

# Country-Wide

## Land management issues made easy for farmers

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A business providing farmers with innovative land management solutions has been launched.

Two former Taranaki Regional Council staff, Sarah Dudin and Lachie Grant, have formed LandVision because they could see the need for their expertise by farmers.

Both have a passion for land management and saw the opportunity for farmers to use extensive land information and resources, especially if they want to extend their business and profitability.

Sarah says their passion is about the rural community, farming and dealing with the people who are involved in it.

“We want to see their businesses be profitable and sustainable and continue to be so.”

They agree farmers need to be proactive in the sustainable management and profitability of their properties because “the writing is on the wall”, especially when it comes to supplying overseas markets.

Environmental issues for landowners are coming more to the forefront, they say.

“Farmers need to be more aware of the issues their businesses are facing and look for solutions. If this doesn’t happen then regulation is likely to happen,” says Lachie.

They say there has been some change in farmer thinking in the past few years, but the speed of change needs to accelerate before the hard questions are asked of farmers by bureaucracy.

“If farmers are not doing something themselves it will be imposed and they have to demonstrate it’s sustainable,” says Sarah.

She says the time could arise when farmers are asked to present documentation of what they have done on their properties and many would not be able to show it.

Lachie says in the future there will be challenges from overseas markets, requiring more sustainable land use and product from assured areas, which LandVision can provide in the form of a farm plan. The plans have parallels to FarmSure (formerly Project Green).

Farm plans are the core business of LandVision, which in conjunction with soil maps match land use with land type that Lachie and Sarah agree will lead to improved farm sustainability and profitability.

The consequences of not matching land type to use include a reduction in soil quality, impact on water quality, and a drop in biodiversity values.

“A farmer can’t optimise his farming business without an understanding of his land resources, the strengths and limitations and how they respond under different conditions,” says Lachie.

LandVision will work with farmers on the plans, a process equipping them with the skills to recognise strengths and limitations on their property.

The farm plan is a more involved process than soil mapping alone, and looks at the bigger picture on the property. It includes, shade and shelter, animal and plant pests on the property, and soil erosion. It also includes management and

potential changes for the farmer to tackle such as internal subdivision to protecting an area of native bush.

“It gives strategic direction,” says Sarah.

The farm plan can be done in sections, but is more beneficial if the comprehensive plan is done.

Soil mapping is another service they provide and both are urging farmers to consider doing this before buying properties. Lachie says many farmers have already decided what they want to do on the land before even buying it.

“Farmers spend \$2-3 million on a property and have decided what they want to do with it prior to buying it. Quite often it may not be suitable.

“If you were buying a commercial building in town for the same value you would invest in an engineers report to determine whether it was structurally sound for what you wanted to use it for,” he says.

The pair agree it is critical to understand the strengths and weaknesses of soil and a soil map illustrates a property's different abilities to cope with different classes of stock.

But Lachie and Sarah aren't just about soil maps and farm plans.

“We will tackle any issue farmers have.”

These include wetland enhancement, coastal land management, to tree species selection for land type and areas down to selecting the right stock policy for your soil type and nutrient budgeting.

“We are about innovative land management solutions for farmers,” says Lachie.

Lachie and Sarah, who have both been involved in soil conservation and farm planning throughout their careers, are based in Stratford and will travel anywhere the work takes them.

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