

An aerial photograph of a rural landscape featuring rolling green hills, a winding road, and distant mountains under a soft, hazy sky. The foreground shows a large green field with a road cutting through it.

Farm Environment Plans (FEPs)

Getting started guide

FARM^{IQ}

**FARM
ENVIRONMENT
PLANNING**

★
WITH FARM^{IQ}

What is an FEP?

In its simplest form, an FEP is a tool to help you manage the way your farm system interacts with its environment and natural resources. From identifying risks, pasture, stock and nutrient management to protecting biodiversity and soil conservation, an FEP is a structure that helps you plan and document past and future environmental actions.

WHY DO I NEED AN FEP?

FEPs are an essential part of every New Zealand farms' future and there are many valid reasons for getting started now:

- Compliance and consenting processes
- Accurate record-keeping
- Triple bottom line success (financial, environmental and social)
- Funding applications
- Farm Assurance Programmes (FAP) and supply agreements
- Building resilience and future proofing
- Aspirational goals



FarmIQ provides all the features and functionality you need to get started with your FEP. From a comprehensive map, stocking rates, pasture and nutrient management, farm diary, tasks, action plans and a purpose-built, step-by-step FEP template. FarmIQ makes sense because everything you need for your FEP is in one place.



7 step guide to creating your FEP in FarmIQ

1

Kitchen table discussion
(who, what, how, when)

2

Method

Choose your 'how' – will you do your FEP yourself in FarmIQ, engage a consultant or seek another resource? Whichever method you choose, steps 3 to 6 are essential.

3

Information gathering

Information gathering from internal and external sources, asking relevant sources for information such as nutrient budgets.

4

Farm walk with camera

Farm walk with a camera (a stock-take and detailed look at the way your farm physically functions in its environment)

5

Farm map

Map set-up (noting features, infrastructure, land management units)

6

Objectives and tasks

Define objectives and tasks (what, how, who and when)

7

Share your FEP

Share with your certified farm environment planner/auditor/council as required.



Kitchen table discussion

Preparing an FEP can be a big job, so involve every relevant person in the business. Whether it starts with a discussion around the kitchen table with your family, or a formal meeting with the entire team, good planning becomes great planning when everyone is involved.

Start by agreeing why you need an FEP. Your decision will determine how and what you need to prepare.

- Is it for compliance and due by a certain date?
- Are you part of a Farm Assurance Programme?
- Is an FEP part of the long-term aspirations and goals for the farm?
- Are you building resilience into your business model?
- Seeking funding or investment?
- Is it part of your succession planning?

Next, make a list of all the people and data sources you may need for information required in your FEP, remembering it's all about record-keeping and inputs and outputs.

- Land information such as title numbers and Farms Online ID.
- Your local regional and district council
- Milk, meat and/or fibre processors
- DairyNZ and/or Beef + Lamb NZ Extension manager
- Farm consultant
- Fertiliser rep
- Accountant
- Bank manager
- Farmlands/Farmsource TFO
- Previous owners (for historical land management)
- Contractors and agents



If you are a FarmIQ user you can create a Farm Plan (in tools and calculators) that captures who is responsible for what and when (farm walk, mapping features, gathering data etc). This all links to your tasks and diary, so becomes a managed and measurable process right from the beginning.

2

Method

Discuss how you would like to do your FEP. Consider any region-specific rules and policy such as mandatory requirements and deadlines, as these will influence which method you choose.

Start by agreeing why you need an FEP. Your decision will determine how and what you need to prepare.

- Ask your Regional Council for support
- Pay a consultant to do it for you
- Ask your fert company to provide nutrient information and files
- Do it yourself in FarmIQ, for 100% control

There are pros and cons with each option. You may want complete control because you know your land best, or choosing to collaborate with a consultant from the start may work better.



Preparing your FEP in FarmIQ is easy, straight-forward and cost-effective for most New Zealand farms. For those with highly complex systems and sensitive environments, you may require more input from a consultant to ensure it addresses any specifics.

3

Information gathering

To complete your FEP you will need:

- Locational data – address, title numbers, Farms Online and/or AgriBase ID.
- Supply numbers
- Seasonal stocking rates and types
- Nutrient management and budgets
- pasture management
- Effluent pond volumes and copies of relevant resource consents
- Irrigation structures, rates and schemes
- Seasonal fertiliser applications and methods
- Pest control
- Crop types, times and harvesting methods
- Cultivation methods

Gathering this data can be time consuming/expensive if you pay someone else to do it. The more you can do yourself the cheaper the whole process should be.



If you're a FarmIQ user then much of the data you need should already be available to you as part of your farm history, which makes it a very easy and convenient place to create and manage your FEP.

4

Farm walk with camera

A farm walk is an opportunity for a stock-take and health-check of infrastructure and natural resources. Take a camera to record risk areas such as stream bank erosion, culverts and slips.

