DAIRY FARMER SAYS TECHNOLOGY CAN EASE PRESSURE ON NZ AGRICULTURE

SUSTAINABILITY AND SCIENTIFIC INNOVATION SHOULD BE HIGH ON THE AGENDA OF NEW ZEALAND. FARMERS.

This is the view of Waikato dairy farmer Grant Coombes, who says it is time for farmers to embrace new technology to tackle issues such as environmental sustainability.

Grant runs a 750 ha dairy farm at Taupiri, North Waikato with 2000 milking cows, plus dairy support and dry stock cattle. Like many younger farmers, he is open to trying out new things on the farm.

He is in the process of phasing out his fleet of quad bikes for new electric motorbikes.

"I've got seven Ubco 2x2 electric bikes, and they are great," Grant says. "They are quiet and easy to operate. I am passionate about sustainable farming and reducing emissions, so this is one way we can do that in our farm business."

Grant first heard about the Ubco bikes at National Fieldays two years ago. "I've always been interested in innovation, so these caught my eye."

Grant says farmers he knows are committed to reducing their environmental footprint and to mitigating nitrogen leaching through riparian planting and fencing waterways and wetlands.

"Farmers across the country have invested a lot of time, effort and money to improve sustainability and protect the environment. They often get a hard time from their city cousins, but I think we should congratulate farmers for their efforts there."

However, with regulatory and political pressures bearing down on farmers, Grant believes that new science and technology will be vital.

"Farmers are working hard on sustainability and improving the health of waterways, and there are still new things that can be done," he says.

"These days we are 'farming in a fish bowl', and that means that the wider community in New Zealand is looking at fa too is the international comm export markets. So it is abou look at new ways to improve on the farm."

"New scientific development ogy hold the key, and farmers in some of the innovative, gro discoveries happening in New

He says one example is CH LowN Sires, a genetic discov reduce nitrogen leaching on farms by 20 per cent within Ambreed selected bulls genet for a new trait related to the a nitrogen in milk.

Cows bred from these bulls s less nitrogen in their urine whi reduce the amount of nitroger grazed pasture. This could po New Zealand 10 million kilogra leaching a year, based on the number of 6.5 million dairy cat

Another innovation he is in Ecotain plantain from Agricom tain is designed to reduce nitr from urine patches by up to 50 is another tool for dairy farmer

Grant says agricultural lea step up and engage proactivel tions in science and technolo can help every farmer.

"It is really important for l industry to communicate the l ic developments, products an to grassroots farmers," Grant like to see agricultural leader more and communicate better science and technology. We r that a part of the story of dairyi

Grant says many farmers embracing science and techn would like to see that continue help farmers better manage says Grant.

"We are so busy, so any app products that can help farme have got to be a good thing. I more farmers embracing syste life easier." **RC**

GRANT COOMBES WITH ONE OF HIS UBCO ELECTRIC FARM BIKES.