

The meso adaptation picture

The message that emerged when looking beyond the farm gate was that regional resilience requires effective social interactions in support of on the ground actions. Often this combination of social interaction and action doesn't come about until a crisis arrives. This led to two questions:

What are the issues at the regional scale, and how do we address them?

Do we have the capacity to work together on proactive change, rather than wait for a future that will bring more climate-related crises?

The picture that has emerged is of a number of key issues that are held in common across the eastern regions. These vary in detail and emphasis according to the unique features of each location. The level of concern about climate change is influenced by recent and present experience with extremes such as droughts and floods and in dealing with water allocation issues. While the level of urgency might vary most people recognise the need and benefits of being proactive in developing greater regional resilience. They have positive views on how this can be achieved.

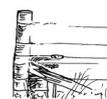
Issues related to water, in particular water quality, storage, allocation and efficiency of use, is something that everyone is focused on at present. Some water issues are being dealt with locally or regionally, or have the potential to be dealt with in this way. There are good examples in New Zealand of how communities are working together for a common good. In some areas, such as Ashburton District, there is a feeling that the issues are too big and support from central government is needed.

People working together with effective communication and education are of fundamental importance to the development of regional resilience. There needs to be buy-in from the community and all relevant agencies to a whole-catchment view. This view needs to be shaped by the climate, land and water resources of the particular locality. Communication, education and consultation are the key ways to involve people from both rural and urban communities. This can be achieved in many different ways. Some examples are public education through regional parks, monitor farms, and focused education programmes for schools and teachers.

There are different views on the role of regulatory authorities and the RMA. The general consensus is that education is the best way to get results. Some see the RMA as a necessary hurdle rather than a barrier. Another perspective shared is that the RMA is a valuable tool. It needn't be a hurdle or barrier if used with the right spirit. Others see it is an impediment to innovation and the capacity to change and adapt quickly.

In all areas it is evident that there is a strong capacity to adapt, as reflected through the good work of individual farmers and local and regional agencies. There are differences of opinion in some cases, but balanced by a view that there is nothing that can't be resolved. Perhaps the biggest constraint is that 'we have the luxury of choice. So long as we have this we will always have different opinions and take longer to reach agreement'.

The capacity to develop regional resilience exists but are we confident that things are moving in the right direction and quickly enough? This chapter has identified key issues and actions that need to be taken towards a stronger focus on proactive adaptation to climate change in eastern New Zealand. Effective communication and education are a priority. This needs to be done in a way that engages communities in developing a shared vision for the future.



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