

This land is our land

In attempting to persuade us that the Crafar farm sale to an overseas company is good for the country, John Key says just 1% of our farmland is in overseas ownership. This figure is not accurate.

New Zealand has a land area of 26.9 million hectares (Ministry for the Environment). Of this, less than 55% is being farmed productively (Statistics NZ) or is in production forestry on the more marginal land. Not only that, agriculture continues to be the backbone of our economy, despite our spending decades attempting to broaden the base. So, protecting our land is protecting our economic sovereignty.

According to economist Bill Rosenberg, who aggregated the published decisions of the Overseas Investment Office, 176,600ha of new land was sold, either freehold or leasehold, to overseas interests for farming or forestry in 2011 alone. This rate was close to double the average for new overseas land sales during the previous six years, and it represents the sale of 1.2% of this land in just one year. We are well on the way to becoming tenants in our own land.

We are not against all overseas investment. But as a result of each investment, the country should receive economic value through obtaining specialist expertise, technology or capital that we would not otherwise have had. The Crafar sale achieves none of these goals. It is a negative precedent, which when followed by similar sales will run down and not add to our indigenous economy.

The proportion of land under foreign ownership or control is already too high. Our farmland must be protected in this nation's interests.

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