

# Te Ahuwhenua and the ‘Sons’ of the Soil’: A history of the Māori-Farmer-of-the-Year award

Simon Lambert

**Abstract:** The Ahuwhenua Trophy is awarded in an annual contest for the Māori Farmer-of-the-Year and was first held in 1932. The competition was initially between small-scale family farms and continued government modernisation strategies for Māori farmers, their families, and their tribal land. Judged on social as well as management and productivity criteria, farmers often struggled in the face of severe challenges that included communal debt for those tribes whose members actually won and then hosted the increasingly extravagant award ceremony. This first phase of the contest struggled for entrants in the 1970s and 80s, and ended in 1990.

Re-emerging in 2003, the event is now dominated by large-scale corporate agribusinesses that are integral to the ‘Māori economy’, itself interpreted as the ‘sleeping giant’ of the wider New Zealand economy. This paper explores the history of Māori farming through the Ahuwhenua awards, and explains why the first phase went into abeyance by offering brief insights into the context of four capitals: economic, environmental, social and cultural. The paper also offers thoughts on the current renaissance of the Māori farming sector and identifies future challenges to Māori environmental planning and sustainable development in the global economy.

**Keywords:** Farming, agribusiness, modernisation, social capital, cultural capital.

## Introduction

- farm** 1. (Eng). pāmu. The family all lived and worked on the farm. I noho katoa te whānau i runga i te pāmu, a, me te mahi anō hoki.  
2. mahi pāmu. The Māori Incorporations farmed their lands well. I pai te mahi pāmu a nga Kaporeihana Māori i o ratou whenua.

This dictionary entry is from page 178 of Hori Ngata’s 1993 *English-Māori Dictionary*. There are several other entries that play on the English word ‘farm’, a word that emerges in 13<sup>th</sup> Century Middle English with *ferme*, meaning leased or rented land (itself derived from the Latin *firmāre* ‘to make firm’). The first example of its translation undoubtedly described a great number of whānau of the early to mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century who worked the land or were employed in transport, harvesting, and basic processing in land-based industries. It was Hori Ngata’s grandfather, Āpirana Ngata, who initiated a competition to identify and celebrate the ‘Māori-Farmer-of-the-Year’ and promote modern (i.e. European) farming methods among Māori land-owners. Notwithstanding a certain romanticism attached to country life in this period, Māori were primarily a rural people, engaged in land-based work, and still living in hapū-based communalism: firmly on the land.

But despite this proud history, the competition spluttered from the 1970s with fewer and fewer entrants. It was held only once in the 1980s, then once again in 1990 in what is the first phase of Te Ahuwhenua. The second dictionary entry for pāmu speaks obliquely of the change which saw the return of the contest alongside the evolution of a corporate framework for Māori land-based industries. Land development schemes, initiated in the early 1920s (again by Āpirana Ngata) ultimately led to modern Māori farms on a scale that dwarf the first entrants of Te Ahuwhenua, covering thousands of hectares and with a capital value of hundreds of millions of dollars, employing skilled staff (primarily non-Māori) to supply the global agricultural commodities market.

Māori are now largely an urban people, drawn from rural New Zealand in the 1960s primarily as a low-skilled manufacturing and industrial workforce but now diversifying individually and collectively both in Aotearoa/New Zealand and overseas. In this one dictionary entry, with its two related but somehow distant meanings, we can see the huge sweep of Māori farming. From a way-of-life, that was revolutionized by European agricultural innovations, to a significant but problematic capital asset and global investment vehicle of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Contemporary development is complex, and for all peoples – Indigenous and non-Indigenous - involves linkages with previously distant societies, the rapid evolution of institutions, and the radical expansion of knowledge and technologies. The concept of sustainable development now bluntly articulates environmental and social bottom lines in addition to the economic. This ‘triple bottom-line’ has been further expanded by the addition of cultural inputs and outcomes (Lambert, 2008; United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation, 1998). This ‘quadruple top line’ for sustainable development in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century encapsulates four ‘capitals’, the economic, environmental, social, and cultural, both frames modern Māori development and can be observed in the history of Māori farming.

