



EVENT BRIEFING

Attend the New Zealand Century Farms and Station Awards Ceremony, 17 May 2025

Date:	14 May 2025	Priority:	Medium
Security classification:	In Confidence	Tracking number:	REQ-0013563

Action sought		
	Action sought	Deadline
Hon James Meager Minister For the South Island	Attend and speak at the New Zealand Century Farms and Station Awards Ceremony.	17 May 2025

Contact for telephone discussion (if required)			
Name	Position	Telephone	1st contact
Karl Woodhead	General Manager Strategy, Planning and Performance, Kānoa – Regional Economic Development & Investment Unit (Kānoa)	Privacy of natural persons	
Cory Hagenaaars	South Island Lead Advisor, Kānoa	Privacy of natural persons	✓

The following departments/agencies have been consulted

Minister's office to complete:

☐ Approved

☐ Declined

☐ Noted

☐ Needs change

☐ Seen

☐ Overtaken by Events

☐ See Minister's Notes

☐ Withdrawn

Comments



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Purpose

To provide background and supporting information for your attendance and speech at the New Zealand Century Farms and Station Awards Ceremony on Saturday, 17 May 2025.

Recommendations

The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) recommend you:

- a **Note** the information in this briefing to support your attendance and speech at the New Zealand Century Farms and Station Awards Ceremony.

Noted

Karl Woodhead
General Manager Strategy, Planning and Performance

Kānoa – Regional Economic Development & Investment Unit, MBIE

12 / 05 / 2025

Hon James Meager
Minister for the South Island

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Summary

1. You will attend, speak, and present awards at the New Zealand Century Farms and Station Awards Ceremony (the Awards Ceremony), hosted by New Zealand Century Farms Incorporated (Century Farms), on Saturday, 17 May 2025. The event is being held over two days (16 and 17 May 2025) at Simpson Park, 1 Thurso Street, Lawrence. You are attending on day two from 5.00pm to approximately 10.30pm. A run-sheet for the Awards Ceremony is attached at **Annex One**.
2. The Awards Ceremony honours families who have had tenure on their land for 100 years or more, with a separate category- the Sesquicentennial Award- honouring farms held for over 150 years. Twenty-two families will receive awards at the Awards Ceremony.
3. At 7.30pm, you will speak on the Government's priorities and about your role as Minister for the South Island. Draft speech notes are attached at **Annex Two**.
4. Following your speech, you will present a bronze plaque to each family and stand with them for a photograph.

Background

5. The New Zealand Century Farms and Stations Awards Programme (the programme) is organised by Century Farms. The programme was founded in 2005 by Russell Brown (from Lawrence, Otago) who was inspired by a similar initiative overseas.
6. The programme recognises and celebrates New Zealand's farming families who have worked their land for over 100 years, aiming to capture and preserve their rich rural heritage. The first group of families received recognition in 2006, a year after the programme was launched.
7. The awards ceremony was first held in Lawrence, and has remained there for subsequent years, with a few exceptions.
8. To be a part of the ceremony, eligible families submit stories of their farm's history, together with relevant photographs and supporting documents.
9. A formal dinner is held to honour the awardees and their significant achievements and is a chance for recipients to meet each other.
10. Century Farms proudly acknowledges over 600 families from throughout New Zealand as part of its group of centenarians and sesquicentenaries that have been nominated for awards.
11. This year's ceremony is the nineteenth, with one event missed due to COVID-19.

Key agriculture statistics

12. The New Zealand agriculture sector in 2024 was worth \$9.74 billion and in the last five years had a compound annual growth rate of 0.9 per cent. The primary sector, which includes agriculture in addition to mining, forestry and fishing makes up seven per cent of the New Zealand gross domestic product.
13. New Zealand is the twelfth largest agricultural exporter in the world, with the agricultural sector making up more than 80 per cent of the country's goods exports in the year to 31 March 2024. China, the United States of America, Australia, the European Union and Japan are the largest purchasers of New Zealand's agricultural exports.
14. The top New Zealand agricultural exports in 2024 included milk and cream (\$9.92 billion), followed by beef (\$4.39 billion), then butter and other fats and oils derived from milk (\$4.25 billion).



