A Whole Farm Plan (WFP) is a valuable business tool for the farmer. Offering comprehensive information about on-farm resources, these plans help the farmer develop profitable and sustainable farm management systems. Recognising both environmental and business benefits, Whole Farm Plans are now being undertaken on farms all around the country.

This fact sheet provides some information on what a WFP is, what is involved, and the potential benefits farmers can gain from having a WFP carried out on their farm.

WHAT IS A WHOLE FARM PLAN?
The aim of a WFP is to build a farm system that is optimal for the business, while also having the lowest impact on the environment. Any proposed changes to the current system need to be profitable, easy to manage and to be able to be adapted over time.

A Whole Farm Plan (WFP) involves a stock-take of land, soil and water resources and combines key information from a range of management areas of your farm into a detailed plan. A comprehensive plan will provide strategic direction for successful and sustainable business performance. Assessment of the following factors contributes to the WFP:

- The impact of the current system on the receiving environment
- Goals and aspirations of the farmer
- Current capabilities and constraints of the business from external and internal factors
- The opportunities and threats to the current system from political and market indicators
- The existing farm infrastructure and resources
WHERE HAVE WHOLE FARM PLANS COME FROM?

Whole Farm Plans have developed over time from the realisation that looking at just one aspect of the farm is not enough. WFP's can have different names depending on who is carrying out the plan, for example, farm management plans, farm environment plan, land and environment plan, but the aim is to understand your farm resources and risks.

WHY HAVE A WHOLE FARM PLAN FOR YOUR FARM?

A WFP will provide a farmer with a way to address the current and future goals of their farm. It is a living document, unique to the farmer and their farm and takes into account farmer goals in relation to economic, social, personal, and environmental impacts.

Whole farm planning provides meaningful and measureable outcomes with which to lift performance of the business. Decision making is enhanced as farmers improve the understanding of their choices, as well as the potential consequences and effects of their actions. Farmers who undertake regular WFP's ensure they have a sound strategy to build a resilient business for the future while they continue to reduce their farming impacts on the environment.

WHAT IS THE PROCESS FOR HAVING A WFP DONE ON YOUR FARM?

To start the process, you usually need to have a trained advisor working closely with you and your current advisors, using the information that you already have, such as your nutrient budget, or Nutrient Management Plan (NMP).

With the help of enough information to generate a typical year, the advisor will be able to build scenarios using the OVERSEER model to look at different options that are aligned with your goals, and aim to design a farm system that is efficient and profitable, while also having the lowest impact on the environment.

There are many current examples of agencies and Councils working with farmers in the WFP process to look for opportunities to improve not only the health and resilience of your business, but also the health of your environment.

Diagram courtesy of Bala Tikkisetty, Waikato Regional Council 2011
CASE STUDY

Andrew and Jenny Hayes, Horsham Downs, near Hamilton, farm an 88Ha effective dairy farm. They have two peat lakes on their farm and the lakes were starting to die in 1981. Since then, the Hayes and their four sons Alastair, Derek, Rodney and Fred, along with DOC, Waikato Regional Council (WRC) and others, such as duckshooters, have cleared 16ha of willows, retired riparian margins, fenced and planted native plants. Silt traps and constructed wetlands have also been installed.

Since 2008, with assistance from DOC, to help protect the lakes even further, the Hayes started having WFPs done with Headlands Consultants. Andrew believes WFPs are much more beneficial than Nutrient Budgets as a WFP tells you how you’re doing and how your farm is performing. For example, a big benefit for Andrew is showing the Soluble N use/ha in relation to the Pasture Harvested (TDM/Harv/Ha). You know what you’re putting on in relation to what you’re getting back via the N Conversion Efficiency. Therefore nothing is wasted and it tells the whole story. Compare this with farmers who put N on “just in case”.

Andrew has a progress report done every year and both the lakes and farm are better. He believes the cost of having a WFP is nothing compared to the net profit gained through farm efficiencies. “I’m a better farmer, that’s the guts of it”.

Table of contents from a typical WFP
OTHER ORGANISATIONS:

Some agencies have their own processes for assessing farm resources and risks, but may not call them whole farm plans as such. Please also contact your Regional, District or City Council or your regional NZ Landcare Trust coordinator for further information.

There are a number of examples both nationwide, and regionally and include, but not limited to:

- **Beef + Lamb NZ**
  Land and Environment Plan

- **DairyNZ**
  Sustainable Milk Plan Template
  [www.dairynz.co.nz/page/pageid/2145879945/Upper_Waikato_Sustainable_Milk_Project](http://www.dairynz.co.nz/page/pageid/2145879945/Upper_Waikato_Sustainable_Milk_Project)

- **Irrigation NZ**

There are also trained private consultants able to carry out whole farm plans and include, but not limited to:

- **Headlands**
  [www.headlandsenviro.co.nz/](http://www.headlandsenviro.co.nz/)

- **Landvision Ltd**
  [www.landvision.co.nz/](http://www.landvision.co.nz/)

Disclaimer – the information in this fact sheet is current to September 2013 and is used and endorsed by the NZ Landcare Trust. Other organisations and/or agencies may have different processes for undertaking WFP’s.

If you are interested in finding out more about Whole Farm Plans please contact:

NZ Landcare Trust, 0800526 322
or email: info@landcare.org.nz