While the renaissance of the Ahuwhenua contest is writ large in the Māori media, and seasonally in mainstream, the early history of the trophy is increasingly remote and lacks a significant presence in scholarly literature. This paper seeks to rectify this omission by presenting a historical snapshot of Māori farming. Drawing on archival material the records on Te Ahuwhenua we find underlying tensions from racist assumptions and cultural differences. However the primary factors leading to the demise of the first phase of the Ahuwhenua Trophy was insufficient interest from Pākehā to support Māori farming communities and address the concerns of Māori landowners, and insufficient interest from Māori to enter something they did not control. The paper also integrates this history with the contemporary competition, touching on issues of sustainability through economic, environmental, social and cultural capitals to give a sketch of current and future issues facing Māori agribusiness.

## **An overview of Māori farming**

The historical landscape of Māori land has been well traversed by both Māori and Pākehā researchers, although many histories are still to be recorded. However, the specifics of Māori farming itself are usually only glimpsed through the twin lenses of macro-scale politics (particularly over land itself; see Kingi, 2008; Orange, 1987; Stokes, 2002), and the micro-scale of personal biographies (see, for example, Matui & Mutu, 2003; Waitangi Tribunal, 2010, pp. 617-618). In neither of these approaches is Māori farming itself the focus. In using the term ‘Māori farming’, I draw a somewhat arbitrary boundary by beginning after the rupture of introduced livestock and crops, described by Crosby (1986) as an ‘ecological imperialism’ as Britain and other European colonisers created Neo-Europes around the world to supply their home markets with, among other things, agricultural commodities (see also Blaut, 1993). This focus on introduced farming methods in no way diminishes the extended history of Māori resource management, which by the time of contact with Europeans was an intimate and highly adapted eco-cultural resilience (Anderson, 2002; Leach, 1984; McKinnon, 1997, Plates 11-16). This methodological and academic disciplinary border can, of course, be crossed at will.

There are several key moments in the development of Māori farming. First there were the introductions of crops, particularly the white potato and wheat, and limited livestock, notably the pig, by early European explorers in the late 1700s (Best, 1925; Grey, 1994; Lambert, 2008). More systematic introductions occurred under the direction of Reverend Samuel Marsden who landed at Rangiorua in 1814 with, among other things, an unflagging will to bring both ‘spiritual guidance’ and ‘prosperity’ to the Natives. The spirituality was to be a rigorous Anglo-Christianity (Reed, 1955; Williams, 2006). The prosperity was to be built on agriculture, with Māori adopting the new crops, livestock, technologies, and activities onto their own land.

The growth and spread of these new farming methods through Māori society was remarkable. While space precludes an in-depth discussion, European settlers observed - and benefitted from - the establishment of Māori commercial ventures (Hargreaves, 1959, 1960, 1963; Petrie, 2006). Māori leaders who emerged, or

cemented their status, in this period were those who recognized and pursued particular innovations, notably muskets and potatoes (R. D. Crosby, 1999), or including particular ‘activities’ or concepts such as Christianity, literacy, trade and commerce (Salmond, 1997, 2000). Ultimately the economic success of Māori, and its exclusivity through land-ownership, was a key cause of the brutal military colonisation that was to dominate the 1860s (Belich, 1996; King, 2003) and lead to the precipitous decline of Māori society and its highly productive agriculture.

Māori resisted colonial oppression in a variety of ways, including warfare (Belich, 1986) and innovative spiritualities (Elsmore, 1989). Within Māori farming we see politico-legislative responses such as that by a group of Māori landowners on the East Coast in the 1870s who vested their lands in a trust managed by Māori leader, Wi Pere, and a Pākehā lawyer and politician, William Rees. This attempt led to the establishment of the New Zealand Native Land Settlement Co. Ltd. to capitalise Māori development strategies, the capital primarily coming from Pākehā (MacKay, 1949). Although this trust eventually went bankrupt, provoking its own legislative remedy, it illustrated Māori were open to accessing the commercial innovations of Europeans in the development of their lands.