15. As of June 2023, agricultural activity covered approximately 13.20 million hectares, accounting for about half of New Zealand's total land area.
16. As of 2024, the agricultural sector employed around 79,200 people.

History of Lawrence

17. Lawrence was founded in 1861 during New Zealand's first major gold rush after the discovery of gold in nearby Gabriel's Gully. Initially named Tuapeka, the town was later renamed Lawrence in 1866, honouring British war hero Sir Henry Lawrence.
18. The gold rush spurred rapid population increase, with Lawrence peaking at 11,470 residents in July 1862, compared to Dunedin's 5,850 residents at the time.
19. Following the end of the gold rush in Gabriel's Gully, the population gradually declined to a few hundred in the late 1930s. As at 2024, the population of Lawrence was 510 people.
20. Today, Lawrence's economy is sustained by agriculture and tourism, largely driven by its historical significance.

About the audience

21. Approximately 200-250 people are expected to attend the event. The audience will be made up of farming families and sponsors.
22. Hon Mark Patterson, in his capacity as Minister for Rural Communities, Associate Minister of Agriculture and Regional Development, and as a sheep and beef farmer from near Lawrence will be in attendance. Also, Ingrid Leary, MP for Taeiri, will attend.
23. Biographies of key attendees are below.

	<p>Bryan Cadogan, Mayor of Clutha District</p> <p>Bryan was first elected Mayor in 2010. Prior to this he was a councillor from 1998 to 2010.</p> <p>He has worked in various sectors, including sheep shearing, farming, real estate, and retail. He owned and operated an electrical store in Balclutha before selling it to focus entirely on his mayoral duties.</p>
	<p>Dawn Sangster, Director, Farmlands Co-operative Society</p> <p>Dawn is a Central Otago-based farmer and governance leader. She co-manages GlenAyr Limited, a large-scale sheep and beef farming business, as well as Nottingham Dairy Limited.</p> <p>Her governance career includes being on the Community Trust of Maniototo Irrigation Co. (of which she is also a Director), and major agribusiness boards such as Alliance Group (2011–2023) and Farmlands Co-operative Society Limited (since 2018).</p> <p>Dawn was appointed a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit in 2025 for her services to governance.</p>

	<p>Simon Hopcroft, Director, Farmers Mutual Group (FMG)</p> <p>Simon joined FMG Insurance in 2022.</p> <p>He is a Southland dairy farmer and owns multiple farming operations, milking around 1,800 cows.</p> <p>Simon also serves on the Southland Rural Support Trust and chairs the Lower Aparima Catchment Group.</p>
	<p>Edward Fitzgerald, Chairperson, New Zealand Century Farms and Station Awards</p> <p>Edward is Chair of the New Zealand Century Farms and Station Awards, a role he has held for over a decade.</p>

Risks and mitigations

24. No risks identified.

Logistics

25. Guests and families will be seated at long tables. A stage and lectern will be set up for speakers. Families receiving awards will come up onto the stage to be presented their awards.
26. You will be met on arrival by National Coordinator, Anne Barnett.

Name	Position / organisation	Telephone	Will meet you on arrival
Anne Barnett	National Coordinator, New Zealand Century Farms and Station Awards Ceremony	Privacy of natural persons	✓

Communications / Media

27. A representative from the Otago Daily Times will be in attendance.
28. A media release with photos will be distributed after the event to farming papers by Century Farms.

Annexes

Annex One: Event run-sheet.

Annex Two: Draft speech.

