



Briefing: Signalling improvements to freshwater farm plans

Date submitted: 18 March 2024

MfE Tracking number: BRF-4435

MPI Tracking number: B24-0238

Security level: Sensitivity classification

Priority: Urgent

Actions sought from Ministers		
Name and position	Action sought	Response by
To Hon Andrew HOGGARD Associate Minister for the Environment	Review and provide feedback on draft Cabinet paper Agree to circulate draft Cabinet paper for consultation ahead of 2 April CBC	20 March 2024
To Hon Todd MCCLAY Minister of Agriculture	Review and provide feedback on draft Cabinet paper	20 March 2024
CC Hon Penny SIMMONDS Minister for the Environment		

Actions for Minister's office staff
Return the signed briefing to the Ministry for the Environment (ministerials@mfe.govt.nz).

Appendices and attachments
1. Appendix 1: Draft work programme
2. Appendix 2: Draft Cabinet paper

Key contacts at Ministry for the Environment			
Position	Name	Cell phone	First contact
Principal Author	Althea Francis		
Responsible Manager	Gina McGrath		
General Manager	Sara Clarke		✓

Key contacts at Ministry for Primary Industries			
Position	Name	Cell phone	First contact
Principal Author	Kay Brown		
Responsible Manager	Claire McClintock		
Director	Charlotte Denny		✓

Signalling improvements to freshwater farm plans

Purpose

1. This briefing provides the Associate Minister for the Environment, Minister Hoggard, with a draft Cabinet paper to signal Ministers' intentions regarding improving the freshwater farm plan system and a proposed work programme for you to discuss with officials if you wish.

Advice

2. We understand that Ministers want to create an enduring and effective freshwater farm plan system (the system) that prioritises:
 - i reducing regulatory burden by creating integration pathways for existing farm environment plan initiatives and industry assurance programmes,
 - ii providing farmers with greater flexibility to find the right freshwater management solutions for their farm and catchment area,
 - iii enabling catchment level solutions and empowering local communities to lead freshwater farm planning,
 - iv reviewing certification and audit requirements to reduce unnecessary cost, while ensuring farmers and growers are supported to develop robust freshwater farm plans; and
 - v reducing duplication for farmers and growers.

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S 9(2)(f)(iv)

4. You have asked for a Cabinet paper that:
 - i allows you to signal your intentions at quite a high level, so you retain some flexibility in how you progress decisions in this space; and
 - ii signals that you will return to Cabinet to seek agreement for your proposed changes.

5.

S 9(2)(f)(iv)

Next steps

6. We have provided you a draft Cabinet paper to:

- i signal your intended priorities for improving freshwater farm plans,
- ii seek approval for the Associate Minister for the Environment and Minister for Agriculture to jointly lead out on communicating the Government's intentions for freshwater farm plans; and

iii **s 9(2)(f)(iv)**

7. Once the draft Cabinet paper and proposed work programme (at Appendix 1) are agreed, we recommend that you lodge the paper for consideration by Cabinet Business Committee (CBC) on 2 April, followed by Cabinet 8 April].
8. This will allow your proposal to be considered alongside related stock exclusion and intensive winter grazing proposals (which Ministers have signalled could be managed through farm plans due to the need to take an approach tailored to each farm's risk profile). It will also allow MfE and MPI to begin work (and engagement) on delivering the improvements you want to see to the system.
9. Ministers could also put out a press release after 8 April Cabinet decisions to signal your intentions. We will work with your office to ensure that you have talking points to support you at CBC, and a draft press release and communications plan.
10. To enable CBC consideration on 2 April, finalising and consulting on this paper would need to occur at pace – see suggested timeframes below.

Office provides feedback on the draft Cabinet paper (and appended work programme)	20 March
Officials update the draft Cabinet paper, and return to office	21 March
Ministerial consultation on the Cabinet paper	22 – 26 March
Paper is finalised post consultation	27 March
Paper is lodged for CBC	28 March

Communicating and engaging on freshwater farm plan improvements

11. Officials will continue working with industry on a pathway for integrating existing industry programmes into the freshwater farm planning system. Targeted engagement with key stakeholders on your future plans for the system will occur as soon as Cabinet has considered the attached paper.

Recommendations

We recommend that you:

- a. **provide** MfE and MPI officials feedback on the draft work programme and Cabinet paper appended to this briefing by 20 March

- b. **agree** to lodge this Cabinet paper for 2 April CBC for confirmation by Cabinet the week after

Yes | No

- c. **agree** for officials to progress the proposed work programme, pending any feedback from you, as outlined at appendix 1

Yes | No

- d. **note** that officials will provide offices with a draft press release and communications plan

- e. **note** that officials will begin engaging with key stakeholders on possible changes to the current freshwater farm plan system following Cabinet confirmation of the paper;

Yes | No

- f. **note** officials will progress work on an equivalence pathway for industry assurance programmes in the interim.

Yes | No

Signatures

Sara Clarke
General Manager –System Enablement and Support, MfE
18/03/2024

Charlotte Denny
Director, Natural Resources Policy
MPI
18 / 03 / 2024

Hon Andrew HOGGARD
Associate Minister for the Environment
Date

Hon Todd MCCLAY
Minister of Agriculture
Date

Appendix 1: Draft work programme

[Redacted]
s 9(2)(f)(iv)

Appendix 2: Draft Cabinet paper

s 18(d)