The unitary organisation of Māori land was possible under the 1894 Native Land Act, with formal incorporations introduced as legal bodies by parliament in the 1909 Māori Land Act. However, it was the introduction of Māori Land Development Schemes by Āpirana Ngata in 1929 that sparked a new and momentous stage of development. Ngata had been working for many years to improve the position of Māori not least through increasing the productivity of their land (Tuuta, 1996), and he vigorously pursued economic development through such organisations as the Union of Ngāti Porou Farmers (Walker, 2001). When Ngata was promoted to Minister of Native Affairs in 1928 he secured government funding for Māori landowners to develop their own farms, and the Native Land Claims Adjustment Act of 1929 allowed him to advance finance towards ‘agricultural pursuits’ and ‘efforts of industry and self-help’ for Māori (Walker, 2001, p. 235). Other strategies saw significant efforts towards education, albeit constrained by the racist assignment of agricultural and trade skills to Māori boys, and domestic skills to Māori girls (Simon & Smith, 2001). Kaumātua sent their sons to agricultural colleges in New Zealand and Australia, Ngata sending his own son, Makarini, to Hawkebury Agricultural College in New South Wales (Sorrenson, 1986). Māori were being schooled in the ‘scientific farming’ (Galbreath, 1998), at which New Zealand would soon be a world leader.

Communal, kin-centric labour was central to these early farms, following what Ngata called the ‘old time pathways’ of the Māori (Sissons, 2000). In many respects Māori ventures remained extended ‘family affairs’ in the manner of the traditional land ownership and use: owners would meet and make decisions as they always had, and do the work themselves. By August 1931 there were 41 incorporations amounting to almost 240,000 hectares (Walker, 2001, p. 253), and a new generation of Māori appeared with greater experience and confidence in managing the land, and possessing a fierce desire to direct their own development.

But opposition to Māori land development continued. Some criticisms focused on the tradition of communal ownership and extensive kinship obligations (Walker, 2001, pp. 273-275). Despite this colonial antagonism, Māori culture continued to play its part. Joan Metge undertook an extensive study of a Māori community of Ahipara, Northland, in the 1950s. Published as *A New Māori Migration: Rural and Urban relations in Northern New Zealand* (1964) in which Ahipara is named ‘Kotare’, Metge refuted claims that Māori farm output was negatively affected by kinship obligations:

...contributions to hui, both labour and goods, were a loss or drain on the farmers’ resources only on a short-term view. He was recompensed, not for each specific gift but in a general way, when a wedding or a death occurred in his own immediate family, for then he received from kinsfolk (not necessarily those to whom he had given or in the same measure) contributions which in the aggregate covered all or a greater part of the expenses of staging of necessary hui. The [Ahipara] farmers also gave frequent gifts of meat, milk, fruit, and vegetables to kinsmen who lacked them, but these were usually returned indirectly, in the form of labour or gifts of goods not produced on the farm, such as seafoods (ibid, pp. 33-34).

However, while the number of incorporations continued to grow, the co-operative spirit evident in their establishment had declined. There were several reasons for this. First, owners were now rarely living together as a community. Many Māori drifted to urban centres over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, and not just local towns but all over the country, and there was a corresponding decline in Māori farmers, from 9,773 in 1951, to 9,676 in 1956, falling to 9,141 in 1961 (Butterworth, 1967, p. 34).