Annex One: New Zealand Century Farms and Station Awards Ceremony run-sheet

Time	Event
From 5.00 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guests arrive for pre-dinner drinks and canapes. • Guests take name badges then queue for official family photo.
6.00 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guests asked to make their way to their seats.
6.10 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guests seated. • MC, Jamie MacKay welcomes everyone to the event. Advises format for the evening and any housekeeping issues. • National anthem is sung by Anne Cheng. • MC introduces Chairperson, Edward Fitzgerald. • Formal welcome from Chairperson (2 mins). • MC introduces Dawn Sangster, Director of Foundation and gold sponsor, Farmlands to say a few words (5 mins). • MC introduces Simon Hopcroft, Board Director from gold sponsor FMG to say a few words (5 mins). • MC introduces Ann Brown to say grace. • Sponsor message video – Alliance.
6.30 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main course (buffet) – guests advised of order to go up to the table.
7.30 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sponsor message video – ANZ. • MC introduces Bryan Cadogan, Mayor of Clutha District (5 min). • Bryan introduces Hon James Meager, Minister for the South Island. • Minister for the South Island's address (7-10 mins).
7.50 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 22 families are presented with their award. • Hon James Meager and Chairperson on stage to present awards. • MC gives short summary of each family story. • Families come up to the side of the stage and are photographed with Hon James Meager and awarded their bronze plaque. • Families can give a short message. • Families exit down the other side of stage and are handed a certificate and cooler bag with sponsor giveaways. • For absent families, a short summary will be read – Chairperson hands plaque to Hon James Meager to accept on the absentee's behalf with photo. • Break for dessert.
9.00 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buffet dessert is served with tea and coffee.
9.30 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sponsor message video – Craigs.
9.40 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sponsor message video – Visit Clutha.
9.45 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formalities close. Further chance for networking before bar close at 12.00am.

Annex Two: Draft speech for New Zealand Century Farms

Attached separate to this briefing.

Draft speech notes – “NZ Century Farms Inc”

You will be introduced by Mayor Bryan Cadogan

Your allocated speaking slot is 7 -10 minutes

INTRODUCTION

- I am honoured to be speaking here tonight, as Minister of the South Island. Having spent a large part of my life in Timaru, a deeply rural farming community, this is a ceremony that celebrates something truly close to my heart.
- Farming has been, and continues to be, at the core of New Zealand’s development, shaping our communities, driving our economy, and feeding the nation for generations.
- The Century Farm and Station Awards are a rare opportunity to pause and reflect on the importance of this history, and the intergenerational legacy of New Zealand’s farming families.
- Tonight, we gather to acknowledge 22 extraordinary families from across New Zealand whose steadfast connection to the land spans 100 years and more.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- I’d like to start by acknowledging the town of Lawrence – a community with deep roots in our country’s agricultural history. From its early days, as a gold rush hub to its present, as a farming heartland.
- Thank you to the Chair of NZ Century Farms, Edward Fitzgerald, and the committee for your leadership of this event.
- I want to acknowledge the presence of my colleague and local resident, the Hon Mark Patterson, Minister for Rural Communities and Associate Minister of Agriculture, and for Regional Development – who spoke here last year.
- I’d also like to acknowledge the attendance of Ingrid Leary, MP for Taieri and Mayor Bryan Cadogan. Thank you for joining us in celebrating these remarkable families.
- And of course, I acknowledge all 22 families being recognised tonight. Each with a rich and proud history that has shaped your communities and contributed to our country.
- A special mention to those receiving the Sesquicentennial Award this evening, recognising 150 years or more as stewards of the land.
- And to those receiving the century mark, congratulations on this significant achievement. Welcome to a proud and growing tradition.

GOING FOR GROWTH

- Tonight, I would like to talk over how this Government is working hard to unlock New Zealand’s potential and make our economy grow faster and reaffirm our commitment to the farming sector.
- We are backing those who work the land, who grow our exports, and who uphold New Zealand’s international reputation for food and fibre.
- In February of this year, the Government announced our “*Going For Growth*” approach, released by the Honourable Nicola Willis in the newly created role of Minister for Economic Growth.
- Economic growth is key to raising living standards, creating higher-paying jobs and delivering the vital infrastructure and public services New Zealanders want and deserve. That’s why

earlier this year this Government created the Economic Growth portfolio and the *Going For Growth* approach.

