

IS THERE A BIG IRRIGATION SCHEME PLANNED NEAR YOU?

This map shows irrigation schemes planned throughout the country.



*While there is dairy planned under Waimea unlike all the other schemes shown Waimea is not *primarily* for dairy

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO STOP BIG IRRIGATION IN NEW ZEALAND?

Join tens of thousands of other Kiwis in signing up to stop Government-funded irrigation schemes at:
www.greenpeace.org.nz/irrigation-petition/

If there's an irrigation scheme planned near you, contact us at info@greenpeace.org.nz and we'll put you in touch with the local group working to stop the scheme.

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GREENPEACE

SOLD DOWN RIVER

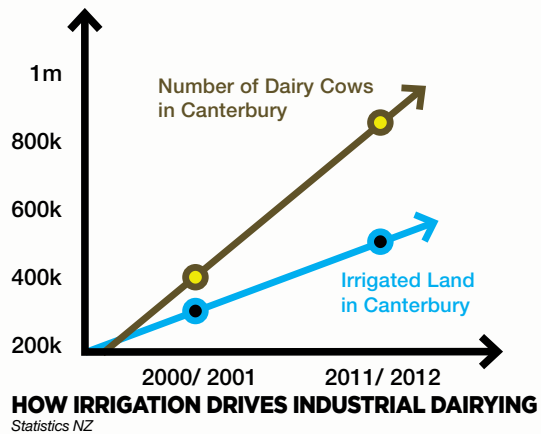
HOW BIG IRRIGATION
WILL POLLUTE OUR WATER



When it comes to clean water, industrial agriculture remains New Zealand's biggest challenge, and large-scale irrigation schemes planned around the country are set to make things worse.

People don't necessarily make the link between irrigation and industrial agriculture. But the one leads directly to the other. Big irrigation schemes are being set up to take water from our rivers to enable more industrial agriculture (primarily dairying) where it wouldn't otherwise have occurred. Where irrigation schemes have been built in the past, industrial dairying has often followed. Canterbury wasn't even dairy country until irrigation came along.

We can't risk a repeat of what happened in Havelock North - the worst waterborne gastro illness outbreak in New Zealand's history. We have to start putting people's health and the health of our rivers before industrial dairying.



INDUSTRIAL DAIRYING = DIRTY WATER

There's been a dramatic rise in the number of dairy cows in New Zealand - a staggering 95% increase since 1990. Each cow produces large volumes of faecal contaminants - about 14 times what a human does each day. This waste ends up on our land and in our water. As well, nitrate in cow urine seeps into groundwater and rivers, driving algal blooms that choke up and can toxify the water.

With irrigation, water is taken from our rivers, used on dry pasture to allow more dairy cows, then returned back to those rivers polluted. Over two thirds of New Zealand rivers are now too dirty to swim in safely.



WHO'S PAYING FOR THESE IRRIGATION SCHEMES?

You are! Despite the risks to our water, the Government is throwing over half a billion taxpayer dollars at industrial irrigation, and local councils are pouring in millions of dollars of ratepayers' money.

WON'T IRRIGATION SOLVE THE DROUGHT PROBLEM?

There's no doubt prolonged dry spells are hurting our farmers and communities - that's the reality of climate change. But industrial scale irrigation schemes aren't used to deal with drought - they're used to intensify industrial agriculture. This can end up creating (rather than solving) problems for farmers.

The Opuha irrigation dam in Canterbury was built in 1998 with the promise of helping farmers through drought. But in the summer of 2015, the dam dried up. All irrigation takes were shut off and 250 farmers were left high and dry. The dam has made the situation worse for many farmers, because they've intensified off the back of it and are now overly reliant on that water.

Even typically pro-irrigation groups like Federated Farmers have raised these concerns. South Canterbury president Ivon Hurst is quoted as saying: "Ironically, it's those with irrigation that are likely to be the worst off because they're stocked up to the limit and have high standing costs so when they do get caught without water, they are in real trouble".

ECOLOGICAL FARMING - THE WAY FORWARD

Ecological farming is a modern and innovative way of farming that works with, rather than against, natural ecosystems - protecting and using them to improve soil and water health, control weeds, pests and diseases and create resilience.

Ecological farming techniques create healthy and fertile soils without chemical fertilisers. Soil fertility is achieved by growing nitrogen-fixing legumes and cover crops, and adding compost or green manures. Meanwhile when you stop overstocking livestock, you reduce soil compaction, meaning the soil's able to hold more water, eliminating the need to irrigate. Eco-ag also means more diversity on farms (so not just growing or breeding one crop or animal). This also boosts soil fertility and resilience.

The result? Healthy livestock, healthy crops, and healthy bottom lines.

Studies prove this. One, an AgResearch report, found that a low-input system with less cows per hectare and no chemical nitrogen fertiliser produced the most milk per cow per year. The study also confirmed that the low input system is the best environmental performer, least financially risky and most profitable when milk-price payouts are low.

