

# Are New Zealand Sheep and Beef Farmers a Dying Breed?

Perspectives of New Zealand Agricultural Students

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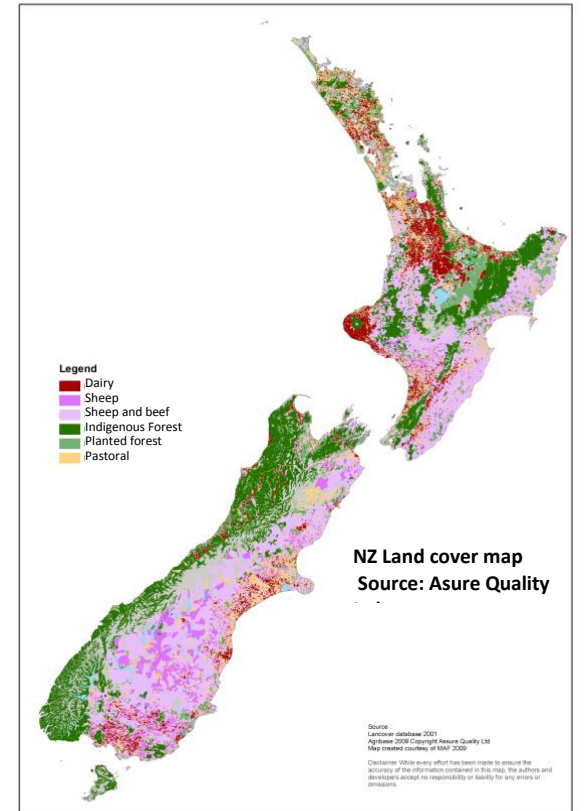


## Background

The New Zealand sheep & beef stock numbers have declined since the removal of government subsidies in the 1980's.

Recently there has been considerable media comment on the fortunes of the industry, to the extent that a news article in a national newspaper in August 2010 declared: "Sheep and beef farms on way to extinction" (Adams, 2010)

- If young people don't choose sheep and beef farming as a career option, the industry will further decline and no longer have sufficient numbers to maintain critical mass.
- The research surveyed New Zealand university students studying agriculture to see if negative sentiment about the decline of the industry was affecting their attitudes and their future career choices.



## Procedures

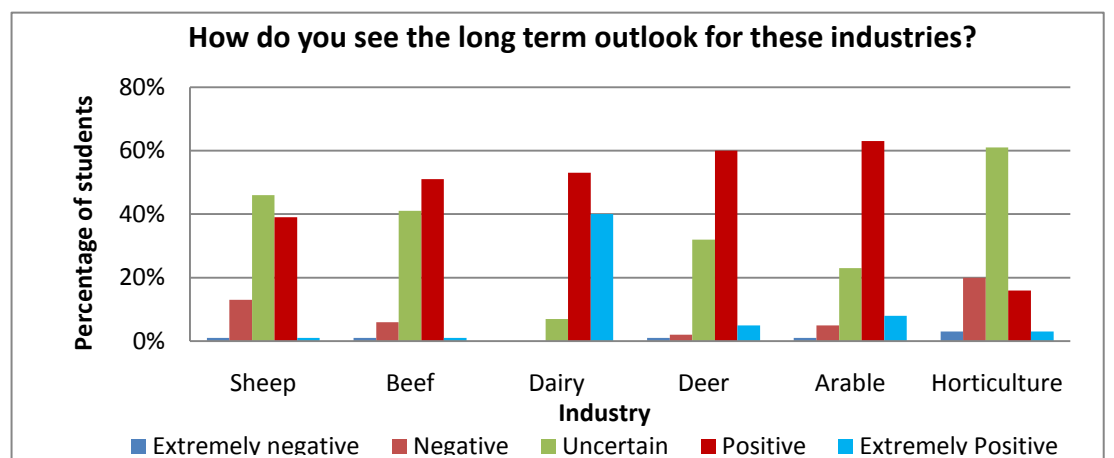
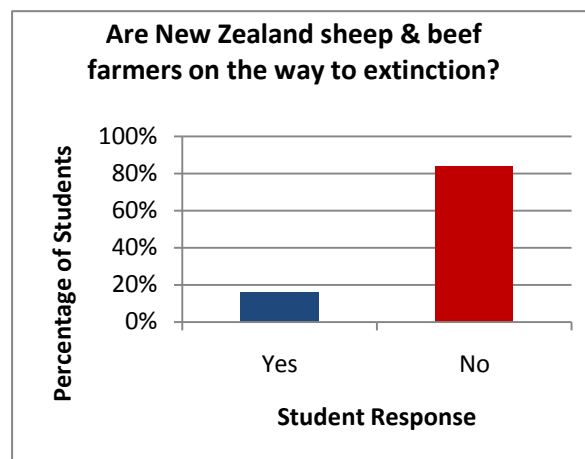
In August 2010 second and third year students studying Bachelor of Commerce (Agriculture) and Bachelor of Agricultural Science at Lincoln University, were surveyed using an online survey.

Students were directed to read the news article entitled "Sheep & Beef farmers on the way to extinction" (Adams, 2010) before answering the survey.

## Results

Students have an optimistic attitude to the New Zealand sheep and beef industry and the majority wished to pursue a career in this industry

- The majority of students (84%) did not think that New Zealand sheep & beef farmers were on the way to extinction and want to work in the sheep and beef industry in the future (65%).
- This was greater than the proportion of students who had a background in the sheep and beef industry (50%).
- The New Zealand dairy industry was seen as having the most positive long term outlook with 93% rating the future outlook extremely positive (EP) or positive (P).
- Less than 50% thought the sheep industry had a positive future (40%), however 51% thought the beef industry had a positive future.
- The majority of students (88%) wish to own their own or manage a farm in the future and work in the sheep and beef industries (65%).



## Conclusion

- The results showed that Lincoln University students have an optimistic attitude to the New Zealand sheep and beef industry and the majority wished to pursue a career in this industry.
- Large numbers see farm management as a career goal.

This indicates that students take a long term view of the industry and weren't significantly affected by the current negative sentiment in their attitudes or career choice. This is positive for the future of the industry.

**Reference:** Adams, C. (2010, Wednesday Aug 4, 2010). Sheep and beef farms 'on way to extinction'. *New Zealand Herald*. Retrieved from [http://www.nzherald.co.nz/fonterra-co-operative-group/news/article.cfm?o\\_id=298&objectid=10663405](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/fonterra-co-operative-group/news/article.cfm?o_id=298&objectid=10663405)

Those who don't want to own or manage a farm mostly want to work as farm consultants (43%), in farm finance (31%) or agribusiness management (25%)



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