

LETTERS

9 Dec 2013

NZ Farmer's Weekly

# Sound reasons to stop

## sales to foreigners

THE item headlined "NZ First will stop farm sales to foreigners" (*Farmers Weekly*, December 2) and the statements by its primary industries spokesman Richard Prosser will find agreement with many New Zealanders.

Of course there will be those, often with vested interest in foreigners acquiring land, who will shout "xenophobic".

However, the reality is the Government's system is merely a rubber stamp for foreigners to buy at will.

Prime Minister John Key has rubbished criticism, saying stakes are only 1% or 2%.

I note NZ First's statement says figures exclude forestry. But economic researcher Bill Rosenberg says a conservative estimate is that the figure is 9% including forestry and that it is artificial to draw a distinction between farm and forestry land.

Though Key spoke about foreign-owned land, the Prime Minister's figures were based on Overseas Investment Office (OIO) statistics that included leased and other interests in land such as forestry rights.

Even if only freehold land was included, a conservative estimate was that more than 3% of farmland was overseas owned, Rosenberg said.

In the past few years, more freehold land of all types was sold to overseas interests in net terms than any other year since 2006.

The prices overseas companies will pay tend to price the average Kiwi and young farmer out of going on to the land.

Next year the Kiwi family farm is being celebrated. While celebrating it, and in an election year, we should look closely at the foreign acquisition question.

Foreign ownership affects

more than just farmers. Outdoor recreational enthusiasts, from trampers to trout anglers to hunters to 4WD buffs, access farm country, particularly high country, for their recreation.

Foreign buyers frequently come from a culture of locked gates and private estates. The consequence is reduced public access.

They usually do not understand, appreciate, or want to embrace the Kiwi egalitarian ethos.

**Andy Cockcroft**

NZ Council Outdoor Recreation Associations co-chairman  
Upper Hutt