

# Importance of farms in protecting New Zealand's lowland forests

Farmland makes up over half of Aotearoa New Zealand's land area, and farms have a lot of native biodiversity.

Before humans arrived, 80% of New Zealand was forested. Now, only 10-15% of our country is covered in native vegetation. A quarter of the country's native vegetation and 17% of native forests are on farms.

This percentage is even smaller at lower elevations because most native forest was cleared during human settlement in these more habitable areas. What little is left at low elevations is mostly on farms, rather than on public conservation land.

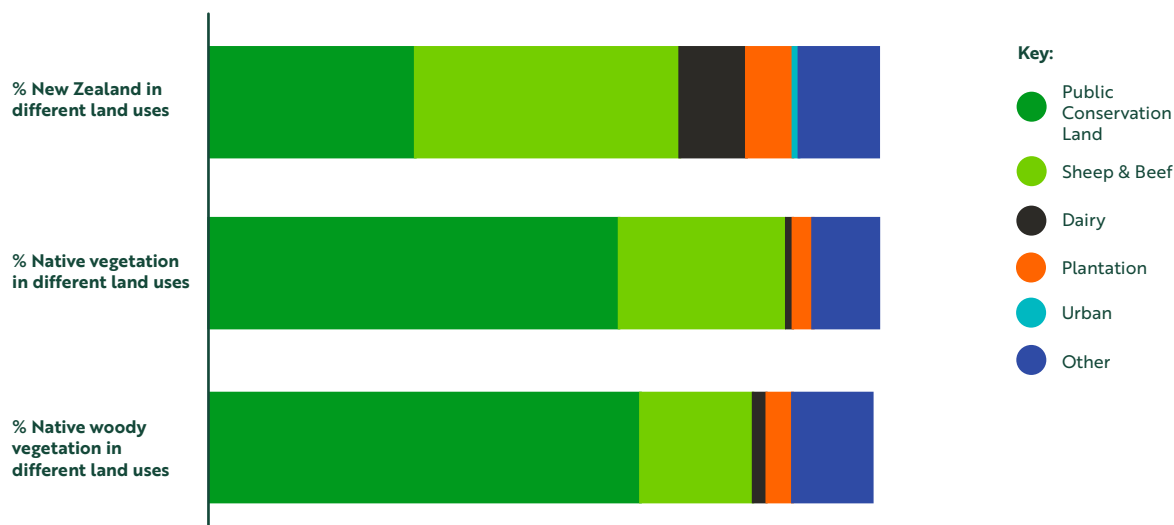
Forest types that are found on farmland are special and need to be protected because they are often rare in conservation land. The power to prevent their further decline is in the hands of farmers.

## Case Study

The eastern plains of the South Island are low-elevation dryland that has been extensively deforested. **Less than 1% of the area contains native woody vegetation, and nearly 60% of the small amount remaining occurs on sheep and beef farms.**

Similarly, although 10% of Aotearoa is used for dairy production, largely on productive lowland soils, **dairy farms only have 2% of the remaining woody vegetation and 2% of wetlands.** It is key to integrate more biodiversity into these dairy farm landscapes.

Most regions of New Zealand show similar patterns to these.



Data from: Pannell et al (2021) DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.20417/nzjecol.45>