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THIS CHAPTER COVERS:

Sustainable land use

- The eastern hill country
- The coastal sand country

Soil health

- Soil quality

Land remediation

- Monitoring sites

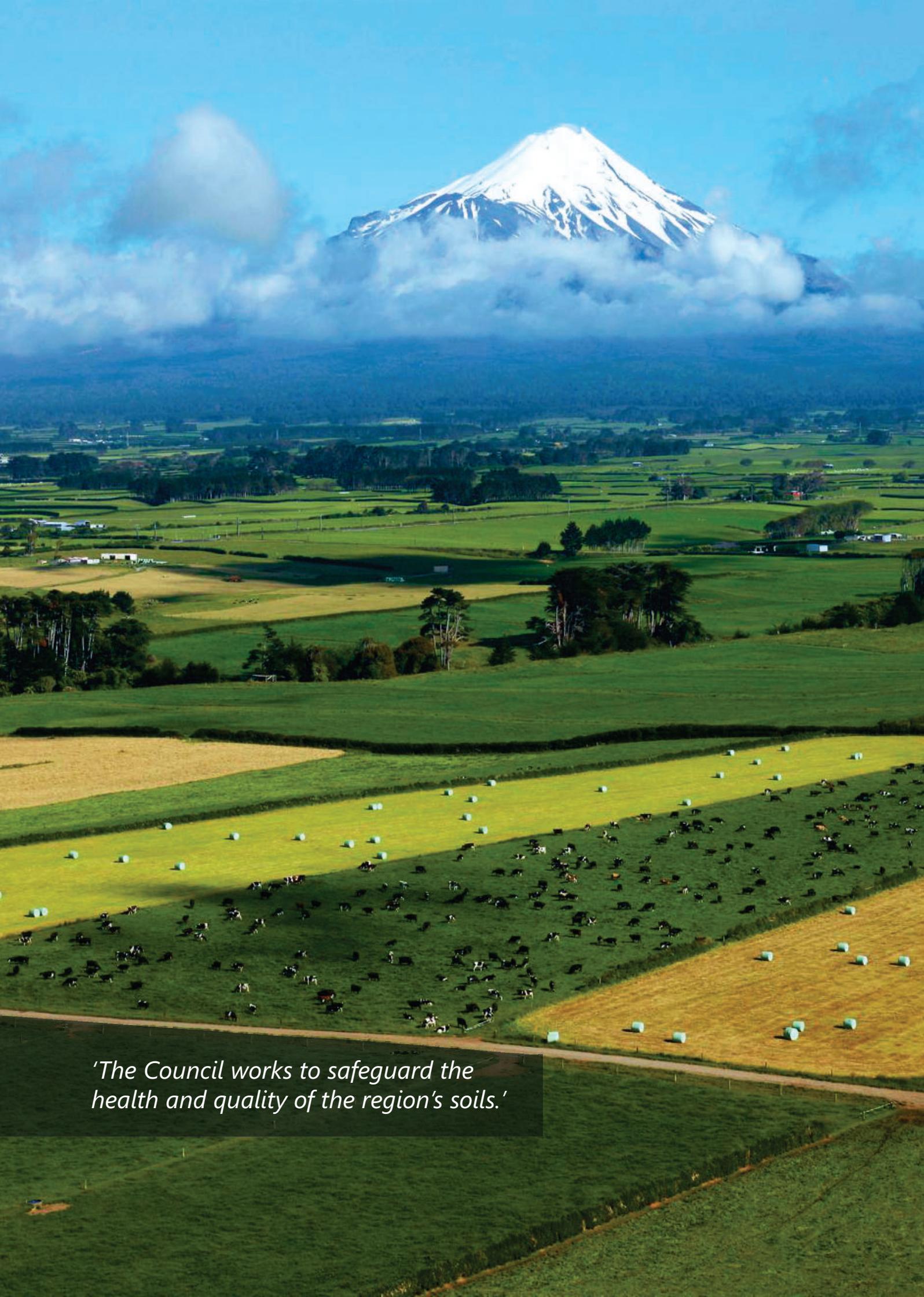


LAND

Soil is one of Taranaki's most important resources, with the region's lush, fertile land the backbone of the regional economy. Taranaki's rural-based wealth is dependent upon good pasture production which, in turn, depends upon sustainable management of the land.

Managing the land works in two ways: retaining the soil on the land, and keeping the soil healthy.

The Council's sustainable land management and monitoring programmes are designed to care for all of the region's land resources—so important in the agriculturally-based economy upon which so many people in the region depend.



'The Council works to safeguard the health and quality of the region's soils.'

Land



Agriculture, particularly dairying, expanded and intensified during the first half of the 20th century and continues to dominate Taranaki's economy. Overseas demand for New Zealand's dairy and beef products means agricultural growth is likely to continue.

Land use supports the economic growth of both New Zealand and the Taranaki region. At the same time, we must minimise the impact of that growth on the region's natural resources and to this end, encouraging sustainable land management in the region is important.

Sustainable land use means using the land according to its capacity for sustained production. That is, matching the appropriate land use with land type. In addition to the riparian planting programme focused on Taranaki's ring plain (detailed in Chapter 3—Fresh water), the Council's sustainable land management programme focuses largely on the region's eastern hill country and coastal sand areas, where soil is most vulnerable to erosion.

In Taranaki, the eastern hill country is relatively steep with low natural fertility. However, it can support both pastoral farming and commercial forestry if it is managed sustainably and used within its physical limitations. The coastal sand country, vulnerable to wind erosion, can also support agricultural production if land use is managed appropriately.

'Around 92% of the land resource in Taranaki is sustainably managed ...'

Around 92% of the land resource in Taranaki sustainably managed. Parts of the coastal sand country and the eastern hill country still require support to move toward more sustainable practices, but even in the hill country sustainable land use rates are high, at around 87%. Although there have been some instances of increased scrub clearance related to favourable returns for meat and wool farming, there has been little change in overall sustainability since 2007.

Soil health is vital for production and the Council works to safeguard the health and quality of the region's soils. Although Taranaki soils are generally in excellent condition, with no significant or immediate health problems, the Council has robust monitoring programmes in place, particularly on the intensively farmed ring plain. Soil health issues are usually short-term and reversible, and careful monitoring and sustainable practices can greatly reduce the impact of human activity on the land.

The Council is committed to continued and ongoing work with landowners to ensure Taranaki's land resources remain healthy and productive in the long term.

