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**NEW ZEALAND FARMERS  
AND  
ENVIRONMENTAL LEGISLATION**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master in AgriCommerce  
at Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand.

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# ABSTRACT

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Agriculture is critical to feeding the world's ever-increasing population but in doing so it uses the planet's natural resources. Therefore, to remain viable and safeguard our natural resources, agriculture needs to be environmentally sustainable. Governments worldwide have introduced various methods to protect the environment under farming regimes, ranging from voluntary approaches to regulation.

This thesis firstly compares two methods of legislation, that of the European Union and of New Zealand. Secondly it explores the views on environmental legislation of six farmers from the lower South Island of New Zealand. The literature review covers the subjects of the natural environment with respect to agriculture, environmental legislation in the European Union and New Zealand, the decision making process of farmers, and the impacts the legislation has on farmers.

The legislation comparison was embedded in a study by the European Commission Directorate for Agriculture and Rural Development to which the author contributed. The results showed that there were limited differences between the European Union and New Zealand with respect to dairy and sheep environmental compliance costs with no country studied being disadvantaged.

The research for understanding the views of six farmers used a multi-case embedded exploratory method of research with qualitative data obtained from semi-structured interviews. The impact of environmental legislation on the farmers resulted in a number of outcomes including financial, environmental, risk to property rights, the influence of environmental groups and the public, and different interpretations and enforcement by those who administer the RMA. These outcomes affected the farmers by causing satisfaction, uncertainty and stress.

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