



# Foresters urge Govt to listen

By ANGELIQUE JURD

**F**ARMERS want the Government to know they are not prepared to be left holding the bag in the Kyoto carbon credit dispute.

"The Government must be careful they don't impose costs on the farming industry that impact on its ability to sell overseas," Pukekohe dairy farmer Wendy Clark said.

"Sixty five per cent of New Zealand's export income is from the primary sector and we already have to compete with countries, which are heavily subsidised and don't fall under the Kyoto Protocol."

Prime Minister Helen Clark attended one of the two meetings held in Auckland last week as part of a month-long consultation series of meetings nationwide.

Around 450 turned out for the first meeting, held at the Waipuna Hotel in Mt Wellington, the majority from the forestry sector.

The subsequent meeting in Pukekohe attracted substantially fewer people - 73 - many of them farmers or horticultural growers.



While there was a noticeable difference in attendance, the unanimous dissatisfaction of those present was the same, according to Kyoto Forestry Association spokesman Roger Dickie.

Kyoto carbon credits are earned by investors who appropriated carbon by planting new forestry since January 1, 1990 and by those industries which have reduced their carbon emissions since that date.

From 1990 to 2002, the country

**Irongate Forest Partnership was the 12th forest established by Roger Dickie. In 2003 Irongate had an estimated net stocked area of 336 hectares.**



experienced a planting boom as investors, including New Zealanders preparing for retirement, poured \$400 million of risk capital a year into more than 600,000ha of new forest.

They expected a return not only from the sale of wood products in the future but also from carbon credits which, Mr Dickie said, had been promised by the Government. The Government policy now was to take these credits for itself.

"We invest for about 28 years and are prepared to take the market risks," Mr Dickie said.

"What we rely on is government stability.

"Everyone, farmers, foresters, investors, made it clear at the meetings that they are disenchanted with what the Government is doing by this expropriation [of carbon credits].

"It's a badly thought-through policy [on carbon credits] and it's an unfair policy.

"The Government is trying to devalue the credits – if they are worth nothing, let us have them."

Green Party leader Jeanette Fitzsimons agrees it is important to recognise the value forestry brings

by storing carbon and says it makes sense to use the value of the credits for the benefit of the forestry industry.

"That may include a cash payment," she said.

"There has to be some incentive for forests to be planted and disincentive to deforestation."

She also agrees it is unreasonable to expect farmers to meet the full cost of emissions produced by their industry, proposing, instead, that they offset the increase since the 1990 Kyoto base date.

National Party leader John Key recently told *Straight Furrow* his party did not favour deforestation, but would remove the deforestation cap.

Like Ms Fitzsimons, Mr Key felt people should be given an incentive to plant.

"We are talking to all the political parties," Mr Dickie said.

"We are not going to go away – we have a lot in the pipeline. The Government needs to stop criticising and start listening."



Irongate Forest is situated on State Highway 2, near Tutira, 55km north of Napier in Hawke's Bay.

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