### Intensive Farming in New Zealand

Farming in New Zealand is becoming more intensive. ‘More intensive’ refers to the increasing use of inputs (e.g. fertiliser, energy, water for irrigation, knowledge or capital) into farming systems to produce more food from the same area of land. Intensive farming is usually characterised by the repeated cultivation and/or grazing of land and the addition of a large number of inputs per hectare to maintain or increase production every year. Over the last century, especially since the 1940s, there has been a general worldwide trend to increase food production through the addition of external human-made inputs into farming systems. These include petroleum-based fertilisers, chemical pesticides, animal feedstuffs and machinery. These inputs have often taken the place of natural processes or resources (e.g. using synthetic fertilisers instead of legumes to ‘fix’ nitrogen into the soil).

Although food production has increased remarkably through the use of these inputs, major concerns have been raised about the long-term environmental, social and economic costs of these farming methods. Prominent issues have included the erosion of topsoil, loss of soil fertility, water pollution, loss of biodiversity and dependence on non-renewable fossil fuels.

Worldwide, there have also been growing concerns about the adverse impacts of intensive farming systems on food safety, human health, the viability of small family farms and the quality of life in rural communities. It is important to note that ‘more intensive’ is a relative phrase, in the sense that something is increasing in relation to what it was. While many farming systems are becoming more intensive in New Zealand, farming in this country is not generally as intensive as many farming systems in North America and Europe.

Intensification occurs along a continuum from relatively low external inputs (such as pastoral farming systems that do not use synthetic fertilisers) to those that rely on very high external inputs (such as factory farming). It is important to emphasise that there are many different ways in which farming systems can be designed to produce more food. For example, it is possible to make more use of human knowledge to increase food production while using less material and energy inputs.

*It is the particular way in which more intensive farming is carried out that needs to be considered in any discussion on sustainability.*

* Watch <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=BMnCiOR3UoQ>
* How has farming changed in New Zealand over the past 100 years? Give details

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