The second reason for declining communalism was that incorporations had become very complex. Large sums of money were invested and the communal work ethic was ultimately replaced by paid labour, as were the tasks of management and administration. Thirdly, owners were becoming 'legal-minded' and legal advice was regularly sought as incorporations came to resemble businesses, taking on many of the practices of private companies. Some incorporations failed through poor accounting and administration, with struggles for power among conflicting factions and assumption of power by dominant personalities (Walker, 2001), features hardly unique to Māori of course. Others suffered equally commonplace fates, such as the declining soil fertility, but the overall trend was for non-Māori, non-traditional social practices to become more and more prevalent in managing Māori land. It is this history of daily, seasonal and generational struggle that is woven through Te Ahuwhenua.

### **Te Ahuwhenua: Māori Farmer-of-the-Year**

By the time of Ngata, Māori had been colonized for two generations and the Ahuwhenua contest was framed by both its Māori and Pākehā supporters as modernising Māori to fit with the 'new' New Zealand (Ballara, 1998; Hill, 2009; Sissons, 2000). Led by the indefatigable Ngata and supported by the Governor-General Lord Bledisloe, it was first held in 1932/33, predating by half a century the mainstream New Zealand Young Farmer-of-the-Year award. Originally restricted to Māori of the Waiariki district, such was the initial excitement over the competition that representatives from North Auckland requested the competition be made a national affair, to which Bledisloe agreed while stipulating the first contest be limited to the Waiariki District. Entry was restricted to "Māori farmers who occupy land under a Native Land Development Scheme administered in terms of section 522 of the Native Land Act, 1931" (New Zealand Government, 1932). Bledisloe donated an impressive silver cup to be awarded to the winner. On one side was inscribed 'Te tohu Ahuwhenua, Na Rore Peraro, Tihema, 1932', and on the reverse 'The Son-of-the-Soil Trophy. Presented by His Excellency Lord Bledisloe, December, 1932.' The judging criteria were "good husbandry, economy of management with a view to a commercial profit, the cleanliness and neatness of the holding, and the progress made by the farmer in the development of the holding..." (ibid.). A farmer's 'character and reputation' were also noted: modern Māori farmers were expected to be good managers of their farms, their households, and themselves.

In the inaugural year of Te Ahuwhenua, 1932, agriculture was both the predominant industry and the primary export earning sector. There were nearly 83,000 farms covering 17.4 million hectares, the average size being 208 hectares (Census and Statistics Office, 1932, p. 23). The first winner was Bill Swinton who farmed at Raukokore and was of Te Whānau-a-Apanui, and who received the trophy from Bledisloe himself in a ceremony in Rotorua (see Walker, 2001, for a photograph of this ceremony). But the competition made stuttering progress, not being held in 1934, 1935, or 1937 when the Waiapu store burnt to the ground, destroying the trophy which was on display. This loss required a formal investigation, presided over by a judge, with much correspondence between all concerned parties and the melted remains photographed and tested to confirm they were indeed the remnants of something silver.

The 1940s were a time of strong growth for New Zealand, with a booming sheep and wool sector. Returned soldiers began to work the land - by 1946, there were over 86,000 farm holdings (Table 35, Census and Statistics Office, 1943-53, p. 43) - often spending long hours clearing bush from rugged hillsides and borrowing money to sow grass and stock their paddocks. In this post-World War 2 era, a number of women entrants became prominent, including Huinga Nepia, whose husband, the famous All Black, George Nepia, was in England playing rugby league at the time to supplement their income during the Depression. The first wahine to win was Tatai Hall in 1940 who farmed at Te Teko; then Mrs. R. Beasley, who farmed at Pokeno, won in 1952; and Aumihi Stevens in 1954 at Okaihau in the dairy

section. Aumihi milked 36 cows run on 33 hectares, half of which was leased. The judge noted how hard she had to work:

[She] has developed a high-producing farm from swamp land overgrown with rushes. Excellent reserves of fodder are saved, but the owner is trying to do all the work herself. She badly needs permanent reliable labour to assist her in maintenance work.