- *Going For Growth* sets out five pillars to drive our push for economic growth – **developing talent; competitive business settings; promoting global trade and investment;** innovation, technology and science; and infrastructure for growth.
- Our economic potential will be unleashed by focusing on the five pillars and fostering investment, innovation and taking calculated risks. Removing barriers and creating incentives empowers businesses to drive growth, ensuring market forces fuel prosperity.
- Recent announcements demonstrate this commitment to the agriculture sector, for example:
 - In April the Minister of Finance and Minister of Agriculture announced “Going For Growth: backing NZ wool producers” by updating the procurement rules and directing government agencies to use woollen fibre products in the construction and refurbishment of government building, where practical and appropriate.
 - In March the Minister of Agriculture and Trade, announced an important step to unlocking export growth opportunities for New Zealand dairy businesses with the Dairy Industry Restructuring (Export Licences Allocation) Amendment Bill, which unlocks greater and fairer access to overseas markets, and includes quota for sheep, goat, and deer milk processors, unlocking new export opportunities and revenue streams.
 - The Government is also championing high-quality beef and lamb in our economic approach by backing sheep and beef farmers by reducing red tape and compliance costs and ensuring they can farm on a level playing field. Red meat exports are forecast to grow by 13 per cent this year – a figure we’re proud to grow further.

THE SOUTH ISLAND

- In my role as Minister for the South Island, my primary objective is to advocate for and coordinate policies which will stimulate economic growth, ensuring the South Island’s substantial contribution to New Zealand’s overall economic success.
- I have three key areas to focus on for the South Island portfolio, which are directly linked to *Going For Growth*. These are:
- ***Aiming to double our exports and lift the contribution to GDP:*** This means not only increasing the amount we export but increasing the value of our exports. Many of you here know that agriculture is critical to achieving this.
- As I mentioned earlier, farming has always been central to New Zealand’s story, culturally, economically, and environmentally. It’s one of the critical aspects to our export economy, and accounts for approximately \$12.75 billion worth of national GDP.

- The South Island makes up around 23 per cent of New Zealand's population and 22 per cent of the national GDP. We can raise the South Islands' contribution to national GDP by focusing on key areas such as increasing productivity, expanding market access, enhancing global competitiveness, and strengthening industries like agriculture.
- ***Investing in resilient, reliable infrastructure which supports growth:*** The South Islands' infrastructure is vulnerable to natural disasters and disruptions, so it is key that we ensure the South Island has the resilient and future-focused infrastructure necessary to drive economic growth, support communities, and mitigate the impacts of natural disaster.
- ***Enhancing and improving delivery of core public services:*** It is critical that the South Island has improved core public services, including healthcare access and workforce retention, and enhanced law and order services.
- Keeping the South Island economy moving and connecting the right people and resources together will help improve living standards and economic outcomes. We all see the potential of sectors in the South Island in contributing to this.
- These priorities are about creating the conditions for farmers like those here tonight to thrive by building the infrastructure, market access, and public service that strong, resilient rural communities rely on.

Thanks/Conclusion

- While my focus as Minister for the South Island is on lifting economic performance across our regions – Tonight's event is a reminder that strong policy is only part of the story.
- The real foundation of our success lies with the families we're celebrating. Those who have built and sustained farms over generations.
- These are more than businesses; they're family legacies and anchors for rural communities.
- Recognising that history and preserving it through this awards programme and the Alexander Turnbull Library, ensures your contributions are acknowledged and remembered.
- To the Families being honoured, congratulations once again, your contribution to New Zealand is profound and deeply appreciated.
- Thank you for the opportunity to talk to you this evening. I look forward to engaging with you over the course of the evening.