



Manaaki Whenua
Landcare Research

Negotiating social licence to farm: what, where, and how

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Negotiating social licence to farm: what, where, and how

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Suzanne Vallance, Sarah Edwards

Manaaki Whenua – Landcare Research

Reviewed by:

Dean Stronge
Researcher – Environmental Social Science
Peter Edwards
Project Leader
Manaaki Whenua – Landcare Research

Approved for release by:

Suzie Greenhalgh
Portfolio Leader – Society, Culture & Policy
Manaaki Whenua – Landcare Research

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Summary

Project and client

This inventory was prepared as part of a larger project funded by the Our Land and Water National Science Challenge on 'Navigating the social licence to operate (SLO) nexus between farmers, agribusinesses, consumers and citizens in New Zealand'.

Objective

To develop an inventory of 'places and spaces' within which social licence is negotiated (where), methods of negotiation (how), and topics of negotiation (what).

Methods

A literature review was conducted in order to develop a framework for:

- what – what elements of social licence to farm are being negotiated
- where – what spaces and places are sites of negotiation
- how – how is social licence negotiated?

This was followed by an analysis of secondary data sources (including newspapers and websites, all accessed in April 2023), and public places such as roadsides, store frontages, and peri-urban developments.

Results

What is being negotiated included:

- food security and sovereignty
- localisation and democratisation of food
- authentication and quality assurance.

Where social licence to farm is negotiated included the following places and spaces:

- farms
- farm gates
- farmers' markets
- special agricultural events
- food and fibre cooperatives
- general retailers
- food boxes
- sites and settings
- media.

How social licence to farm is negotiated included:

- campaigns by farmers or industry bodies
- protests and awareness raising
- marketing
- promotions, sponsorship, and endorsements
- awards
- certification schemes and labelling
- research and reporting.

Conclusions

- **What** is being negotiated: This is diverse. Many of the issues at the centre of these negotiations of social licence are already well known and include, for example, animal welfare and environmental degradation. Some aspects are in the process of transitioning from informal negotiations of social licence to farm, to more formal legislation, such as the passing of the National Policy Statement on Highly Productive Land as urban areas encroach on versatile and high-class soils.

However, there are also issues included in the inventory that may represent the seeds of future negotiations on food security and food sovereignty, the democratisation of food and fibre, localisation, and kai ora ('be healthy / have life'). Seeing these seeds and initiating voluntary codes of conduct or standards through certification and/or verification may be a way of proactively managing social licence along the journey from seed to statute.

- **Where** (places and spaces): This part of the inventory documents how the spaces and places where social licence is negotiated are diverse, ranging from 'on farm' (agri-tourism, pick-your-own, etc.), through markets of various kinds, on roadsides, to specific areas where the adverse effects of farming (e.g. declining water quality) are being experienced. We include various media as a type of space here too.
- **How** (programmes and protests): This part highlights that there are numerous *ways* of negotiating social licence. Some are productive, in the sense of both gaining approval by supplying much-needed or highly valued food and fibre and accentuating the positive. Negotiations can also be prolonged, complex, event-driven, emotive, or adversarial, and they can invoke different versions of 'the social', from small groups protesting over localised issues to broader movements.

Recommendations

- Producers and 'publics' have a range of options when it comes to negotiating social licence to farm. Developing a good match between the complexity of the issue, the places and spaces where the negotiation takes place, and how negotiations are undertaken may be key to more productive and less adversarial outcomes.

1 Background literature

The idea of a social licence to operate (SLO) has a plethora of meanings in industry, government, and media, as Edwards and Trafford (2016) have noted. While these multiple meanings and inconsistencies must be acknowledged, the literature does often refer to notions of public acceptance or approval of a company, commercial activity, industry or sector. Hurst et al. (2020, p. 3) define social licence as

an intangible, dynamic construct that broadly refers to the ongoing acceptance of an entity (individual, project, organization and/or industry) by its stakeholders, as evidenced by the entity's ability to engage with its stakeholders and respond to the ever-changing demands on, and expectations of, the entity.

Social licence is not a legal permit; rather, it suggests an industry's legitimacy, credibility, and transparency, and the public's or community's endorsement of the activity (see Power 2017; Moffat & Zhang 2014; Newton et al. 2020; Douglas et al. 2022; Baines & Edwards 2018; Clarke-Hall 2018).

There are debates in the literature about *who grants social licence* and the extent to which broad social acceptance and approval may differ from more localised or distinctive populations, such as those directly affected by an industry (Sinner et al. 2020; Newton et al. 2020; Dare et al. 2014; Boutilier 2021; Joyce & Thomson 2000; Knook et al. 2020) or indigenous people (Poelina et al. 2021). Who grants social licence is related to *the issue in question*, which may include worker safety, environmental performance, contribution to GDP, animal rights, and so on. Activities to enhance social licence might include sponsorships or support for community groups, demonstrating compliance with either voluntary codes of practice or formal rules and regulations, or running events that promote understanding and familiarity, such as A&P Shows (Holloway 2004).

The literature also notes that there are *varying levels of social licence to operate* (Boutilier & Thomson 2011, p. 2; see also Boutilier & Thomson 2018; Eabrasu et al. 2021; Power 2017). These levels may be affected by high-profile events (such as Cyclone Gabrielle, which left significant areas of Hawke's Bay covered in forestry slash), or a sector or company's efforts to enhance their social licence (Bice & Moffat 2014; Moffat & Zhang 2014; Eabrasu et al. 2021). This has generated a line of enquiry around *how* social licence to operate is negotiated, with *contact quality* and *procedural fairness* identified as key factors (Moffat & Zhang 2014; Mercer-Mapstone et al. 2017; Hurst et al. 2020; Ford & Williams 2016).

