What are the drivers of rural land fragmentation in the Tasman District and what have been the planning responses?

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Abstract

Rural land use in the Tasman District of New Zealand is characterised by fragmentation of farming land, driven by a mix of historical land use patterns, global influences, and political decision-making. Colonial farmers developed subsistence farming on small allotments of mixed productivity. Pockets of highly fertile land supported the development of small-scale horticultural industries and the region's good climate and high amenity value have made it a desirable destination for urban-employed migrants seeking lifestyle opportunities.

The fragmentation of rural land occurs via subdivision, a process that is administered by the local district council, regulated by a district plan framework and land-use consent mechanisms. Analysis of Tasman District plans and policy, case law, and subdivision data, reveals a regulatory process that is failing to limit ongoing land fragmentation with increasing numbers of subdivision applications and new allotments and dwellings developed on the most productive land.

Key Words: planning, rural land fragmentation, rural subdivision, rural land use, Tasman District
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The Massey University Research Ethics Office has approved this study as a Low Risk Notification (attached as Appendix 1).
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