



# Agri-tourism

## BRINGING A BOOST TO FARM INCOME

While the pastoral sector collectively dominates New Zealand's export earnings, tourism is charging hard on its heels and some farmers have found ways to combine the two to enjoy the best of both sectors' success.

**W**ith many New Zealand farmers enjoying 'office' views many would only dream about, it has proven a natural step to open that view up to visitors who will gladly pay to share with them.

Both islands of New Zealand are dotted with enterprising rural tourism farm ventures enjoying New Zealand's time in the tourism sun. Trophy hunting, caving, rock climbing and mountain biking are some of many catering to tourists' needs, and providing a valuable boost to traditional pastoral farm incomes.

Bayleys' former national country manager Simon Anderson said the combination of potential tourism dollars and a farm's setting was an added bonus for farmers when they were considering selling their property, or wanting to tap into a growing opportunity.

"And those opportunities are making themselves seen in places that in the past may have been seen as off the traditional tourist routes. Farmers located along newly developed cycle trails in areas like Otago have found a ready market for tourists wanting to sample life on a New Zealand farm during their trip."

Colville farming couple Roy and Kaye Ward managed to expand the income from their Kairauhati Hereford stud farm by building a farm café business that has an emphasis upon locally sourced ingredients. For their "Hereford 'n a Pickle" café, that comes right down to using the Ward's prime Hereford beef in their sausages, burgers and salamis.

Today the café generates income that almost exceeds the farm's, and can support the next generation of Wards on the remote Coromandel farm.

“ The combination of potential tourism dollars and a farm's setting was an added bonus for farmers when considering selling or wanting to tap into growth opportunities. ”



wine trail. Chinese visitors in particular enjoyed going to a farm or orchard, with two-thirds going to either or both.

The report's authors found that with changes in how consumers purchase food and beverages, the ability to repeat purchase of local specialities and products once back home helped relive their holiday experience. For example a visit to a winery provides access to their email address on a mailing list, and a direct link for future purchases.

They pointed to opportunities for farmers and growers to partner up with top accommodation providers giving options for eco-type accommodation experiences that help ease emerging capacity constraints at key times of the year when established options in tourist hot spots are already limited.

Simon Anderson said Bayleys regularly has agri-tourism ventures within agents' portfolios, and regular enquiry from hands on investors keen to balance a pastoral income with tourism cash flow.

"Predictions are for tourist numbers to continue to climb over coming years. With increased pressure on the usual tourist attractions, we can see great potential for places that may have been less than well known in the past to expand as more tourists look to go off the beaten track. There are some exciting options opening up for farmers which they may have never considered before."

“ There are some exciting options opening up for farmers which they may have never considered before. ”

On the opposite side of the coast, north western Waikato farming couple Anne and Philip Woodward's underground caves proved an income bonus as business above ground on the farm got tougher. Today the couple in Waikaretu Valley capitalise on the property's beauty above and below ground, including accommodation, a café and function centre.

Tourism Export Council chief executive Lesley Immink said the council had businesses operating farm and rural stays, or specialising in agricultural tours, alongside high-profile operations like the Agrodome and Walter Peak Station.

"And as world leaders in agricultural technologies and food production, more inbound business are being asked by leisure, corporate and export sectors to include visits to appropriate universities, farms and companies."

She said word-of-mouth between travellers about New Zealand's high quality food meant many were wanting a "gate to plate" experience when they got here.

An ANZ AgriFocus report late last year on agri-tourism viewed the influx of international tourists as an opportunity to showcase the broader food and beverage sector.

Over a quarter of the international tourists visiting New Zealand in 2015 visited a farm or orchard, and one in five visited a vineyard or

