

## Is it time to put the brakes on forestry?

By Keith Dolman  
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**G**overnment seems to think so. It's changing the rules under the Overseas Investment Act to ease concerns that too much farmland is being converted to forestry.

The fact is that the Special Forestry Test does not allow applications for carbon-credits-only farming. It is compulsory for overseas investors to operate a harvest regime.

If the government does bring in measures to clip the heels of carbon farming it will calm those who see this having no place on land which can be used to produce timber or livestock.

HBFG agrees that carbon farming does not make sense on productive land, as it employs few people and without silviculture, predisposes others to fire, pest, and disease risk. We see a place for it on land which is remote, difficult, or too unstable for farming or fibre forestry.

Moreover, we think a rush to curtail carbon farming could hurt some

landowners and ultimately all of us if it limits our capacity to meet international greenhouse gas reduction goals.

Many farmers have adopted a 'plant and leave' approach for the toughest parts of their farms. Now, with a market for carbon, they can expect material reward for doing the 'right thing'. Good as this is, the science is clear: planting exotics on scale, as carbon sequestration off-sets, provides the only affordable solution for New Zealand to reach its 2030 greenhouse gas reduction target.

We do not have 100+ years for kowhai and rata to lock up appreciable volumes of carbon. Even if we did, native trees would require a far greater land area and an eye-watering spend. It is too late to wait for a 'natural' solution. The climate change issues are far more urgent than that.

We sit at the bottom of the world and are dependent on maintaining market access for our primary products. When the world speaks, we need to listen.

And the message is clear, 'we need to lock-up extra carbon dioxide and quickly'. Production forests can do it, but the government intentions to restrict their expansion will mean carbon forestry, in the right place, will be critical. We have unproductive land in rugged and degraded areas outside the conservation estate in our back country. This could be converted to carbon farms, return a dividend to the owners, and help avoid global sanctions.

Production forestry and carbon farming, each in their place, may be the only way to reach our international carbon targets. We can only hope that any new legislation leaves the door open for that.



Exotic tree plantations offer the most and viable option for New Zealand to reach international carbon sequestration goal.



Carbon farming is an option for locking-up carbon dioxide on land too remote, difficult, or unstable for farming or fibre forestry.



### Hawke's Bay Forestry

- Competitive, profitable adding investment choice
- Committed to responsible environmental outcomes
- Third largest export industry
- Varied and attractive job opportunities
- Easiest way to achieve zero carbon goal by 2050



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