Power (2017) drew on Arnstein's (1969) ladder to categorise the types of engagement 65 New Zealand companies practised in building and maintaining social licence. Her work demonstrates that the ability to match the seriousness and substance of the issue with the type of engagement is critical to building and maintaining social licence with the different publics listed above. Type of engagement may range from newsletters, through on-site visits, to providing entry-level jobs for those potentially affected by a company or sector's activities (Eabrasu et al. 2021)

Engagement at the 'empowered' end of the International Association of Participation spectrum or at the top of Arnstein's ladder may be important for indigenous peoples (Lyons

et al. 2023; Meesters & Behagel 2017; Joyce & Thomson 2000), and in the context of te Tiriti/Treaty of Waitangi here in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Ruckstuhl et al. (2014, p. 306) detail how, despite the Resource Management Act 1991 being a 'legal rather than a social permitting instrument', attempts to enact the principles of the te Tiriti/the Treaty generally involve negotiation, dialogue, and, in some cases, partnerships. Consequently, they argue, though unevenly adopted, 'Māori cultural values such as *kaitiakitanga* (guardianship) have become acceptable and commonly held "yardsticks" for measuring resource usage impact... and a sharing of Māori values within wider society'. Their research also showed some bottom lines that might indicate denial or weakening of social licence, such as insufficient recognition of indigenous interests, ownership, and sovereignty, poor safeguarding of customary rights, or weak mechanisms for distributing the benefits of activities to indigenous groups.

The literature reviewed so far provides some useful lessons and frameworks for the current research project, and also points to a number of debates about:

- what is being negotiated (what)
- where these negotiations take place (spaces and places)
- how social licence is negotiated (types of engagement).

To contribute to our understanding of what, where, and how, we present an 'indicative inventory' of (a) the types of issues being negotiated, (b) the places and spaces where publics (consumers, those affected by farming) encounter and experience farms, or purchase or receive farm products, and (c) the types of engagement that, one way or another, shape these publics' opinion of farming.

2 Methods

Our review of themes and debates in the social licence literature (as presented above) directed our attention to resources and activities that are specifically related to negotiations over social licence to farm. These included:

- observations of particular places, such as roadsides and public events, including farmers' markets and award ceremonies
- secondary data sources, including websites, Facebook pages, reports, newsletters, and other publicly available documents.

All of these were accessed in April 2023.

Analysis of these data was iterative, and a number of categorisations were considered and discarded. Ultimately our categorisation flowed from the two basic themes of where social licence is negotiated and how. We could then look more carefully at the different types of places and spaces (e.g. points of production and consumption, and hybrids of these) that seemed to enable and constrain various relationships between farmers and publics. This, in turn, allowed us to add nuance to the activities and programmes that happened in these places to inform debates about the quality of contact.

The inventory also indicates the sorts of issues that are being negotiated in these various spaces. In short, it is a resource to be used to inform our understanding of what, where, and how social licence to farm is being negotiated. It is not intended as an exhaustive list; rather, it is an indication of the diversity of places and spaces, programmes, and issues involved in negotiating social licence to farm in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

3 Results

The inventory is divided into three parts.

- 1 **What** is being negotiated: This is diverse. Many of the issues at the centre of these negotiations of social licence are already well known and include, for example, animal welfare and environmental degradation. Some aspects are in the process of transitioning from informal negotiations of social licence to farm, to more formal legislation such as the passing of the National Policy Statement on Highly Productive Land as urban areas encroach on versatile and high-class soils.

However, there are also some issues included in the inventory that may represent the seeds of future negotiations on food security and food sovereignty, the democratisation of food and fibre, localisation, and kai ora. Seeing these seeds, and initiating voluntary codes of conduct or standards through certification and/or verification, may be a way of proactively managing social licence along the journey from seed to statute.

- 2 **Where** (places and spaces): This part of the inventory provides an indication of the diverse spaces and places where social licence is negotiated, ranging from 'on farm' (agri-tourism, pick-your-own, etc.), through markets of various kinds, on roadsides, to specific areas where the adverse effects of farming (e.g. declining water quality) are being experienced. We include various media as a type of space here too.
- 3 **How** (programmes and protests): This part highlights that there are numerous *ways* of negotiating social licence. Some are productive, in the sense of both gaining approval by supplying much-needed or highly valued food and fibre and accentuating the positive. Negotiations can also be prolonged, event-driven, well-informed, emotive, complex or adversarial, and they can invoke different versions of the social, from small groups protesting over localised issues to broader movements.

Producers and publics have a range of options when it comes to negotiating social licence to farm. Developing a good match between the complexity of the issue (what), the places and spaces where the negotiation takes place, and how to undertake negotiation may be key to more productive and less adversarial outcomes.

3.1 What is being negotiated

The right to farm may be negotiated, but so too are the different ways farming is practised. Our approval, acceptance or endorsement of these varied practices ebb, flow and change over time. When Aotearoa/New Zealand was established as 'Britain's farm', clear-felling of native forest to expand productive land was seen as 'progressive'. In the 1980s and 90s

neoliberal doctrine emphasised economic growth as the path to progress, with milk as this country's equivalent of Australian ore or Saudi oil.

Things change: some of what was seen as progressive is now being questioned. This short section of the inventory indicates some emergent issues. Other issues that have been negotiated for a more extended period of time – dirty dairying, animal welfare – are included in the 'where' and 'how' sections. Here we highlight nascent or more complex debates that cut across neat social or environmental issues.

3.1.1 Food security and sovereignty

Food security requires a reliable supply of and access to food that is culturally acceptable, healthy, nutritious, and affordable. Food sovereignty reconfigures food systems so that those who produce, distribute, and consume food also control the means through which that food is produced, distributed, and consumed. This may have particular implications for indigenous peoples. Te Waka Kai Ora, for example, aim to:

Support whānau, hapū and Māori communities to join together to; grow, farm, compost, bake, cook, make and eat kai... This is about having access to safe, local, culturally appropriate and nutrient dense food that supports living and thriving Māori economies. Māori food sovereignty is the practice of ensuring food-secure futures for whānau, independent of multinational and national food systems and in harmony with Te Ao Tūroa (the natural world). It is about whānau having access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that is produced locally and free from chemicals, pesticides and genetic modification.¹

3.1.2 Democratisation of food

Food security and sovereignty share some elements with the democratisation of food. Community gardens, community-supported agriculture, agrihoods, allotments, and food co-ops are all ways in which democratisation of food can occur. While these look at food production and access, other examples disrupt the other end of the supply chain. Happy Cow,² for example, enables 'anyone' to become a milk retailer. They use a unique, small-scale milk processor to collect milk, and an app to connect consumers and producers. Anyone can become a patron through a novel, crowd-sourcing approach.

