

# Integrated landscape Sustainable future

**Wairoa farmer Dave Read has planted thousands of poplars and willows for erosion control, alternative feed and to realise his dream of a truly integrated landscape on the land he loves.**



Waiau Station is 12 kilometres inland from Wairoa in Northern Hawke's Bay. Here, Dave Read and his wife Judy Bogaard farm 1200 hectares of steep hill country with a mix of sheep and cattle. They've been on the farm for just over 30 years and have reinvigorated the land with love and hard work. "We arrived in 1989. It had been farmed really well in the distant past but had suffered from 12 years of recent neglect."

It is clear that Dave's passion has paid off, turning the station into a productive and beautiful environment. The farm has a 20-hectare block of bush fenced and protected by the QEII National Trust, 20 hectares of regenerating manuka used by a local beekeeper, along with unfenced blocks of kanuka and tauhinu.

Dave started planting areas with willow and poplar when he arrived on the farm and believes strongly in the benefits.

*"I think trees will always have a future on this land. If we integrate trees in our landscape, it becomes more sustainable and the payoff is huge."*

Dave and Judy had an aim to plant 300 trees every year. They have lost a small amount over time and they have around 6,000 trees

in total across the farm now. The benefits of willow and poplar are many; erosion control, shade and shelter, and fodder for stock during drought.

Dave is committed to integrated land use. "It's a more complex system than a grazing-only system. It needs another level of management and it needs a lot of careful thought."

He has been targeting higher value land and gully erosion, slumping, tracks and crossings. This approach will help to reduce sediment in waterways, movement and flood damage. Dave will also blanket plant to manage some actively eroding and awkward to manage areas.

Along with alleviating soil erosion, the trees across Dave's farm provide an alternative food for stock in times of drought. "The calves are trained up to eat willow, and it means that if it stays dry, we can wean the calves off the cows early in autumn, and save a whole lot of feed there. By the time we get into a big drought situation, we're looking at providing 30 percent of their energy from willow, and 70 percent from pasture."

Dave is an ambassador for The New Zealand Poplar and Willow Research Trust, formed to support research into the benefits of these trees. Poplars and willows have an important role in developing greater resilience in farming systems and are the tree species most suitable for stabilising soil on pastoral land due to their deep root systems.

Planting the right trees in the right places is about planting the right tree species on marginal, erodible land to support the farm operation. It is an effective way to slow erosion, improve freshwater quality and build any farm's resilience to climate change. Dave acknowledges the value his tree planting is creating for his farm, and his business. "In terms of pastoral farming, we're producing high quality protein – that the world is short of. If we integrate trees in that landscape, it becomes more sustainable."

Dave has learned much over his three decades on Waiau Station and is keen to share his experience with others. "There's a wealth of knowledge in the Regional Council and I'm happy to talk to anyone about trees and offer advice. You might not get it right at first, but the important thing is to make a start."

For more information about the Hawke's Bay Regional Council's Right Tree Right Place programme go to [hbrc.govt.nz](https://hbrc.govt.nz): **search #rtrp**

