

# Future Farming Conversations

## Understanding land use diversification

Kiwi farmers are world leaders in food production, known for finding practical, innovative solutions to new challenges. Land use diversification can help you get the best from your land, letting you find new ways to effectively manage productivity and sustainability.



*These Future Farming Conversations are proudly brought to you by BallanceEx and hosted by dairy farmer Tangaroa Walker. What is BallanceEx? It's our "Ted-Ex"- inspired platform that brings together experts, scientists, and other big thinkers. They share their expertise and points of view, getting us ready for the future of farming and growing in New Zealand. For more from BallanceEx visit [ballance.co.nz/ballanceex](https://ballance.co.nz/ballanceex)*

## Meet the Panel



**Tangaroa Walker,**  
*Host & farmer*

When not running his 500-cow dairy farm in Southland, Tangaroa is using his own experience to teach others about the farming industry. His mission to redefine New Zealand farming led him to BallanceEx, where he's able to share his enthusiasm for innovation with like-minded farmers.

*"There's nothing better than showing the world how it's done, from one of the most challenging parts of the world."*



**Robyn Dynes**

Robyn is a Farm Systems Scientist and Science Strategy Leader at AgResearch. With over 25 years of experience in this field, Robyn has a special interest in farm system resilience and diversification.

*"Land Use Diversification is as broad as New Zealand is diverse."*

*"The science needs to work with farmers and communities to deliver the best outcome for the environment, while balancing people's values and livelihoods."*



**Warwick Catto**

Warwick is Science Strategy Manager at Ballance and a board member of FertResearch. He has co-authored numerous scientific papers and developed fertiliser industry policy for over 25 years.

*"The investment that drives profit is in you, and your skills."*

## Land Use Diversification: Solutions and Opportunities



### What is land use diversification?

Land use diversification involves re-thinking the way you use the land on your farm. It can mean adapting part of your farm to work for a new alternative or changing the systems you use within your existing farm.

It's a way to optimise the use of your land. Not just growing higher-priced products, but finding the best setup for your lifestyle, for the environment, and to meet regulations. Adapting and innovating to futureproof your business.

There is no "right or wrong" when it comes to land use diversification. Every farm is different, with different opportunities and challenges. Just because the farm next door has planted avocado trees doesn't mean the same will work for you – you know your farm best.



### Why is land use diversification worth considering?

You'll find many advantages to diversifying your farm no matter what your goals are. To begin with, diversifying land use also means diversifying income. It's not just a sign of futureproofing, it's a sign of a flexible farmer and team. They're ensuring not a single corner of their land goes to waste.

Another key benefit is meeting regulatory requirements. For example, you might find that an alternative results in lower nitrogen loss, and therefore a lower footprint.

It can also help you overcome unique challenges to your farm. Does your farm not have easy access to water? Are you in an isolated spot that makes getting extra labour in difficult? Look for alternatives that make managing those challenges easier.

Finally, diversified land can help you get the lifestyle you want. You can craft your farm to fit your skillsets, your passions, and run things the way you want to. Look for the opportunities that are good for the land, productivity, and for your lifestyle.



### How do you get started?

**There are three simple steps to get you started:**

1. Understand your land and where the opportunities lie. A farm environment plan is a must have, as it will help you map out where your constraints and opportunities are (sometimes you'll find that they're the same thing).
2. Make a plan. Do your values and goals line up with the alternative you're exploring? Are you diversifying for the right reasons? How will it affect your succession plan?

You can try getting in touch with an investor with experience in the type of farming you're looking at. Or do you have someone in your family or team who can upskill? Not everything needs to rest on your shoulders.

3. Connect with people and resources to get a better understanding of the alternative you're interested in. There are plenty of resources out there to learn from. Ask questions, seek out different opinions. Make sure there's a stable market. It's better to ask questions now than make a mistake later.



### Where should you go for support?

If you're buying your first farm or diversifying for the first time, it's worth visiting a few operations to understand how land diversification works. Your banker or accountant will know which of their clients are doing well and could give you a few names to call (they're also good at challenging you). Start by taking the best learnings from others and make them work for you.

If you're a farmer looking to learn, finding a more experienced mentor is a great start.

Keep an eye out for farmers with higher profiles, people already putting themselves out there. If they're on TV or picking up national awards, they're already comfortable with sharing their expertise.

Most local councils and government bodies are more than happy to give you the scientific information you need that's relevant to your region – after all, it benefits the whole community.

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*Taiao ora, Tangata ora.*

