

Farming the Next 50 Years

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New Zealand's food story has been built on volume and purity. But global markets are shifting fast. To stay competitive, farmers must link stock and soil with health, science, and environmental care.

For decades, New Zealand has been known for purity, productivity, and export success. Food is no longer valued just for what it is, but for what it does. Food as medicine. Farming as health care.

On recent visits to Singapore, Ireland, and Europe, the message was clear: nutrition, health, and environmental care are merging. In Ireland, soil and dairy science is linked directly to human wellbeing. In Singapore, government and investors are backing health-focused foods. Across Europe, regulation is driving carbon markets and ecosystem services into farming systems.

It was also clear that we as producers and agricultural based industries are falling behind in many ways, in where we need to be to thrive. The perspective in New Zealand is different to the reality.

For New Zealand farmers, the question is whether we keep competing on bulk commodities or move into high-value products in adjacent industries such as functional foods and bio-nutraceuticals. Analysis shows that shifting from volume to nutrition and health could add another \$20–30 billion beyond current export goals. That's what will keep us competitive and keep farmers on the land.

At Criffel Station, we're asking how to farm for the next 50 years, not as we have for the last 50.

Deer remain at the heart of our business, but so too are regional test beds, agri-tech partnerships, and nature-based solutions. It's about showing that our food comes with traceability, resilience, and environmental integrity – the qualities global markets are now demanding. It is about connecting and collaborating with researchers and offshore expertise to maximise opportunities in the bioeconomy.

We are also learning about and discussing the value of intergenerational rather than succession approaches for future farmers.

Farmers have always adapted. We've picked up new genetics, new markets, new technology. We have invested in the health of our land. The next step is harder but vital:

connecting our livestock and land with science, innovation, and health outcomes. If we succeed, New Zealand won't just be a trusted food supplier – we could be the world's health capital.

The choice is ours: stick with volume, or build real value.