3.1.3 The rise of authentication and quality assurance schemes

When considering 'what' is being negotiated, 'standards' almost deserve their own category. Standards are included here as an emerging issue associated with the rise of authentication and quality assurance schemes and the new industry of consultants, auditors

¹ <https://www.tewakakaiora.co.nz/maori-food-sovereignty/>

² <https://happycowmilk.co.nz/>

(including QCONZ³) and authenticators (such asASUREQuality⁴) that act as intermediaries between producers and consumers.

These certification and authentication schemes both reflect and contribute to negotiations. They indicate that there is an appetite to know what is going on – on the farm – without actually having to go there. It speaks to an established sociological distinction between *gemeinschaft* (where negotiation takes place in communities or through face-to-face interaction, as was typical in pre-industrial revolution/urbanisation societies) and *gesellschaft* (where negotiations are contractual and associated with the modern nation-state).



Figure 1. Doug's Free Range Eggs have the SPCA ✓ (Photo: S. Vallance)

3.2 Where: places and spaces of negotiation

Farming is an incredibly diverse activity encompassing all types of production, from the large corporate and industrial scale, to hobbyist enterprises and niche goods. Some farms have a singular focus (e.g. deer velvet), whereas others combine production of food and fibre with, for example, Airbnb and other agri-tourism ventures that bring producers and different publics into contact.

Places of consumption of – or at least exposure to – these products is perhaps even more diverse, ranging from the farm gate, through dairies (which may actually be fairly distinctive to New Zealand, at least in their label), to butchers and, now, supermarkets. These are all places where publics encounter farming. In Aotearoa/New Zealand, travelling from town to

³ <https://qconz.co.nz/about-qconz-audit-company/>

⁴ www.asurequality.com

town, whether as tourists or commuters, will take you through farmland. Roadsides are also sites of encounter, where people's opinions of farmers and farming are shaped, which in turn influences farming practices.

3.2.1 Farms and farm tours

Farm tours and farm stays have promoted a relatively new field of agri-tourism, where people get to see, hear, and smell farming for themselves. Some offer short visits and *demonstrations* of farm life, including shearing a sheep or milking the cows, while others offer longer (overnight) stays in boutique or basic (shearing sheds) accommodation and hands-on experiences of feeding a lamb, fruit and flower picking, or tractor and pony rides. Some are marketed to an international audience, whereas others seem to be speaking directly to the New Zealand public. Open Farms, for example, is described as New Zealand's National Farm Day, 'Reconnecting Kiwis with our land, food & farmers'.⁵ Another example, Geraldine Farm Tours, says you may 'cuddle and feed lambs', learn to shear a sheep or meet a 'friendly and curious cow'.⁶ It is also possible to 'calm the soul' at Shamarra Alpacas.⁷ There are many other examples of petting zoos and on-farm activities involving interactions with animals. Other farms offer opportunities to engage in more horticultural activities, such as 'pick your own' berries at Julian's Berry Farm and Café,⁸ for example.

Some of these tours are advertised internationally, with Farm and Leisure Tours showcasing 'New Zealand – also known as Aotearoa, "Land of the Long White Cloud"',⁹ with Marlborough and Tasman's Quilt and Fibre Tour¹⁰ advertised next to Ireland, UK, and South Africa.

3.2.2 Farm gate

Consumers do not necessarily see or experience much of farm life, but there are many opportunities to purchase farm products at the farm gate directly from the producer. This may be literally at the farm gate at a road stall, which often relies on an honesty box, where the producer has to trust the consumer. Recent sales of raw milk have been possible due to these direct sales to consumers, as conventional shops are unable to sell this product. A common feature of all these options is direct sale to the consumer with no 'middleman', even if you do not interact with the producer directly. Some, like Farm Gate Produce (selling aged beef and free-range pork), also have an online presence¹¹ and various distribution channels, while others sell directly at the gate.

⁵ <https://www.openfarms.co.nz>

⁶ <https://www.geraldinefarmtours.com/>

⁷ <https://www.shamarra-alpacas.co.nz>

⁸ www.juliansberryfarm.co.nz

⁹ https://www.farmandleisuretours.nz/?fbclid=IwAR2TqxASfzzO7m_1HTeEriUbYSYWIFSFBIfEdBeq91JTL2UnicaZ_4wvdGA

¹⁰ https://www.farmandleisuretours.nz/?fbclid=IwAR2TqxASfzzO7m_1HTeEriUbYSYWIFSFBIfEdBeq91JTL2UnicaZ_4wvdGA

¹¹ <https://www.thefarmgate.co.nz/>



Figure 2. An honesty box, Pound Road, Canterbury. (Photo: S. Vallance)



Figure 3. Shortening supply chains – farming direct, State Highway 75. (Photo: S. Vallance)

3.2.3 Farmers' markets

Farmers' markets provide a physical place for purchasing food directly from local producers, as they do in Nelson.¹² They may also be involved in placemaking, town revitalisation, or regeneration projects (e.g. Riverside in Christchurch¹³). Others are connected to a broader infrastructure of localism and self-sufficiency, such as Project Lyttelton, who advertise themselves as 'community catalysts evolving action through community projects on local

¹² <https://www.nelsonfarmersmarket.org.nz>

¹³ www.riverside.nz

food, waste, climate change, community education, connection and events in dynamic and uncertain times.¹⁴



Figure 4. Little River Farmers’ Market. (Photos: S. Vallance)



Figure 5. Produce at Little River Farmers’ market. (Photos: S. Vallance)

¹⁴ <https://www.projectlyttelton.org/>

3.2.4 Special agricultural events

There are a number of special events that bring producers and consumers together. Some of these have been running for many years, such as the Agricultural and Pastoral (A&P) Shows. In New Zealand the first agricultural show was held in the Bay of Islands in 1842, but others followed as cities and towns sprang up around the colony. Today's shows are public events organised by local A&P associations, hosting a diverse range of activities and competitions, showcasing animals, food, equipment, skills, and recreation associated with agricultural activities, and providing sideshow entertainment and family fun. It has been argued that A&P shows foster connections between rural and urban communities (Scott & Laurie 2010) and play an important role in 're-imagining' agriculture in the face of public pressures (Holloway 2004), thereby promoting a 'sense of trust in agriculture' (Larsen 2017, p. 679). As such, they can be interpreted as places where an understanding – and endorsement – of agricultural activities is negotiated with non-farming publics.

