have led the way in encouraging the development of freshwater farm plans,” David Parker said.

“The freshwater farm plan regulations are another step in the progression towards widespread adoption of these plans that will, over time, lift the quality of our rural waterways.

“The Government is investing \$22.5 million from the Essential Freshwater fund to help farmers, growers and advisors develop the plans.”

The rollout period for the remaining regions will be outlined before the end of this year.