

Horizons Plan Change 2

Manawatū-Whanganui Region | July 2024

What is Horizons Plan Change 2?

The council's proposed approach will result in a reduced area of existing commercial vegetable growing (CVG) and an extremely difficult consenting framework for expansion of CVG.

The One Plan is the consolidated regional policy statement, regional plan, and regional coastal plan for the Manawatu-Whanganui Region (Horizons).

Plan Change 2 sought to improve the workability of the One Plan provisions that manage existing intensive farming land uses (dairy farming, commercial vegetable growing, cropping and intensive sheep and beef) in target water management sub-zones.

Under the One Plan, existing intensive farming land uses are not all required to gain consent, but rather consent is only required for existing intensive farming land uses within targeted Water Management Sub Zones. This covers a large proportion of the area in which vegetables are grown, and the One Plan required consents for the majority of CVG. In order to get consent, CVG had to meet Overseer numbers, however unfortunately these numbers were not set by reference to CVG operations, Overseer does not accurately model CVG, and the updates to Overseer enhanced issues with meeting the numbers in the plan. This, combined with additional restrictions in the One Plan policies, resulted in no CVG operations being able to get consent. This situation persisted for several years, and PC2 aimed to amend the One Plan to enable consents for existing intensive farming land uses by updating the Overseer numbers in the table and providing a viable consenting pathway.

Submissions on PC2 sought the inclusion of an additional pathway to consent through a controlled activity option where the Overseer numbers in the plan could not be met. This was particularly important for CVG, who fundamentally will struggle to meet the Overseer numbers.

The Commissioners Decision issued on 19 March 2021 supported the controlled activity pathway which required a 35% reduction in leaching from baseline for CVG, and held that where an activity could neither meet the updated Overseer numbers nor the 35% reduction then a discretionary activity status was appropriate.

This decision was appealed by a number of appellants. The appellants sought that there be no controlled consent option – that is, that CVG would either need to meet the recalibrated Overseer numbers for a controlled activity consent HortNZ, Horizons Council, and Federated Farmers opposed this, seeking the ability to get a controlled activity consent where good management practices and best management practices could be demonstrated that would lead to leaching reductions. In the alternative HortNZ sought the retention of the 35% reduction-controlled activity pathway for CVG. The Environment Court hearing will close soon, with a decision expected in late 2024.



Few commercial vegetable growers will be able to meet the recalibrated Overseer numbers required for the controlled activity consent, and therefore if the appellants are successful then all CVG will require a discretionary consent. No CVG applicant is guaranteed to be successful when applying for a discretionary consent. Should the appellants be successful, and the Environment Court agree that there should be no alternative reduction of good management practice/best management practice-controlled activity pathway, the viability and continued feasibility and certainty of a large proportion of domestic vegetable production would be uncertain.

WHERE TO GO FOR MORE INFORMATION

- [Horizons Regional Council website](#)
- Keep an eye on [HortNZ's website](#)
- HortNZ contact - Michelle Sands (michelle.sands@hortnz.co.nz)