First Auckland A and P Show 19 December 1843



Figure 6. A&P shows are a traditional part of New Zealand culture.¹⁵

¹⁵ Source: <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/first-auckland-a-p-show#:~:text=Agricultural%20and%20pastoral%20shows%20celebrating,as%20a%20purely%20agricultural%20event>

There are many other events that fulfil a similar function of bringing town and country together, such as the Sherpherdess Muster¹⁶ which brings women together from across Aotearoa/New Zealand and the Little River Pumpkin Festival, which combines traditional agriculture-based competitions (such as the ugliest fugliest pumpkin and best dressed scarecrow) with a car club cruise.¹⁷

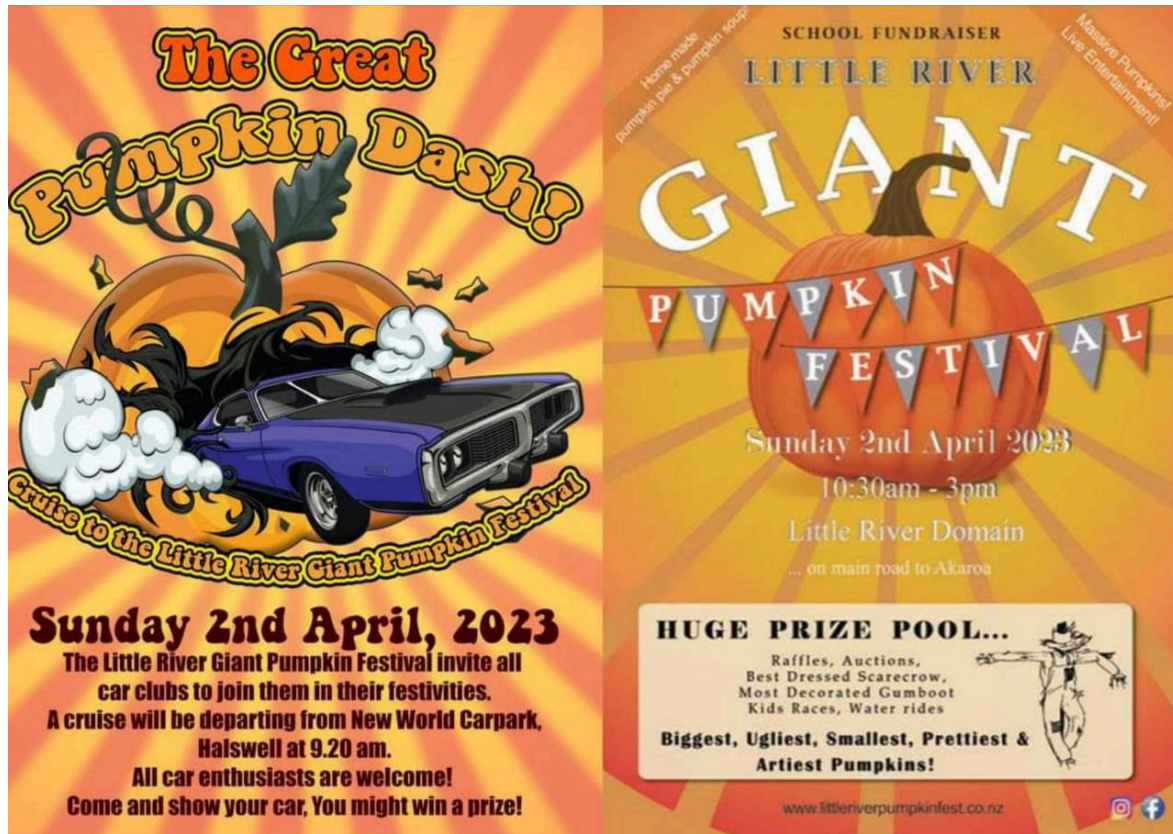


Figure 7. Little River Pumpkin Festival. (Source, with permission, Little River Pumpkin Festival)

3.2.5 Food and fibre cooperatives

Sometimes the places of production and consumption – and the producers and consumers – are clearly distinct, but in other cases the distinction can be a little blurry. Cooperatives of various sorts, such as mara kai and community gardens, are examples, but so too are cases where consumers are shareholders in infrastructure that supports farming, even if they are not farmers themselves. In other cases, producers have interests in the processing or retailing of their products (and sometimes, eventually, buying them back). The Food Resilience Network is a different kind of cooperative again, where participants become signatories to a charter promoting particular values.

All of these cooperatives try to reconfigure the distinction – and relationship – between producers and consumers, albeit in different ways. Some look like fairly traditional retailers

¹⁶ <https://www.shepherdess.co.nz>

¹⁷ www.littleriverpumpkinfest.co.nz

(such as Ruralco¹⁸ and Farmlands¹⁹), while others, such as Fonterra²⁰ and Alliance,²¹ cooperate for commercial purposes, often with reference to looking after the land and its people. Some cooperate by coordinating certain activities and programmes, such as Edible Canterbury,²² which offers a charter based on values and principles that signatories adhere to. The principles include accountability, ecological sustainability, food education, social enterprise, cultural appropriateness, mahinga kai, and collaboration. Owl Farm²³ is a demonstration farm, a joint venture between Lincoln University and St Peters School to demonstrate 'excellence in farm performance to create a sustainable future'.

3.2.6 General retailers: grocers, butchers, and supermarkets

Supermarkets are large chains or franchises that are controlled through national (or international) businesses. However, smaller-scale and locally owned produce stores, butchers, and dairies also provide a market for people to purchase food. Some of these emphasise their family and/or community connections, whether in terms of their suppliers, internal business structure, or links to the local community. In addition to the large retailers such as New World,²⁴ Pak'nSave,²⁵ and Countdown,²⁶ which often offer a broad range of products including small appliances and pharmaceuticals, there are a number of smaller operators such as Raeward Fresh²⁷ and Funky Pumpkin²⁸ that focus on fresh produce.

