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## **Continuing to increase productivity while maintaining our clean green image Introductory remarks**

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An increase in intensive livestock farming can help our agricultural industry increase the production of more affordable food products. Unfortunately it can also have a negative impact on our environment and consequently the overall acceptance of our food products by the international consumer. To retain our position as leaders of premium quality agricultural food products, the New Zealand agriculture sector must find ways to increase production and profit on-farm while still maintaining our clean green image. This contract session will discuss the importance of sustainable food production from a market point of view, the role of legislation in improving farm sustainability at the farm level, and an overview of how scientific research is trying to find ways to increase agricultural output without increasing greenhouse gas emissions. Three examples of case studies which are looking at the trade-offs between production and profit and environmentally sustainability will also be presented.

## **The importance of sustainable food production for our markets**

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### **ABSTRACT**

New Zealand market advantage is at the “top-end” of value, in the production of sustainable, superior quality, highly valued protein. Enhancing our image as the “garden of the pacific”, will lead to greater opportunities for economic growth and a prosperous red meat industry, while at least maintaining, if not improving, our natural resources. This paper discusses what sustainable food production means and identifies some of the expectations of our international markets. The paper also briefly describes how Alliance Group Limited is responding to improving sustainable food production. Strategies outlined include improving farm practices, processing capabilities and improving quantity and quality of product.

**Keywords:** sustainable food production; markets.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Demand for protein is growing more rapidly than ever before due to increasing population and affluence in developing countries. However, the magnitude of global environmental issues means there is discord between how we produce our food and how we treat our resources. Sustainability issues are well documented for red meat production and within New Zealand, agriculture is responsible for 48% of our total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions (Ministry for the Environment, 2010). Agriculture also contributes to over 50% of our total export earnings and will continue to be vital for the future prosperity of our country. So where do we at Alliance Group position ourselves on the global food market in order to keep the goose and the golden eggs?

New Zealand is not able to compete with developing countries in the mass production of low-cost protein. Instead, our market advantage is at the

“top-end” of value, in the production of sustainable, superior quality, highly valued protein. Enhancing our image as the “garden of the pacific”, will lead to greater opportunities for economic growth and a prosperous red meat industry, while at least maintaining, if not improving, our natural resources.

In this paper we will discuss what sustainable food production means to us as red meat exporters and identify some of the expectations of our international markets. We will also describe the responses Alliance Group Limited is making in the context of the greater New Zealand response.

### **WHAT DOES SUSTAINABLE FOOD PRODUCTION MEAN?**

Sustainability is a fourteen letter word with 1,400 meanings and still counting. The Resource Management Act (1991) defines sustainable production as, “the use and development, and protection of natural and physical resources in a way