

AGRICULTURAL RECOVERY PROGRAMME - 'ON-FARM' RELIEF MEASURES FOR FORESTRY

Rural Affairs Minister Jim Sutton said in a press release on 8 April that the key aim of the Agricultural Recovery Programme was to enable farmers and crop growers to re-establish their businesses as quickly as possible:

“People who earn 51 per cent or more of their income from farming and crop growing within the boundaries of the South Taranaki, Wanganui, Ruapehu, Rangitikei, Manawatu, Horowhenua, Kapiti, Central Hawkes Bay, Tararua, Masterton, Carterton, and South Wairarapa local authorities are eligible for assistance through the Government’s agricultural recovery programme.

“It isn’t possible to make the effects of this go away for people. The impact of February’s storm is such that people will continue to see the effects on their land, particularly in the hill country and in their balance sheets, for many years to come. But this package will help people get on with their lives and their businesses.”

The assistance through the Agricultural Recovery Programme will be in two key areas:

- Essential infrastructure, which is eligible for 75 per cent government assistance; and
- Crop re-establishment, which is eligible for 90 per cent government assistance.

Farmers will have to meet a threshold of \$10,000. This will be assessed on the first payment request – not on each payment request that is made. There is no cap to government funding for eligible items.

MAF have contracted the following Agricultural and Forestry Recovery Facilitators in the storm-affected areas to assist in the implementation of the Agricultural Recovery Programme. They are available to assist in completing an application form, advise on the contents and criteria of the Programme and other forms of assistance that may be available.

Central Hawkes Bay	Neil Kittow	06 844 2665
Tararua	Chris Southgate	06 374 9862
Wairarapa	Bruce Watkins	06 378 6895
Manawatu	Bruce Withell	06 358 3202
Feilding	Bruce Beard	06 323 2281
Ruapehu	Malcolm Swanney	06 385 4133
Wanganui	Brian Doughty	06 342 1846
South Taranaki	Alistair Parsons	06 346 6207
Dairy	Steve Barr	0274 499 648
Forestry	Kelly Coghlan	0274 488 067

[Kelly may also be contacted at logrite@xtra.co.nz]

Farmers, growers and foresters who meet the criteria are invited to request an information and application pack from MAF. Requests can be made by emailing floods@maf.govt.nz, faxing a request to 04 474 4206, applying through the Agricultural Recovery Facilitators, visiting www.maf.govt.nz or posting a request to Agricultural Recovery Programme, PO Box 2526, Wellington.

Forestry assistance will be through facilitating the use of skilled labour and equipment to enable wind throw harvesting to be undertaken. *[Note that the full details of the Relief Programme are not being provided here, as we are focusing primarily on the aspects relevant to forestry, but the whole package is available on request from the Editor.]* To be eligible farmers must earn 51% of their gross income from farming, cropping, vegetable growing, forestry activities or any combination thereof.

The forestry sector will be eligible for essential infrastructure assistance, such as restoration of essential internal access tracks (but excluding any upgrading), and boundary fencing. Industry specific support will include: support for transporting harvest equipment from outside the region to affected blocks, at 75% of the additional transport cost; and skilled labour for ‘clean-up’ and harvesting activities utilising out-of-region forestry workers.

This labour can be provided through: Work and Income Enhanced Task Force Green by a) unemployed workers outside the region registering with Work and Income; and b) importation of contract gangs to provide necessary skilled labour. Assistance can include reasonable costs of transporting and accommodating out-of-region skilled labour at 75% of standard costs.

Government support is being provided to local government to enable restoration of roading to a standard for transportation of heavy equipment and logs. Government has approved \$11.25 million (GST inclusive) for rates remission - Department of Internal Affairs are developing detail as to how the assistance will be distributed. IRD are providing information to affected farmers to develop responses on flood related taxation issues.

To access the Relief Package, a two stage application and payments process will be used:

- Stage One will be an *Application* assessing the loss and the items that it is anticipated will be eligible for payment. It is desirable (but not mandatory) that Stage One Applications be received by mid-May 2004.
- Stage Two will be *Payment Requests*, which will require receipted invoices, or equivalent. The number of payment requests will vary according to the type and timing of works to be undertaken. The latest date for receiving payment requests will be 1 May 2005, with all payments completed by 30 June 2005.

Assessment Process:

- All applications will be received by MAF and entered into a database, and checked for completeness;
- Applications will be distributed to the relevant Agricultural or Forestry Recovery Facilitator, as Chair of the Assessment Committee, who may request further information if required;
- The Assessment Committee will consider applications and forward advice of decisions to MAF for payment;
- An Appeals Committee and process will be established to enable a reconsideration of Committee decisions.