With most prime land lost through colonisation, many Māori farms were isolated. An example of this isolation was the 1953 winner Rohe Takiari of the Ngāti te Wehi hapū, Waikato, who farmed at Rakaunui, Kāwhia, a district with poor roads, no electricity, and mail only twice a week. The nearest Post Office and store were 13 kms away and the only place for social activities such as dances or the cinema was 24 kms away. Gifted 10.5 hectares in 1947, Rohe soon secured a further 30 hectares and took leasehold of another 90. Much of the land was undeveloped and covered with mānuka, fern and ragwort. Initially the farm was under the control of the Department of Māori Affairs, from whom tractor and tools were hired. When development started only 120 ewes could be wintered on the farm and working days of up to 18 hours were needed to clear the land, and for the first three years Rohe lived in a 'ponga whare'. The year he won the trophy, 860 ewes and 97 Polled Angus cattle were carried. The media reported:

The farm generally presents a neat and tidy appearance. Fences and yards are in good order with all gates well hung. All tools and equipment are kept under cover when not in use. Pastures have been kept in good heart by an annual application of three hundred weight of fertilizer. Particular attention has been paid to pasture management by judicious grazing with sheep and cattle. His farm books and daily diary are perfectly kept and contain much useful information...His thirst for farming knowledge is never satisfied and although he has gained this highest award it is not likely he will rest on his laurels but will strive to increase his production as much as possible (G. Mead, 1953).

Field officers and judges found it increasingly difficult to judge the merits of sheep and beef farms on the one hand, and dairy on the other, and in 1954 the competition was split into two sections. This was an acknowledgement of the growing diversity of the Māori farming sector. Perhaps the goal of modernising Māori farming was being realised, at least in the work of the competition winners.

From the mid-1960s, wool prices began to decline; the boom years were over. Māori farms of this period are somewhat larger than the previous decade, reflecting the general growing NZ farm size. Watchman Waaka, a returned serviceman and Māori All Black, the 1960 winner of the sheep and cattle section, managed a comparatively large 416 hectares where the average farm size for his district was just over 260 (Waetford, 1961). But many holdings were not large enough to support all those who sought to survive on the farms. The dairy section in 1962 was won by Wiremu Maki of Takahiwai who first settled on the property with his brother in 1949 on a 20 year lease. In 1957 they realised the farm could not support two families and the brother transferred his half of the lease to Wiremu who was subsequently given a new 32 year lease. Others experiences speak of similar challenges, with mortgages often in excess of what could be sustained. One farmer considered Ngata's schemes 'disastrous': "We could not make a living from the farm, we moved around living where we could get work and going back to help on the farm when we could" (Matui & Mutu, 2003, p. 25).

The Department of Māori Affairs would bill farmers for goods and services such as manure and fencing that were ordered by the Department's supervisors, disregarding local needs and preferences. Although successful farmers reduced their debt, government-appointed supervisors often increased farm debts by needlessly ordering extra capital expenditure (Walker, 2001, p. 387). Farming on Māori land was increasingly difficult and for many whānau simply unsustainable.

## Declining Interest

Despite continued media coverage and official government support, concerns were being expressed among some officials and agricultural field officers that entries were down in the sheep and beef section, with only one entrant in 1968, although there were nine in the dairy section (still less than previous years). Entries from Northland declined over the 1960s, with none at all towards the end of that decade. This waning interest was to reach serious levels in the 1970s with the New Zealand economy, and farming in particular, suffering a decline. Although this period had its first entrants from Southland, several years in this decade showed just one or two entrants in sheep and beef section. A memo from a District Officer (dated 14/8/70) listed several issues:

“The costs incurred as a result of winning are too great for the sake of a piece of paper...The cost of ‘prettying up’ the farm to competition standards is too great, when money is needed for more essential purposes, and time so spent could be better spent elsewhere....Many entrants don’t favour the Judges comments on their farms, albeit that these comments are aimed at improved farming practice and production....Poorer farmers are just not interested... Better farmers [have] more to do with their time...Many of the better farmers are Europeans with Māori wives. A good many others in this category are of little Māori descent [...]”