As well as noting risk prone areas, take photos of where mitigation and enhancement projects have been completed, such as riparian planting, fenced bush blocks and wetlands, pole planting, compliant stock crossings and so on.



If you are a FarmIQ user you can upload your photos into your Land File Library in FarmIQ then attach them to your FEP.



5

Farm map

Every FEP requires a detailed farm map. Your farm map should show:

- Paddocks
- Waterbodies
 - ◇ lakes, rivers and streams
 - ◇ drains and culverts
 - ◇ ponds, dams and sediment traps
- Infrastructure
 - ◇ Buildings and sheds
 - ◇ troughs
 - ◇ effluent ponds
 - ◇ races and tracks
 - ◇ yards, stand-off pads and holding pens
 - ◇ bridges
- Natural features and areas of high biodiversity
 - ◇ shelter belts
 - ◇ shade and fodder trees
 - ◇ native bush blocks (fenced and unfenced)
 - ◇ woodlots and forestry blocks
 - ◇ riparian planting
 - ◇ swamps and wetlands
- Land Management Units (LMUs)
 - ◇ cropped and cultivated areas
 - ◇ effluent blocks
 - ◇ steep, marginal and/or retired/unproductive areas
 - ◇ seasonally managed areas such as wintering paddocks
 - ◇ Point-source areas
- Offal holes
 - ◇ rubbish pits
 - ◇ burn piles
 - ◇ silage and feed stacks
 - ◇ supplementary feed storage



A digital, easy to use and edit farm map is a key feature of FarmIQ. You can add all relevant FEP features yourself, saving time and money.



6

Objectives and tasks

Objectives and tasks are all about how you plan to mitigate the environmental risks identified, such as soil erosion and nutrient loss.

This can be the challenging part of your FEP because it requires both science and policy knowledge in order to comply with any specific regional rules such as nutrient management and winter grazing. This is the most common and practical step to seek advice from a consultant or your regional council, and because all the leg-work has been done, your FEP is ready to inform your advisors efficiently, saving you money and hassle.



The FIQ template provides suggestions for both Objectives and Tasks which you can choose to use or simply write your own. All of your tasks and actions can be easily added to your calendar to help you stay on track, monitor progress and measure results. Setting tasks ensures staff and your FEP community know what's expected of them, as well as providing on-hand proof that your FEP is under control.

Share your FEP with advisors/ auditors/council etc

An FEP is an evolving document and may need to be shared with different parties throughout its life for a variety of reasons. You should contact your regional council for specific advice on this as different councils have different rules.



If you are a FarmIQ user you can share their FEP with whomever you choose, at any stage throughout its life.

- *Invite consultants and advisors in to add and edit specific information at any time.*
- *Email your FEP as a completed document (.pdf) to anyone that needs it*
- *Print off hard copies for use at home or on farm.*

We recommend that farmers operating within regions that have complex environmental regulations such as Canterbury, Waikato and Southland seek advice on how these rules affect the preparation of your FEP.

What FarmIQ farmers say about their FEPs

“With climate change upon us and a drought prone farm, we wanted to build a high level of resilience into our farm system. Preparing an FEP was both a visual and methodical pathway to making the changes we needed in a measurable and financially manageable way”

— **BOB & RAEWYN, WAIRARAPA**

“We bought an 800 ha dry stock farm on the coast. It didn't have one tree on it, and whilst we thought it was great to have a blank palette to create our dream farm vision, the reality of 'where do we start?' was quite overwhelming. Doing an FEP helped us feel in control and allowed us to plan our environmental and system goals in flexible stages that suited our budget”.

— **CRAIG, RAGLAN.**

“I wanted to apply for funding from my regional council to help with fencing an important river and wetland. I had to support my application with an FEP, which once I'd started, they gave me feedback on and helped me finish. I not only got the funding for the fencing, but from my FEP, the council advisors noted that some willow poles would help stabilise some areas of the river bank, so they provided them as well”

— **STUART, WAIKATO.**

“We had to do an FEP as part of our resource consent application. Having all our farm data in FarmIQ made the process much faster and less painful – we could easily show our farm consultant what stage we were at, at which point they just added some key data, finished and filed it with council for us.

— **TINA AND JASON, CANTERBURY**

“Our farms are iwi-owned, so our monthly report includes how we're progressing with both environment mitigation and restoration projects in our FarmIQ FEP. The calendar, health and safety and tasks feature in FarmIQ helps organise our staff and contractors to stay on track. We can include photos of the work undertaken in our FEP which creates tangible connections for our trustees”.

— **TIM, TAURANGA**

“Our FEP really helped get the sale of our farm over the line – the buyers were really impressed with our record keeping and the work we had achieved according to our calendar and map. It also gave them a clear picture of what actions were required on-farm for compliance so they could forecast accurately.”

— **SIMON, WAIKATO.**

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