The internet has allowed a number of smaller producers to access different markets and promote their wares on their own websites, often emphasising local connections and commitments to local communities. One example is the Jade Garden, which 'grows a variety of vegetables in the great outdoors, choosing ones that suit Canterbury's climate and seasons and our own farm's soils'. They 'are passionate about looking after the soil, utilising sustainable practices and water management. We work hard to minimise and mitigate our environmental impact and to help ensure future generations can continue to grow quality local produce in the Canterbury region'.²⁹

¹⁸ <https://www.ruralco.co.nz/>

¹⁹ <https://www.farmlands.co.nz/>

²⁰ <https://www.fonterra.com/nz/en/our-co-operative.html>

²¹ <https://www.alliance.co.nz/>

²² <https://ediblecanterbury.org.nz/our-story-2/>

²³ <https://owlfarm.nz/>

²⁴ www.newworld.co.nz

²⁵ <https://www.paknsave.co.nz/>

²⁶ <https://www.countdown.co.nz/>

²⁷ <https://raewardfresh.co.nz/>

²⁸ <https://funkykp.co.nz/>

²⁹ www.jadegarden.co.nz



Figure 8. The German Butchery sells 'smallgoods' in Lincoln, Canterbury. (Photo: S. Vallance)

Another example is Peter Timbs Meats, who advertise themselves as 'Butchers With A Difference, Legacy with a Story',³⁰ based on their establishment in Oxford, England, in 1876, by Peter's Great-great grandfather Samuel Timbs. The Timbs family then migrated to New Zealand, opening a butchery here in 1901.

3.2.7 Food boxes

These also use online space for selling and purchasing food, often with associated recipes to help households plan their weekly meals. Some, such as Ooooby,³¹ Woop,³² and My Food Bag, connect consumers with small-scale and/or local producers. On its website Ooooby state that they are 'keenly aware of the benefits of a food system that looks after small-scale producers', and they 'work with farmers committed to growing responsibly'. Profiles of their suppliers – termed 'Farmers & Artisans' – are included on their website. Ooooby is also a member of the Food Resilience Network in Canterbury (see section 3.2.5 Food and fibre cooperatives).

Similarly, My Food Bag³³ emphasises their locally sourced and free-range produce. One of the founders of My Food Bag, Nadia Lim, is a well-known celebrity chef; her TV show *Nadia's Farm* combines her role as a chef with her latest endeavour to farm 1,200-acre Royalburn Station in Central Otago (see section 3.2.9 Media). The show was aired on Three TV channel, and during the broadcast notifications were sent to mobile phones of My Food

³⁰ www.petertimbsmeats.co.nz)

³¹ www.ooooby.co.nz

³² <https://woop.co.nz/sustainability>

³³ www.myfoodbag.co.nz

Bag subscribers to highlight recipes in the show that were available. A number of products grown on Royalburn Station were also available for purchase through My Food Bag.

3.2.8 Sites and settings of negotiation

While they are not strictly sites of production or consumption, the following categories – consents and committees, roadsides, peri-urban developments, and settings where the effects of farming are experienced - are sites where social licence to farm is negotiated. Consent applications, committees, and planning consultations are commonly associated with decisions on land use, including for productive purposes. Even when these decisions ostensibly focus on 'urban' development, there may also be a clear link to food production.

For example, peri-urban developments that involve housing moving onto high-class soils have attracted so much protest that a National Policy Statement on Highly Productive Land was passed in 2022. This is a good example of legislation being passed when informal social licence (to sprawl) is insufficient in mediating gaps and differences in values.

Any road trip will take you through agricultural land, and roadsides are arguably one of the most understated but common sites of exposure to farming. Roadsides shape people's ideas of what farming involves, promote ideas of 'good farming', or spur protest of its effects on the animals being farmed or on the wider environment. Farmers are themselves aware of the potential influence of roadside frontage, which in turn influences their own farming practices.

Statutory and non-statutory planning as 'sites' of negotiation

One of the most controversial aspects of farming is its effects on the environment, particularly water quality. Deforestation, flooding, wetland drainage, eutrophication, and faecal contamination have degraded waterways and, in some areas, increased the rate of erosion and heightened flood risk as waterways are altered. These effects are experienced by diverse publics, ranging from farmers themselves to those who have no experience of farming.

This is why Resource Consent applications (under the Resource Management Act) distinguish between those who might be directly affected by an activity and the general public. Publicly Notified Applications enable any person (other than a trade competitor) to make a submission in support and/or opposition, whereas Limited Notified Applications identify and alert all persons seen as being adversely affected, and only these persons may lodge a submission.³⁴ Council websites provide details on publicly notified applications and guidance on how to make a submission. These provide a formal 'legal space', often invoked when informal negotiations for social licence to farm fail.

Committees – where issues are debated – may be a precursor to legal liability or changes in legislation. Committees are also the vehicle for negotiating non-statutory planning matters,

³⁴ <https://www.qualityplanning.org.nz/index.php/node/870>


such as the allocation of funding to programmes, activities, infrastructure, and so on, as part of Long Term Plans required under the Local Government Act 2002/2019.

The screenshot shows the 'Notifications and hearings' page on the Environment Canterbury website. At the top left is the council's logo. The main header features a photo of two women in a rural setting with the title 'Notifications and hearings' overlaid. Below the header is a breadcrumb trail: 'HOME / WELCOME TO CONSENTS / NOTIFICATIONS AND HEARINGS'. The page is divided into a left sidebar and a main content area. The sidebar lists navigation options like 'Welcome to Consents', 'Understanding resource consents', 'The consent process', and 'Notifications and hearings'. The main content area includes an introductory paragraph about the assessment process, a list of considerations for decision-making, and three large icons representing 'Open notified consents', 'Current consent hearings', and 'Hearing decisions'.

Figure 9. Notifications and submissions. (Source: <https://www.ecan.govt.nz/do-it-online/resource-consents/notifications-and-submissions/>)

The screenshot shows the 'About the water zone committees' page on the Environment Canterbury website. It features the council's logo at the top left and a breadcrumb trail: 'HOME / WATER / WHAT'S HAPPENING IN MY WATER ZONE? / ABOUT THE WATER ZONE COMMITTEES'. The page has a left sidebar with a 'Water' section containing various links. The main content area is titled 'About the water zone committees' and explains the role of these committees in delivering on the 10 targets of the CWMS. It includes a list of key points about committee meetings and a link to view upcoming meetings. A photograph of a river landscape is shown on the right side of the page, along with social media sharing icons for Facebook, Twitter, and a plus sign for more options.