It was further noted:

...the great bulk of our settlers [i.e. Māori settled pursuant to the Native Land Development Scheme, S522, Native Land Act, 1931] are below average farmers, more often than not propped up by the Department. (J.H.W. Barber, D.O. File: MIA 16; H.O File: 60/8 Māori).

A letter written by a representative of Rongomaipapa marae (Rotorua), who were to host 400 guests including the Governor-General for the 1972 ceremony for ‘their’ winner Johnny Edwards, detailed concerns. At a marae meeting it was decided to inform the department of “...our collective disappointment and the inadequacy” of the department’s \$50 contribution towards expenses which were anticipated to be \$1,000 and included renovations of \$400 and some guests staying three days. The meeting decided to tax local people \$10 per household, giving approximately \$200. These costs were, for the locals, ‘unfair’ and did not give “present and potential competitors any incentive to take part in the competition” (A.H. Edwards. Archival material BBFZ 4945 37c Ahuwhenua Trophy 1969-73).

The response from officials was unequivocal:

The grant of \$50 is the same amount made available throughout the country to cover presentations where a morning or an afternoon tea only is involved. The presentation of the Ahuwhenua Trophy should not be an excuse for a hui; if the people want this then they must be prepared to meet the cost. The Minister will not be attending the function.

A memo from the Senior Field Officer for the northern region listed further reasons for a lack of support for Te Ahuwhenua from Māori farmers:

Our farmers do not appear to wish to enter a national competition where entrance is based solely on race and restricted almost entirely to Department settlers ... Farming as such is not a race issue ... a Māori farmer thinks only of himself as a farmer and being a Māori is of no consequence relative to his farming activities. To ask him then to enter a competition and a farmer because he may be a good “Māori” farmer even if he is only average in his district is somewhat patronizing. (W. Flint, memo dated 21/3/75, Archives ABAH, W4187, 34).

Another departmental memo in 1976 noted “The honour and glory accruing to the winner are, in this material age, insufficient incentives for participation.” Some officials thought the contest should be biennial as the limited number of entries continued to threaten Te Ahuwhenua, with no contest held in 1980 or ’81. The 1982 winner, Matenga Kingi of Ngāti Porou, farmed at Whangara on the East Coast of the North Island. (This land was later incorporated into the 2009 winner, Pakarae Whangara B5). Matenga had taken over management of the 321 hectares of family land in 1970, having studied agriculture at Te Aute College for three years, and then spent several years managing farms in southern Hawkes Bay, including three years for the Department of Māori Affairs. When Matenga began to farm Whangara it was carrying 2,200 stock units with two thirds of the farm having reverted to blackberry. Matenga proceeded to develop the farm with Department of Māori Affairs funding, clearing the blackberry and sowing grass on a further 155 hectares and planting 15 hectares in sweetcorn. By 1982 the farm was running 4,400 stock units.

But the kōrero within the competition notes still speaks of struggle. Matenga’s wife worked four days a week “to help the family finances through this difficult financial period”. Matenga himself suffered from asthma and heart problems, necessitating regular medical check-ups although “this is not well-known as Matenga is not one to complain or expand upon his problems.” It was noted that rentals – being reviewed every 5 years and based on capital value – were ‘uncomfortably’ high.

There was only one further contest in this first phase of Te Ahuwhenua, 1990, when it was won by the Paewai brothers of Tirotu Station, Hawkes Bay. After this, the Ahuwhenua competition, inaugurated to help develop Māori farming, went into abeyance for 13 years. The Sons’ of the Soil no longer saw their trophy as worth the effort.

