



MEDIA ALERT

McDonald's beefs up environmentally friendly farming

Unique public-private partnership with AgResearch to trial regenerative beef farming

In a partnership that links scientific research with burger fans, McDonald's and science provider AgResearch have joined forces on a regenerative farming trial. The two organisations have a shared interest in positively influencing the sustainability of pasture-based beef production and are working together on a two-year project that aims to improve soil health and environmental performance.

The pilot study, soon to be underway in Hawkes Bay, focuses on alternative stock grazing management to boost the cycling of nutrients through the soil. Compared with conventional grazing management practices, the cattle will be offered longer pasture and grazed at higher stocking intensity for a shorter time, leaving greater 'residual' pasture after grazing. The high-intensity stocking is intended to trample more pasture, and together with the greater residuals remaining after grazing, allow an increased proportion of nutrients to be returned directly to the soil in a more evenly distributed way.

"It is becoming increasingly important to identify factors influencing the sustainability of pasture-based beef production systems, given the changing climate, consumer expectations around food production systems and resource use, and environmental and regulatory requirements," says Dr Gerald Cosgrove, senior scientist and project advisor at AgResearch.

The study aims to increase plant growth due to greater nutrient content in the soil and enhanced physical, microbial and chemical soil properties, potentially also leading to a better soil structure and higher water retention capacity.

"The exploration of regenerative farming practices is a key player in McDonald's progress towards our global Responsible Sourcing Goals, says Dave Howse, McDonald's New Zealand managing director. "For over 10 years we've been working across the beef farming sector on more sustainable beef production, and we're excited to be helping to fund AgResearch with this trial."

As well as exploring stock grazing and pasture cover management techniques, the study is also aimed at encouraging increased carbon storage in soils, contributing to a lower environmental footprint.

"This research is not only about achieving better environmental performance, but we're also aiming to show that we can do it without sacrificing beef production. As scientists, working with a top global brand like McDonald's is a great opportunity to share what is possible and to further position New Zealand as a leader in sustainable farming," says Cosgrove.

As one of the largest buyers of beef globally, McDonald's is actively progressing goals to drive position change in the global food system. Earlier this month, the company announced a global goal to decarbonise all of its operations, including the supply chain, by 2050. By 2030, McDonald's aims to have ensured sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production. Research projects, such as the one currently underway in



New Zealand, are designed to increase resilience of ecosystems, strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters and that progressively improve land and soil quality.

“New Zealand is one of the top 10 export markets to the McDonald’s world,” explains Dave Howse. “Strategically that makes us an important country as the global business works towards more sustainable beef production. We made some really positive progress working across the industry, including being a part of the formation of the New Zealand Roundtable for Sustainable Beef and Whangara Farms becoming part of our global Flagship Farmers programme. It’s testament to the collaboration across the industry that we’re now working with AgResearch.”

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About McDonald’s New Zealand

New Zealand’s first McDonald’s restaurant opened in Porirua in 1976. Today there are over 170 McDonald’s restaurants across New Zealand, 85 per cent of which are owned and operated by local business men and women. The organisation employs over 10,000 people in restaurants nationwide, and is one of New Zealand’s largest employers of youth. In 2018, McDonald’s spent more than \$170 million with local suppliers, while New Zealand producers exported \$171 million of food to other McDonald’s markets around the world. McDonald’s is the primary supporter of Ronald McDonald House Charities New Zealand, who keep families close while their children are in hospital. For more information visit www.mcdonalds.co.nz

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About AgResearch

AgResearch is a Crown Research Institute. It is focused on delivering high-quality science that supports the agricultural sector to be more productive, resilient and environmentally sustainable.

For more information, visit www.agresearch.co.nz