Dancing to whose tune? Farmers’ perspectives on agriculture’s role in diminishing New Zealand’s 100% Pure brand

Ronlyn Duncan
Department of Environmental Management, Lincoln University, N.Z.

Paper presented at the 2014 NZARES Conference
Dancing to whose tune? Farmers’ perspectives on agriculture’s role in diminishing New Zealand’s 100% Pure brand

Ronlyn Duncan
Lecturer in Water Management, Department of Environmental Management

Ronlyn.Duncan@lincoln.ac.nz  Tel: (03) 423 0427
Recently published ...
Duncan, R. 2014. Regulating agricultural land use to manage water quality: the challenges for science and policy in enforcing limits on non-point source pollution in New Zealand

*Land Use Policy*, Volume 41: 378-387
DOI: 10.1016/j.landusepol.2014.06.003

Overview

• Overview of research
• Set the scene: NZ’s ‘100% Pure’ brand
• Accusations and some of the outfall
• Research: where and who
• Research results
• Implications?
The Research

• Social qualitative research (interpretive not quantitative)
• Hurunui Waiau region of North Canterbury
• 23 interviews conducted during 2013
• Participants: regional plan submissions and snowball sampling
• Thematic analysis: descriptive and analytic coding
100% PURE NEW ZEALAND

newzealand.com
Dairy farmers are killing our waterways with their short term pillaging of natural resources that belong to us, not to them. They must pay for the rectification of the damage they have caused - and keep any profits left over with a clear conscience. Polluters must pay, and be held accountable for restoring the damage they do, or lose their licence to operate. It's heartbreaking standing by and watching one river die after another because of their short term thinking that is as bad for them in the long term as it is for us.

Translating Fed Farmers speak into plain english:
"We're spending billions..." = You stupid taxpayers and ratepayers are spending billions cleaning up our mess and you don't even realise it... haha!
"We're the backbone of the economy..." = If we say this often enough, those stupid townies will beleive dairying is the only game in town; don't bother about the perils of having all our eggs in one basket or our dirty industry ruining it for tourism. Bugger off townies - we should be able to do what we like because we're creaming it.
"It's not just farming that's the problem..." = If we say this often enough those stupid townies won';t cotton on to the fact that 95% of nitrate pollution comes from intensive farming.
"The National Objectives Framework will resolve a lot of the public's concerns." = Those stupid townies don't even realise the government has set the framework bottomlines so low it will permit rivers to turn toxic with dairy nitrate runoff... hahahahaha!
Regional distribution of interview participants

Participants: 23
Dairy = 12
Irrigated sheep, beef, arable with dairy support = 8
Dryland sheep, beef, arable = 3
Locations are indicative only.

Source: Environment Canterbury
“friends, when they hear you’ve got an irrigator, you just feel that they think you’re sucking the water out, you’re ruining it ... I worry about those things ... but on the other hand, to survive in this world [you need water to farm] ... I always feel torn”.

(Wife, sheep and beef farm with dairy support)

“we’ve got our girls ... at boarding school ... you go out to a dinner with town people and they all say oh, you’re from Culverden, oh is there much dairy farming up there? ... oh you’re not one of those are you? Oh, it’s bad this dairy farming and those horizontal pylons, they hate those, oh it’s all just so bad what the farmers are doing. And I say well only 3% of New Zealand’s water is used and 97% goes out to sea and 2% of it is used for irrigation. They think we’re using all the water.”

(Sheep and beef farmer with dairy support)
Question posed to farmers:

What do you make of media reports that suggest agriculture is degrading New Zealand’s rivers and putting its ‘100% Pure’ brand at risk?
Descriptive themes

1. Media misrepresentation
2. Minority of farmers
3. Farmers by nature
4. Town people
5. Taking action
6. The purity of ‘Pure’
7. The economy
Emotions

Negative:
1. Disagreement
2. Disappointment
3. Frustration
4. Anger
5. Unhappiness
6. Hopelessness
7. Surprise
8. Feeling hurt

Positive:
1. Pride
Analytic themes

1. Injustice
   (wrong target, powerless to refute claims, minority to blame, media misrepresentation, no recognition of good actions, never pure)

2. Invalidation of social identity
   (farmers contributing to economy, not in their nature to argue, farmers do care about environment - custodians not vandals, taking action but nobody listening)

3. Defiance
   (proud to be farmers, reject claims, keep going)
How does this analysis inform questions about farming to changing expectations?

It illustrates:

– the context into which calls for change seek to intervene

– the potential barriers (and solutions) to change are not just technical
Acknowledgments

• I thank my research participants who gave up their valuable time to participate in my research

• I also thank the Lincoln University Research Fund which funded this research