

# Beyond Sauv Blanc: How Does Marlborough Imagine Its Future

Marlborough communities share a strong desire to increase native and agricultural diversity, and restore and conserve the landscape for future generations, but research in the region wasn't able to identify a clear shared vision for land use.



Forestry, viticulture, beef and lamb. Scan your eyes across the landscape in Marlborough and that's what you'll see most.

New Zealand's primary industries have experienced exemplary economic success worldwide. This is largely due to a focus on specialisation and prioritising export market demands. However, this focus comes at the expense of biodiversity. The wine industry is dominated by one variety in particular – 74% of vineyards in New Zealand produce Sauvignon Blanc. The story is no different in Marlborough. Lack of biodiversity makes these specialised systems increasingly vulnerable.

Diversification is becoming more important to winegrowers because factors like changing consumer preferences and climate change can have a significant impact on the industry. Interest in cover cropping and planting natives within vineyards is growing across the Marlborough region.

It is with this in mind that a recent research project, led by Bragato Research Institute, investigated [visions for land use in Marlborough](#). Having a better understanding of the community's vision for land use puts winegrowers in a position to refine their diversification efforts to better meet the expectations and needs of the community.

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Across Marlborough there is an increased risk of nutrient loss from soil to water, increased soil compaction and loss of soil organic matter. Water availability and quality is also changing. There are concerns about declining levels in the recharge aquifer in the Wairau Valley, as well as increasing concentrations of nitrate in groundwater in several areas across the region. Drought risk in the region is also projected to increase, further compounding these issues.

Many of these challenges cannot be solved at the farm level alone, and would benefit from a landscape approach that includes the entire community in planning, designing, and coordinating solutions.

The research project aimed to understand the visions various communities in Marlborough have for land use, and how to develop pathways to transition to a diversified shared landscape. It also sought to identify key connections and relationships that need to be established to achieve a shared vision and facilitate collaborative regional change.

## Two sets of interviews

Researchers conducted two sets of interviews: te ao Māori and community interviews. These explored interviewees' connection to place and their vision for its future, perceived regional challenges, the role of diversification and the types of partnerships that need to be created to develop a pathway for the development of a shared vision.

Te ao Māori interviewees held roles in commercial businesses within the primary sector, land, sea and environmental management, and in iwi management and governance.

The community interviewees were individuals who worked directly in the dominant primary industries in the region, regional government officials, employees working in environmental management, and residents involved in environmental interest and advocacy groups.

## Visions for land use

The visions that people had for land use were driven by their connection to Marlborough and what was important to them about the place.

For both te ao Māori and community interviewees, the Wairau Marlborough region was home, but the articulation of what this meant to both sets of interviewees was different.

Te ao Māori interviewees emphasised the spiritual and practical connection to place through whakapapa, highlighting their obligation and responsibility to protect iwi, whanau, land, and water in the region, regardless of whether they live there or not.

This connection is different from the community interviewees' description of home, which was articulated through a sense of responsibility to, and appreciation of the place, but not necessarily a connection transcendent of generations or location.

The te ao Māori participants' vision for land use focused on acknowledging and protecting indigenous knowledge, conserving and increasing diversity, and limiting the negative effects of current agricultural practices.

The broader community vision emphasised diversification of agricultural production systems, regeneration and conservation of natural habitat, and better planning of housing in the region.

Maintaining or increasing access to nature and wilderness areas was important to both groups. Integrating native biodiversity and habitat provision into current production systems was also important to both groups.

## Barriers to a shared vision

Differences in worldview and short-term versus long-term perspectives pose significant barriers to partnership.

On an individual level, lack of understanding or apathy about issues, lack of time, prejudice and ego were all seen as obstacles to partnership.

Short election cycles were also seen to influence prioritisation and action around these issues, including a lack of future planning.

Often described as 'lore versus law', traditional knowledge does not fit easily within existing planning structures or legal frameworks and so was also seen as a barrier to successful partnership. Lack of capability and capacity within organisations can prevent them partnering well on issues.

Trustworthiness, integrity, and competition for funding were also seen to impact an organisation's ability to partner.

## **Towards a shared vision**

Partnership needs to be enabled through the development of shared values, effective communication, and recognition of organisations' and iwi capacity and capabilities. Future thinking around collaborative solutions, representation and inclusion of Iwi Māori at all levels were seen as central to enabling partnership.

Interviewees also valued real and early engagement, and deep understanding of the principles of Tiriti o Waitangi. Te ao Māori participants stressed the need to build relationships based on balance, equity, trust and collaboration.

Enhancing mana and acceptance of each other's cultures were identified by both groups as critical to building strong partnerships.

The [Te Hoiere Pelorus Catchment Restoration Project](#) was seen as an example of land use change and diversification that has successfully been enabled by working in true partnership. This project brings together Marlborough District Council, Ngāti Kuia, the Department of Conservation and the wider community to look after the whole catchment from the mountains to the sea.

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## **No single vision, but shared hopes**

There was no single vision for land use and diversification in Marlborough but there was a strong shared desire to increase native and agricultural diversity, and to restore and conserve the landscape for future generations.

There were differences in connection to place between groups, but all share a concern over how the place has changed due to agricultural intensification, specialisation, and housing development.

To achieve a shared vision, regional efforts towards land use diversification need to be facilitated in a way that addresses current barriers to partnership. The principles and processes adopted in the Te Hoiere Pelorus Catchment Restoration Project are overcoming these barriers, and have led to successful land use change and diversification.

Learning from successful projects like this can guide future attempts to create land use change and diversification, especially where Iwi and multiple partners need to be brought together to create change.

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**Additional information:**

- The [Shared Vision for Land Use in Marlborough](#) project was funded through the Our Land and Water National Science Challenge as part of the Pathways to Transition research. It was led by Bragato Research Institute, in collaboration with Meihana Consulting, AgResearch, Agribusiness and Economics Research Unit (AERU), Market Economics and Tipu Ake Systems.
- A journal paper has been submitted for publication. You can [read a summary here](#).

**Date:** 11 October 2023

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