



## Legally Speaking

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# National's farming policies post-election

Following election night on 14 October, it is clear that the next Government will be one led by the National Party, although National, as at the time of writing this article (with the special votes still being counted) has not secured enough votes to govern alone.

by Tyler Burgess  
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While the upshot of this is that any Government policy on agriculture and primary industry generally will be dictated by the parties who make up the coalition Government, one would expect the National Party policy to be dominant within the coalition.

The question therefore becomes, what is National's agriculture policy for 2023 and beyond?

National released the report 'Getting Back to Farming' in April of 2023, outlining the 19 different changes that they would introduce to the agricultural sector, were they to get back into Government this year. Some of those changes include:

- Increasing the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) Scheme from 19,000 annually, by phasing in a cap increase to 38,000, over five years.
- Ban foreign investors from purchasing farms for the purpose of carbon farming.

- Dial back the Proposed National Environmental Standards for Sources of Human Drinking Water.

- Re-introducing live exports of cattle, but with strict regulations and the requirement that all vessels must be purpose built for live exports.

National's agriculture policy aims to increase the amount of RSE visas issued, to assist with the large number of seasonal workers required in New Zealand's economy.

Interestingly, some of National's policies are opposed to foreign investment. In particular, foreign investment that aims to purchase good farmland for carbon farming (i.e. planting them with large amounts of trees in return for carbon credits).

The Proposed National Environmental Standards for Sources of Human Drinking Water were the Labour government's plans to utilise the Water Services Act 2021 to heavily regulate the supply of water for domestic purposes, particularly in rural areas where one neighbour supplied the drinking water of

another. This would apply even in the most informal and private of arrangements.

The cost of these regulations for the party supplying the water would in many cases heavily 'penalise' that party for supplying.

National's policy would be to exempt many of these small-scale arrangements from requirements proposed by the previous Government, and only require these strict regulations for larger scale arrangements, of more than 30 connections.

As many will be aware, live exports of cattle by ship were banned in April of 2023. National proposes re-introducing this practice, on the basis that high animal welfare standards are maintained, and that all ships used are purpose built for carrying live exports.

While these are just some of National's policies on agriculture, and some of them may not come to fruition, it will definitely be evident for the farming community for the next three years that there is a new government in Wellington.

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