Figure 10. Committees. (Source: <https://www.ecan.govt.nz/your-region/your-environment/water/whats-happening-in-my-water-zone/about-the-water-zone-committees/>)



Tāmaki Makaurau

Have your say and help shape Auckland

Topics you can have your say on
Help us shape Auckland. Give feedback on an open consultation or find a project, plan change or topic and have your say.

Take our online surveys - join the People's Panel
Joining the People's Panel is a quick and easy way to give your feedback and ideas to help make Auckland a great place to live.

Have your say at a meeting
We encourage people to attend council meetings. Find out how to have your say at an Auckland Council meeting.

Have your say on a resource consent
Have your say on an open resource consent.

Public notices
Find a public notice.

Why you should have your say
We need your views to help shape Auckland into a place that reflects the needs of our increasingly diverse communities.

What happens to your feedback
Read about what happens to your feedback, as well as our policy on transparency, fair process and inclusion of Auckland's diverse communities.

How we work with Māori in our decision-making
We provide opportunities for Māori to contribute to our decision-making processes.

Hearings
Find a hearing, or find out how to have your say at a hearing.

Be part of Auckland Conversations
A series of free events featuring high-profile international and national speakers, aiming to inspire, educate and engage Aucklanders.

Figure 11. Consultations. (Source: <https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/have-your-say/Pages/home.aspx>)

Peri-urban developments



Figure 12. The village of Tai Tapu expanding towards Lincoln, Canterbury. (Photo: S. Vallance)



Figure 13. Photo centre shows a large pile of highest-class soil on the edge of Lincoln, Canterbury, cleared away for a subdivision. (Photo: S. Vallance)

Roadsides



Figure 14. Forage Farms Happy Hens, State Highway 75. (Photo: S. Vallance)



Figure 15. Wording spray-painted on hay bales, State Highway 75, which originally read 'FEEDLOTS STINK', a protest against a proposed feedlot in Kaituna Valley. (Photo: S. Vallance)



Figure 16. 'Good' farmers can sow crops in straight lines. (Photo: S. Vallance)



Figure 17. Hedges provide both shelter and privacy. (Photo: S. Vallance)



Figure 18. Farm animals are often clearly visible from roadsides. (Photo: S. Vallance)



Figure 19. A fairly typical view from the road showing a mix of crops and a sheep/beef farm in the distance, Canterbury. (Photo: S. Vallance)

Exposure to the effects of farming



Figure 20. Exposure to the effects of deforestation/farming: 'High risk: Do not swim'. Lake Forsyth / Wairewa. (Photo: S. Vallance)



Figure 21. Deforestation to develop farmland contributes to flooding in Little River, 2021. (Photo: Gaber Gabrielle on Little River Facebook page)

3.2.9 Media

Television

While print journalism is well established, new technologies have enabled a range of new online media, including Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter (X), which have promoted greater diversity in the negotiation of social licence. Television traditionally gives 'the News' at 6 pm, where controversies are reported. Examples include the debate about bobby calves,³⁵ and forestry slash after Cyclone Gabrielle.³⁶ There is a range of programmes, such as *Country Calendar*, depicting New Zealand farms, but there are also fictional farms – Emmerdale being a classic.

Print media

A relative newcomer, *Shepherdess*, sits alongside more established magazines such as *Country-Wide*, *Dairy Exporter*, and *Young Country*. Many New Zealanders will also be familiar with the cartoon Dog from *Footrot Flats*.³⁷

³⁵ <https://www.1news.co.nz/2023/01/24/fonterra-tells-suppliers-they-can-no-longer-kill-bobby-calves/>

³⁶ www.newshub.co.nz

³⁷ <https://www.footrotflats.com/strip-archive?strip=5823>

Radio

The Country is hailed as New Zealand's flagship rural radio as part of Newstalk ZB, 12–1 pm weekdays, while Groundswell Radio has recently started broadcasting, with Peter Williams reporting on 'real yarns with down to earth Kiwis about urban and rural issues'.³⁸ Radio New Zealand often reports on controversial issues such as 'Dirty Dairying'.³⁹

News online

There are numerous examples of radio, TV, and print providing access to news online as well. Some, like Stuff,⁴⁰ only have an online presence and provide a range of stories about the dairy industry rebuilding social licence, and forestry losing theirs after Cyclone Gabrielle.

³⁸ www.groundswellnz.co.nz

³⁹ <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/302500/dirty-dairying-declining,-or-hidden>

⁴⁰ <https://www.stuff.co.nz/business/farming/98291980/rebuilding-dairy-farmings-social-license-to-operate-with-the-public>



LATEST NEWS AND HAPPENINGS

Celebrating two years of Southland Catchment Group support through Thriving Southland

If you watch one video this month – this is it! [Watch here.](#)

With more than 80 projects and almost \$2M in funding accessed by Southland Catchment Groups during our first two years, we are here to empower Southlanders to get projects off the ground and inspire community action.

'Everything to Gain' event shines a light on the future of farming in New Zealand



Figure 22. Everything to Gain event reported in Thriving Southland's newsletter, February 2023.

Social media

This is a growing category of online space where negotiations range from well informed to vitriolic. Facebook, Twitter (X), Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok are some of the main social media.

3.3 How negotiations are undertaken: programmes, protests, and campaigns to change hearts and minds

If the first category (section 3.1) documented places and spaces where social licence to farm is negotiated, this category collates activities that happen in those spaces and places. These include what can start off as small-scale protests over a local issue, to larger, truly social movements. This section captures the nitty gritty of negotiation and deliberate attempts to change hearts and minds. It is a very diverse section, as these attempts can be pro- or anti-farming, enduring campaigns or one-off events, scientifically informed or relying on direct experience.

3.3.1 Campaigns and initiatives by farmers or industry bodies

Groundswell⁴¹ have become a high-profile advocate for farmers. Their mission is to find 'solutions to environmental issues which are effective and that can be tailored to regional differences. Our primary concern is the extent of unworkable regulations and policies developed in silos'. While they are not afraid to protest – at times blocking streets and motorways in urban New Zealand – other groups are running campaigns that focus on the benefits of farming to the country and its people.

