

The generation game: managing New Zealand's soil resource to meet current and future needs

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Experts from across New Zealand's science, government and primary sectors came together in a project to review Future Requirements for Soil Management in New Zealand. The study, commissioned by Ministry for Primary Industries reveals the challenge of managing soils, reflecting complex ownership, the involvement of a diverse range of organizations, sectors and individuals in decision-making and the conundrum of ensuring economic growth, protecting the natural resource base and meeting society's need.

The most significant pressures on the soil resource were identified as being attributable to intensification, land use change and the legacy of past actions. Critical as we play the generation game, that is managing our soils to meet current and future needs, is ensuring 'readiness' to address these pressures and impacts.

Three pillars of science readiness are identified as:

- A national suite of agreed land and soil information, tools and databases
- Soil research prioritised through a national research strategy to influence and guide investment
- Appropriate capability and soil literacy developed within and outside of the science system.

These three pillars are necessary to ensure the primary sector and policy decision makers are equipped with knowledge on the effectiveness of soil management measures, and that regulatory and non-regulatory measures are evidentially developed to ensure the full range of services provided by our finite soil resources are sustained into the future.

As a result of this study a National Soil Management Group will be established and the recommendations used as the basis to inform development of Aotearoa's Living Soil Action Plan. The Action Plan aims to unlock and realise the full potential of New Zealand's soils, and ensure that the needs of both today and tomorrow's generations are met.