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Stuart Ellingham Horizon Farming Managing Director

Partnering on erosion control work a win-win

Horizon Farming in Hawke's Bay is committed to getting the right balance between running a commercial operation and enhancing the land they farm.

Thanks to its partnership with the Hawke's Bay Regional Council, managing director Stuart (Chook) Ellingham says the operation has been able to speed up its work to protect areas that are prone to erosion, and keep soil on the land and waterways clear.

Horizon Farming is a farming business with Wellington owners, based over nine blocks of land in Hawke's Bay covering 11-and-a-half thousand hectares, from Woodville to Ocean Beach.

“The Hawke's Bay Regional Council's goals on environmental values fit really well with ours. We have really similar values and objectives about getting the mix and balance right. We want to make sure we are farming the right type of land and identifying erosion prone land for retirement.

“We are very much focused on having win-win situations where we as commercial farmers are winning, and the environment is winning,” says Chook.

Partnering with the Regional Council through the Erosion Control Scheme, Horizon Farming has been able to speed up the process of identifying pieces of erosion prone land that should be retired.

“We've been able to get some areas out of farming operations without affecting commercial profitability. We've done multiple poplar and willow plantings to stop sheet erosion on hills. We've also done riparian planting to protect stream banks, keep stock out of the water to enhance the water quality and create corridors of biodiversity for all the flora and fauna,” says Chook.

Hawke's Bay Regional Council's Catchment Advisor for Southern Area, Dean Roughton, says Horizon Farming is a great example of what to aspire to in erosion control.

“This has been a great partnership. A highlight for me has been working with the different managers on each of the blocks that Horizon's run, undertaking work over each property. This has ranged from getting fences installed along the Maraetotara River, looking to retire out native bush blocks, to making sure that their pole orders are being met.

“This work is allowing Horizon Farming to keep the soil on their land, the waterways clear, with little impact to the farming business which benefits all of us,” he says.

There are a variety of ways for farmers to get assistance from the Regional Council to fence and plant to protect their land from erosion. Visit www.hbrc.govt.nz and search #erosion or call your local catchment advisor.