Meat the Need,⁴² for example:

is a three-year-old charity that is farmer founded and farmer led. We connect the dots between farmers who want to donate some of what they produce and families in need.

Produce, in the form of premium mince and milk, is donated by farmers and put into the hands of those already on the frontlines of food insecurity in NZ: food banks and community organisations. Food banks already know the needs of their local community, and it's through them that mince and milk is given to families that need it.

Ultimately, our aim is for no one to go hungry in NZ. We also believe everyone should have access to the nutritious protein that is grown right here in NZ. Alongside farmers, we're on a mission to achieve just that.

⁴¹ <https://www.groundswellnz.co.nz/>

⁴² <https://meattheneed.org/>

Industry groups such as Beef + Lamb NZ, Dairy NZ,⁴³ and the Foundation for Arable Research⁴⁴ also run campaigns of various sorts to enhance the industry profile. Beef + Lamb NZ led Kiwis Backing Farmers⁴⁵ in 2022 to highlight ways in which farmers were making positive changes and addressing concerns about climate change and water quality. Your Food Producers⁴⁶ ran a small campaign in 2022 using green crosses on roadsides to indicate the death of agriculture from unworkable regulations.

Individual companies are also running campaigns to improve their image, with Ernslaw One (as reported by Eastland Wood Council⁴⁷) donating \$500,000 to the Tairāwhiti Mayoral Relief Fund after Cyclone Gabrielle. Fonterra, among others, also donated produce after the cyclone.⁴⁸

3.3.2 Protests and raising awareness

Protests are a way of raising awareness of an issue or impeding a development. They vary in size from one-off, small-scale events where people are affected by an activity, to broader social movements such as Extinction Rebellion. Others lie somewhere in between. For example, Animal Rebellion in the UK calls on governments to support farmers to move towards a plant-based future and has staged milk pours and blocked egg aisles in supermarkets to encourage shoppers not to buy animal produce.⁴⁹ Similar protests have been staged in Aotearoa/New Zealand to prevent shoppers buying meat.⁵⁰ SAFE (Save Animals From Exploitation⁵¹) and Greenpeace⁵² are long-standing and well-known critics of certain farming practices and their effects on animals and/or the environment.

A different kind of protest has occurred when development (urban sprawl) encroaches onto ancestral land and sites of significance. In the late 20th century, arguably starting with Ngāti Whātua at Bastion Point,⁵³ there have been a number of protests against land confiscation and use. Ihumātao was first settled by Māori in the 14th century, but the land was confiscated by the Crown in 1863.⁵⁴ It was then used for farming until 2016, when Fletcher Building bought the site for housing development. Māori opposition and occupation over a period of 3 years resulted in the Government buying the land and establishing a steering

⁴³ <https://www.dairynz.co.nz/about-us/education/godairy/>

⁴⁴ <https://www.far.org.nz/environment>

⁴⁵ <https://kiwisbackingfarmers.nz>

⁴⁶ <https://YourFoodProducers.co.nz>

⁴⁷ https://eastlandwood.co.nz/ernslaw_010323/

⁴⁸ <https://www.fonterra.com/nz/en/our-stories/articles/supporting-flood-affected-kiwis.html>

⁴⁹ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/sep/02/animal-rebellion-activists-vow-disrupt-uk-milk-supplies>

⁵⁰ <https://www.stuff.co.nz/business/116085947/give-life-a-chance-vegan-activists-block-meat-fridge-in-protest-at-hamilton-supermarket>

⁵¹ <https://safe.org.nz/>

⁵² <https://www.greenpeace.org/aotearoa/press-release/state-of-environment-report-reveals-dairy-is-nzs-dirtiest-industry/>

⁵³ <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/keyword/bastion-point>

⁵⁴ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ihum%C4%81tao>

committee to decide its future. Other protests are now occurring around the country, including Pukeiāhua, near Ngāruawāhia, where housing was going to be built over ancestral mara kai (food production) sites.



Figure 23. Protect Pukeiāhua (from urban development on ancestral land on the outskirts of Ngāruawāhia). (Photo: S. Vallance)

3.3.3 Marketing

Many producers use marketing to highlight the benefits of their products. Increasingly, marketing is also aimed at attracting and retaining employees, and raising the profile of the agricultural sector more generally. A recent example is the Centre of Vocational Excellence⁵⁵ promoting agriculture as the ‘engine room of our economy and the heart of our communities’. There is a diverse range of marketers (producers, retailers, industry) and a diverse range of values they promote, including traceable (Icebreaker⁵⁶), local (Otis milk⁵⁷), and palm oil free (Whittakers⁵⁸), to name but a few.

3.3.4 Promotions, sponsorships, and endorsements

Retailers who engage directly with potential customers often run special promotions. New World’s ‘Little garden’⁵⁹ provided shoppers and schools with seedling kits, encouraging them to grow vegetables and herbs at home. The idea is that supermarket shoppers

⁵⁵ <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/food-fibre-cove-commitment-primary-sector-success>

⁵⁶ <https://www.icebreaker.com/en-nz/our-story/our-story.html>

⁵⁷ <https://otisoatmilk.co.nz/>

⁵⁸ www.whittakers.conz

⁵⁹ www.newworld.co.nz/littlegardens

become producers as well as consumers: 'prosumers'. In the Countdown Bricks⁶⁰ promotion, customers received farm-themed plastic bricks in order to help Kiwi kids learn about who grows their food and where it comes from.



Figure 24. New World's Little Gardens. (Photo: S. Edwards)

⁶⁰ <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/lifestyle/countdown-launches-brick-farm-collectibles-in-nod-to-hardworking-producers/KQNKTOCR7VH35KFPVD5KLVBZMQ/>



Figure 25. Countdown Bricks (Photo: S. Edwards)

3.3.5 Awards

Awards both establish the standards for, and celebrate, good practice. As such, they signal approval and endorsement of particular practices and values to both the industry and the public. By bestowing (or sponsoring) these awards, the donors imply that they are credible judges of good practice, as seen in the New Zealand Farm Environment Awards sponsored by Ballance,⁶¹ whose 'core business was in fertiliser manufacturing, supply, sales and advice. But as the industry grew, we have embraced the advances in agri-science and technology to lead the way in creating the best soil and feed on earth'.⁶²

Industry bodies also offer awards, including the deer industry,⁶³ whose awards seek to:

- promote the adoption of sustainable deer farming practices on all deer farms
- recognise innovative deer farmers for implementing and practising sustainable and profitable deer farming practices in land and deer systems management
- encourage sharing of experiences and proven best sustainable management practices and innovation through the resource of the NZ Deer Farmer's Landcare Manual.