## **Revival and Challenges**

The history of Te Ahuwhenua gives a superb overview of the modern challenges to Māori environmental planning and development, and the responses by Māori as landowners and farm managers. The Ahuwhenua competition was in many ways a natural extension of Rev. Marsden’s civilising project. Ngata and others sought to modernize Māori society through capitalising Māori land to enable productive use of the one resource Māori still had some control of, namely land. Bledisloe, not surprisingly, agreed the contest should encourage, demonstrate, and diffuse so-called scientific farming, and there is certainly evidence of some success. However many Māori farmers, having lost access to the best lands through colonisation, struggled to improve what were often difficult lands, with declining capital (economic, environmental, social and cultural). Whereas the competition was promoted, and initially accepted, as a way to better develop Māori land, over time interest waned as the costs of entering and hosting, and the nuances of race-based criteria undermined its credibility. To describe the demise of Te Ahuwhenua in terms of ‘social capital’ (Putnam, 2000; Svendsen & Sorensen, 2007) which acknowledge reciprocity, mutual understanding, and trust, Māori social capital could not sustain the contest; Pākehā social capital would not.

However, the thirteen years during which Te Ahuwhenua sat in a display case in the Whanganui museum were not years of Māori reticence. In fact a ‘renaissance’ saw the reassertion of Māori culture and a remarkable growth in Māori cultural capital (Durie, 2005; H. M. Mead, 1996; Sissons, 1993). Māori language, arts and crafts, practices, histories, faces and voices were increasingly prevalent where they had previously been absent and increasingly strident where they once had been placatory.

Alongside the cultural renaissance of Māori, Māori land was being steadily (if only partially) returned through the Treaty settlements process. Like Ngata a century earlier, Māori were interested in the better use of this land, and it was in this context that Meat and Wool NZ board members Gina Rudland (Ngāti Porou) and Wayne Walden (Ngāti Kahu and Tai Tokerau) revitalised Te Ahuwhenua in 2003. Meat and Wool NZ (now Beef and Lamb NZ), an industry group financed by farmer levies to research and lobby on behalf of farming interests, was now aware of the growing size of Māori agribusiness. Other corporate sponsors were soon enrolled to support a rekindling of the search for the Māori Farmer-of-the-Year. The modern criteria have parallels with historical judging, including efficiency, financial results and ‘effectiveness of governance’ (Farming competition invaluable, 2010). ‘Triple Bottom Line Reporting’

has been introduced to allow for the environmental and social values that incorporations ‘add or come into conflict with’. Prizes include \$40,000 in cash and farm-related products and services to the winner, with three regional winners each receiving a medal and \$15,000 in cash, products and services. The fact that application forms can be found and downloaded from the internet gives just one small example of the continued radical technological changes in which agriculture operates.

The first winners of this second phase of the competition were Kapenga M Trust, located at Waikite just south of Rotorua where so many winners in the 1930s and 40s farmed. The Trust was established in 1981 under section 438 of the Māori Affairs Act 1953 and continued as an Ahu Whenua Trust under Te Ture Whenua Māori Act 1993. The Department of Māori Affairs had developed the land on behalf of owners when shares were first amalgamated in 1950. Representing some 700 owners/shareholders, the Trust took over from the Department in 1983, and declares an annual dividend to shareholders while also providing education grants and an annual grant to shareholders over 65 years of age. Total distributions at the time of winning the trophy were around \$150,000 a year (Kapenga M Trust, 2005).

The 2010 dairy winners were Waipapa 9 Trust, located just north of Taupo. Covering 6500 hectares this Trust ran 3000 dairy cows on three blocks and also has land in forestry as well as sheep and beef (Bank of New Zealand, 2010). Having accumulated adjoining farms from the late 1990’s, further growth in the Trust’s agribusiness is envisaged, alongside other commercial investments. As commercial entities, these modern-day Māori ventures have a breadth and scale that places them firmly at the forefront of New Zealand’s agribusiness sector.

But all these agribusinesses are attempting further economic development in a context of increasing social and ecological pressures. In New Zealand, the public is increasingly concerned about conventional farming methods (Aerni, 2009); a recent report argues that pastoral land-use in New Zealand is now associated with ‘eutrophication and ecological deterioration’ (Verburg, Hamill, Unwin, & Abell, 2010, p. 37). The farming sector has been challenged to address these concerns, not least to maintain the premium that a ‘clean and green’ image of New Zealand can command in the international market (Parliamentary Commissioner of the Environment, 2004). The related debates are often acrimonious and unfold in a global context of restructuring commodity chains (Le Heron, 2003) in which New Zealand’s peripheral location and struggling economy (McCann, 2009) reduce what influence farmers and other producers can wield.

