



## MP for Wigram

Minister of Energy and Resources

Minister for Greater Christchurch Regeneration

Minister of Housing

Minister of Research, Science and Innovation

Dr Paul Reynolds  
Chair  
AgResearch Limited  
Private Bag 4749  
CHRISTCHURCH 8140

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Dear Paul

## ANNUAL LETTER OF EXPECTATIONS FOR 2020/21

I write to convey the Government's priorities, and my expectations for your role in achieving these, along with my strategic and performance expectations for AgResearch in relation to the 2020/21 financial year and beyond.

This Government is committed to an inclusive, sustainable, and productive New Zealand, and research, science and innovation (RSI) will play a crucial role in helping to deliver the Government's agenda. We need new ideas, innovation and new ways of looking at the world, as well as the ability to collaborate with the knowledge and ideas we already hold.

In response, I am developing the new RSI Strategy, Kei Mua Te Ao, which intends to guide the RSI system in New Zealand and Government's actions within that system.

Furthermore, the Collective Crown Research Institute (CRI) Review undertaken by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) has the purpose of identifying how well CRIs are collectively and respectively positioned to meet New Zealand's current and future needs. This review will help us realise the potential of the RSI system.

I trust AgResearch will work in ways to contribute and help realise Kei Mua Te Ao and the findings from the CRI Review.

All Crown Research Institutes should foster and support diversity throughout the organisation and within the Board, and especially at the senior leadership level. This involves being aspirational on the implementation of the vision and actions of the Science Workforce and Māori Partnerships and Co-Innovation reports, such as having an embedded Māori culture and realising Vision Mātauranga, as well as contributing to the future science workforce, particularly through working with Universities to grow the pipeline of talent.

## Specific priorities for AgResearch

I appreciate the achievements of AgResearch over the last year. AgResearch has a strong record in delivering its objectives while maintaining high standards of good governance, science and robust operating systems. I expect AgResearch to take into consideration and contribute to relevant government-wide initiatives and science strategies in your sector, in collaboration with appropriate organisations, iwi, agencies and departments.

I would like to thank AgResearch for using the Science Review conducted by MBIE this year as an opportunity to focus the AgResearch science portfolio and implement the new Science Plan. I acknowledge the difficulty in balancing the capability required for transitioning existing sectors with the capability required for new transformational initiatives.

During 2020/21, my specific expectations for AgResearch are:

- **Implementation of Science Plan:** Implement the changes to AgResearch's research programmes arising from the new Science Plan and MBIE's Science Review, leveraging key science strengths to build competitive advantage and build effective partnerships to take advantage of new opportunities.
- I support the move by AgResearch to increase the **Strategic Science Investment Funding (SSIF)** in ideas generation and development (also referred to as horizons two and three), whilst ensuring a strong pipeline of new ideas that can be developed into applied research. I encourage AgResearch to use SSIF flexibly and consider the information in the map of science capability developed by MBIE and AgResearch following the Science Review to focus your science portfolio by investing SSIF in areas which are:
  - Critical for New Zealand – providing a government operational or regulatory function, or a public good impact.
  - Unique to AgResearch with a comparative advantage.
  - Contributing to the goals of the RSI Strategy.
- **Overseer:** Liaise with The Ministry for Primary Industries and the Ministry for the Environment to chart a way forward for the overseer tool, which AgResearch part owns.
- **Progress AgResearch's Lincoln Facility:** We expect the Implementation Business Case to demonstrate effective engagement with Lincoln University and fully explore other opportunities for collaboration.
- **Invermay:** Building on last year's Letter of Expectations and recent decisions by AgResearch, I expect you to facilitate the maintenance of human and physical capital at this site, and develop Invermay into a centre of excellence within the four campus model.

I also expect you to follow the advice provided in the State Services Commission's updated Letter of Enduring Expectations, and the general and good governance expectations outlined in Annex One.

## Response

Your advice by 20 March 2020 on how you propose to respond to the expectations set out in this letter would be appreciated.

I look forward to continuing our working relationship over the coming year.

Yours sincerely



Hon Dr Megan Woods

**Minister of Research, Science and Innovation**

Copy to: Tony Hickmott, Acting Chief Executive, AgResearch Limited

## **Annex One: General and good governance expectations**

### *Effective boards*

Ensuring the Board is, and remains, high-performing is essential. There are many tools to help boards self-assess and improve performance. I expect you to carry out an assessment, using a robust process. Please provide me and the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) with a summary of the results of your self-assessment, including the steps the Board is taking to respond to the results.

Your input into succession planning for the Board is also sought. I expect you to provide MBIE with your view of the competency mix you need to work well as a board, along with your thoughts on upcoming appointments and any candidate attributes to target.

### *Deliver responsible governance with a broader measure of success*

I ask you to be part of a public sector that builds a New Zealand we can all be proud of; a public sector that recognises the value of every New Zealander and backs all our people. To do this I expect you to think holistically about the impact of your organisation's plans and programmes prioritising interventions that make the biggest difference to lifting the current and future wellbeing of New Zealanders. In particular, I ask you to strengthen your effort to partner with Māori organisations to improve services and outcomes for Māori.

I expect you to actively promote and develop the diversity of your workforce for the long term to encompass a broad spread of experience, culture, perspective and lifestyle of those who live in New Zealand.

### *Effective monitoring of entity performance by boards and relationship with MBIE*

In addition to setting and driving a strategy that delivers on government priorities, your Board is the most important monitor of entity performance. I expect the Board to provide me with high quality information and analysis on entity performance against plan, implications for future performance, and risks and opportunities facing the entity.

I expect you to have a constructive working relationship with your monitor within MBIE. This relationship should include active participation and engagement with my officials in the process of setting your organisation's strategic direction and in any review of existing strategies, priorities and plans, and data systems.

I also expect you to work with and across government to integrate the work of your organisation with the role and work of other agencies, and to support the state sector stewardship of government departments.

### *No surprises*

The Government has a 'no surprises' policy. No surprises means that the Government expects a board to:

- be aware of any possible implications of their decisions and actions for wider government policy issues
- advise the responsible Minister of issues that may be discussed in the public arena or that may require a ministerial response, preferably ahead of time or otherwise as soon as possible
- inform the Minister in advance of any major strategic initiatives.

I also ask you to avoid 'pre-judging' my potential responses to risks and opportunities. I expect to hear about emerging issues and what major actions the Board is considering. My reactions will be based on a range of factors, including the benefits of new initiatives and of taking different approaches to achieve our goals.