⁶¹ <https://nzfeawards.org.nz/find-my-region/>

⁶² <https://ballance.co.nz/Our-Business-and-History>

⁶³ <https://www.deernz.org/home/deer-industry-new-zealand/industry-awards/environmental-awards/>

Some other examples include Lincoln University's Food and Fibre Awards,⁶⁴ and those offered by many regional councils, such as Environment Southland's Community Awards, which recognise 'groups that are working collaboratively within their community to enhance Southland's environment'. The 2022 recipients included catchment groups, individual farmers, and commercial services (e.g. pest control).

3.3.6 Certification schemes and labelling

Certification schemes often seem to be aimed at negotiating social licence in the form of building consumer confidence in a certain brand and are therefore linked to markets. They are voluntary schemes that signify compliance with best practice guidelines and/or statutory requirements. Some examples include organics, fair trade, halal, non-GMO, palm oil free, and SPCA approved, and they can apply to a range of products.

Some industries maintain their own standards, such as the Marine Stewardship Council. They claim that

When you buy seafood with the MSC blue fish tick label, it comes from a well managed and sustainable fishery ... We're the Marine Stewardship Council, an international non-profit on a mission to end overfishing. We set the world's leading standards for sustainable fishing and assurance within the seafood supply chain.⁶⁵

Toitū Envirocare⁶⁶ (previously Enviromark) provides various certification programmes related to carbon accounting and sustainable business practices. These certifications are in turn accredited through internationally recognised standards.

3.3.7 Research and reporting

Because trust is one of the elements underpinning social licence, the trustworthiness of sources of information about an activity or industry is important. 'Watchdogs' vary in terms of their credibility, scientific objectivity/independence, and connections to farmers and the general public. Examples of organisations conducting research and publishing their reports are Horticulture NZ,⁶⁷ AgScience,⁶⁸ the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment,⁶⁹ universities, Crown Research Institutes, and the government, especially through the Office of the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor.⁷⁰

A particularly interesting example of 'research' is that undertaken as part of Royal Commissions of Inquiry. These, in some ways, signal an escalation of issues that may have

⁶⁴ <https://www.lincoln.ac.nz/news-and-events/lincoln-university-food-and-fibre-awards-and-networking-dinner-2023/>

⁶⁵ <https://www.msc.org/en-au>

⁶⁶ www.toitu.co.nz

⁶⁷ <https://www.hortnz.co.nz/environment/reports/>

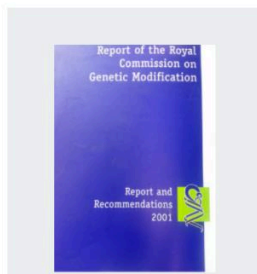
⁶⁸ <https://www.agscience.org.nz/agscience-magazine/>

⁶⁹ <https://pce.parliament.nz/>

⁷⁰ <https://www.pmcsa.ac.nz/>

started as small, localised protest but have become a matter of national importance. Independent inquires have focused on, for example, abuse in care, COVID 19 lessons, the Christchurch mosque attacks in 2019, as well as genetic modification.

The screenshot shows the Ministry for the Environment website. At the top left is the logo with the text 'Ministry for the Environment' and 'Kaitiaki Take Kōwhiri'. To the right are links for 'Publications', 'OIA releases', and 'Consultations'. Below this is a navigation bar with five categories: 'Pūtaiao' (Facts & Science), 'He mahi ka taea e koe' (What you can do), 'Ā mātou mahi' (What we are doing), 'Te ao Māori' (The Māori world), and 'Ngā Ture' (Acts & regulations). A search icon is on the far right. The main content area features a large green heading: 'Report of the Royal Commission on Genetic Modification'. Below the heading, it states 'Published: 30 March 2021' and 'Reference: No number'. There are two tags: 'Publication' and 'Natural hazard'. On the right, there is a 'Share' button with icons for Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn.



A Royal Commission on Genetic Modification was established by the Government on 8 May 2000 to look into and report on issues about genetic modification in New Zealand. This report presents their findings.

Figure 26. Royal Commission on Genetic Modification.
(Source: <https://environment.govt.nz/publications/report-of-the-royal-commission-on-genetic-modification/>)

4 Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

- **Where** (places and spaces): This part of the inventory documents how the spaces and places where social licence is negotiated are diverse, ranging from 'on farm' (agri-tourism, pick-your-own, etc.), through markets of various kinds, on roadsides, to specific areas where the adverse effects of farming (e.g. declining water quality) are being experienced. We include various media as a type of space here too.
- **How** (programmes and protests): This part highlights that there are numerous *ways* of negotiating social licence. Some are productive, in the sense of both gaining approval by supplying much-needed or highly valued food and fibre and accentuating the positive. Negotiations can also be prolonged, complex, event-driven, emotive, productive or adversarial, and they can invoke different versions of 'the social', from small groups protesting over localised issues to broader movements.
- **What** is being negotiated is diverse: Many of the issues at the centre of these negotiations of social licence are already well known and include, for example, animal welfare and environmental degradation. Some aspects are in the process of transitioning from informal negotiations of social licence to farm, to more formal legislation, such as the passing of the National Policy Statement on Highly Productive Land as urban areas encroach on versatile and high-class soils. However, there are also some issues included in the inventory that may represent the seeds of future negotiations on food security and food sovereignty, the democratisation of food and fibre, localisation, and kai ora (be healthy / have life). Seeing these seeds and initiating voluntary codes of conduct or standards through certification and/or verification may be a way of proactively managing social licence along the journey from seed to statute.

Recommendations

- Producers and publics have a range of options when it comes to negotiating social licence to farm. Developing a good match between the complexity of the issue (what), the places and spaces where the negotiation takes place, and how negotiations are undertaken negotiation may be key to more 'productive' and less adversarial outcomes.

5 Acknowledgements

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