Significant governance issues have yet to be resolved for these large-scale agribusinesses. Paranihi ki Waitotara (PkW) in Taranaki, a region in which Māori suffered terribly from colonisation, encapsulates many of these concerns. The incorporation is made up of approximately 1.2 million shares distributed between 8,500 people (Tuuta, 2009). There is no minimum shareholding, and fragmentation of titles has led to many shareholders holding a miniscule share. The incorporation has inherited a bitter legacy from the colonial wars of the 1860s:

They find it offensive that they are classified as shareholders. From their point of view they are landowners... They don’t like the term shareholder, they don’t like the term beneficiary... to this day you still get calls from people saying we want our land back. [They are] very staunch, ‘we want our land back; we can look after it ourselves!’ (Tuuta, pers. comm.)

Only a minority of shareholders, approximately 1,600 of a total of 8,000, actually live in the Taranaki district. Although overarching racist legislative constraints hinder the development of PkW (Tuuta, 2009), one of the primary strategic goals is:

...to turn this corporation into a Māori business. That’s the key innovation that’s happening now, because before that, for the past 32, 33 years, PkW has been owned by Māori, run by Pākehā according to Pākehā values, Pākehā business models, and Pākehā business systems, and to a great extent it still is. Our farming practices are very mainstream farming practices, corporate, traditional Taranaki farming (Tuuta, pers. comm.)



It has proven difficult for these modern incorporations to find Māori employees in what is, as per modernisation's 'scientific agriculture' discourse, a highly skilled career (Tuuta, Mark, pers. comms.). The descendents of the Sons' of the Soil no longer standing collectively firm on the land, and do not know the ecological and technological contexts in which sustainability can be maintained. Neither do Pākehā, although this is no consolation as it merely reflects that much of the requisite knowledge and technologies have yet to be invented.

## Conclusions

As a conduit for so-called 'scientific agriculture', Te Ahuwhenua was both an outcome and expression of the modernisation strategies of both Māori and Pākehā whereby the traditional mode of ownership was reformed according to introduced legislative and corporate contexts. Surviving this experience saw Māori drawing on whatever capital they had at hand, including and perhaps *defining* this development, their cultural capital. As with the rest of New Zealand land-based industries, conventional agriculture sees Māori now drawing on their residual environmental capital and coming up against ecological constraints as well as a growing societal unease at the intensification of farming, particularly dairying, and the subsequent environmental costs.

The history of Māori farming as experienced through the entrants and winners of Te Ahuwhenua show changes in the environmental planning and development contexts in which Māori work their land. Thus while there are multiple challenges for Māori as land owners and managers, they could perhaps be summarised as the need to mitigate against the various distances between individuals, collectives, and the land so as to maximise Māori economic, environmental, social and cultural capitals. Despite the historical concerns of Māori farmers regarding race based criteria of Te Ahuwhenua, it is the Māori specific networks of trust, *distrust*, and cultural endurance remain evident and increasingly influential in bridging these distances in contemporary land-based industries. This cultural economy points to how a significant component of the Aotearoa/New Zealand economy will operate into the future.

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## Author Notes

Dr. Simon Lambert (Ngāti Ruapani ki Waikaremoana/Tūhoe) is a lecturer in Māori Environmental Planning and Development at Lincoln University, Christchurch, New Zealand. He has compiled a list of all winners, place getters and other details associated with Te Ahuwhenua, and welcomes any requests for this list from whānau or landowners associated with the competition, or other researchers.

E-mail: [simon.lambert@lincoln.ac.nz](mailto:simon.lambert@lincoln.ac.nz)