

To: Waikato Regional Council
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Submission on: Proposed Waikato Regional Plan Change 1
Waikato and Waipa River Catchments

Date: 7 March 2017

Submission by: Koch Farms Limited
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Our submission relates to the whole of the proposed plan change 1 (PC1) and partly supports and partly opposes PC1.

We seek a modification to PC1.

We wish to speak at the hearing in support of our submissions.

Signed: 
Koch Farms Limited by its directors

Date: 7th March, 2017

Submitter's interest in PC1

We have lived and farmed our 93 ha dairy farm some 8 kms from the west side of the Waikato River for the last 20 years - Lower Waikato sub-catchment 6, priority 2 (almost on the boundary of the sub-catchment withdrawn from PC1 notified on 3 December 2016). During the early part of this time we were profitable milking 240 dairy cows.

Today approx. 52 ha is part of a dairy farm, including the property next door, and the balance is in market gardening, leased and managed by Wilcox's of Pukekohe.

We view ourselves as kaitiakitanga, guardians of the land, and have always farmed responsibly to avoid any negative effect on the environment, our way of life or those surrounding us.

Since owing our property we have used the Waikato River re-creationally for white bating, water skiing, swimming and fishing. Over the last twenty years more and more people have been using and enjoying the river from the Tuakau Bridge all the way to within a kilometre of Port Waikato where the river enters the ocean.

1. Subject matter and provision in PC1

We submit the overall objective of having a healthy Waikato River is very important to us all as a society. But PC1 is a complex set of ideological rules that are difficult to work through and understand. In its present form PC1 **WILL** put many farmers and market gardeners out of business, destroying many millions of dollars in economic value in the process.

We support the notion of clean water but subject to the following submissions

Summary and reasons for this submission

PC1 will make our farm business unviable, as it will detrimentally impact on the lease we have with the Market Gardeners. At this stage it seems to us that very little is known or understood by WRC about market gardening and its effects on land.

PC1 intends to help restore and protect the health of the Waikato and Waipa rivers by introducing extensive rules to manage and reduce:

- a. Nitrogen,
- b. Phosphorus,
- c. Sediment, and
- d. Microbial pathogens;

in the areas which affect the Waikato River and the Waipa River. What is not clear is how market gardening, which has been a vital part of the food production in the Waikato and South Auckland for a century or more, detrimentally impacts on our ecosystem.

Before PC1 is progressed we submit that much more scientific research and information is required as the broad-brush approach will destroy the economy on terms that do not offer compensation to those directly affected.

Relief sought

More time is required to look at and determine the actual effects of Nitrogen, Phosphorus, Sediment loss, and Microbial pathogens on properties engaged in market gardening and the options available to mitigate those effects. We therefore object to market gardening being regulated in the way proposed by PC1.

Once market gardening comes to an end on part of our farm, we had provided in our lease that it would be returned to dairying. We do not want to be excluded from having the whole of our property as a dairy farm again in future so object to the Land Use rules in PC1 which would require us to seek and obtain a consent to resume dairy farming. This is an unnecessary expense and is prejudicial to our farm and its economic value.

2. Subject matter and provision in the Plan

Property over 20Ha less than 6 stock units per Ha

Rule 2, part 1

N loss doesn't exceed Nitrogen Reference point or 15kg N/ha/year

Summary and reasons for this submission

We fully support reducing losses of N from the land into waterways, but we object to the arbitrary imposition of the N limit as proposed in PC1. This should be a sub-catchment issue, not an individual property issue. It wrongly penalises farmers who have been responsible in the use of N and are low

users and benefits the farmers who have been high users and perceived to be the cause of the N overloading. That is unjust and should not be allowed to remain in PC1.

Relief sought

The provision imposing the N cap for each property must be amended or deleted.

The concept of developing a Farm Environment Plan is commendable but not on the terms set out in PC1. The use of WRC recognised professionals creates a bureaucracy with a cost structure that will cripple farming. This is unacceptable and must be modified or deleted.

Conceptually the Farm Environment Plan will be a written plan for each farm to manage Nitrogen and Phosphorus use, manage sediment movement across the farm and control the runoff of Microbial pathogens within the farm boundaries. This may need a professional for some farms with high loadings and runoff problems, but that will not be the case for many farms so we object to the rules that impose an absolute requirement (with associated expense) for a Farm Environment Plan prepared by WRC approved professionals.

3. Subject matter and provision in the Plan

Property over 20Ha less than 6 stock units per Ha

Rule 2, part 2

No land over 15 degrees slope cultivated or grazed

Summary and reasons for this submission

We **cannot support** this provision in PC1. Steeper land is poorer performing and tends to carry low stock numbers. If this land is not viable to farm it will revert back to gorse, ragwort and tobacco weeds, unless it is retired and planted in trees designed to generate a revenue over time. The economic cost and losses from this provision are catastrophic to farming.

We agree that very steep land, should not be cultivated, as it is obvious what happens to the soil and structure and where it ends up. But we fully support that any land that stock and humans can walk on can and should be land that can be grazed on by sheep, horses, deer or cattle.

Dead flat land can flood or become water logged transferring nutrients, sediments and contaminants over land into waterways and therefore just as detrimental as land with any slope, poorly farmed.

Relief sought

We would ask that this provision be deleted entirely

If the provision goes ahead we ask to be compensated for the current value of our property so that we can relocate to flat land and resume a viable business.

4. Subject matter and provision in the Plan

Property over 20Ha less than 6 stock units per Ha

Rule 2, part 3

No soil cultivation occurs within 5m of a water body

Summary and reasons for this submission

We **fully support** this part of PC1.

Relief sought

The provision is retained as written

5. Subject matter and provision in the Plan

Property over 20ha

Rule 2, part 4

No winter forage crops grazed in situ.

Summary and reasons for this submission

We cannot support this provision.

Leading experts and agronomists are clear that winter crops direct drilled can actually help reduce the soil sediment loss and proper management of stock grazing winter crops, with post grazing planting of a crop like oats, fully utilise the N in the root zone. In many soils winter rains water log the soil so it is not possible for N to leach through the soil as there is no movement in the saturated soil. Phosphorus attaches itself to the surrounding soil and does not leach; the only risk of loss is overland with sediment movement. Microbial pathogens also only migrate overland as the soil is a filter and the bacterial activity in the soil converts the pathogens into sustenance for the environment over time. The only issue is containing runoff within the farm and that is a matter for the Farm Environment Plan to address.

Relief sought

The provision is deleted

6. Subject matter and provision in the Plan

Property over 20ha

Rule 2, part 5

Water bodies are fenced and stock excluded. Any new fence are located to keep cattle, horses, deer and pigs at least 3m away from water body

Summary and reasons for this submission

We support the proposed fencing of water ways in part.

We do not agree to 3m, this is too large an area for most waterways.

We agree that this does need to happen so that stock cannot enter the water ways and cause contamination.

Relief sought

The provision is amended by waterways being fenced sensibly to allow for ease of cleaning and spraying and that the fences are to be stock proof.