

Introduction

If you plan to intensify your farming operation, then to do this in a sustainable manner, it is important to have an understanding of your farms natural resources and how they will react under different conditions. This will help you to make management decisions that do not compromise soil health, water quality, or accelerate erosion. Long-term productivity can only be sustained if the farm's resources are managed sustainably.

The simplest approach for any intensification programme whilst managing your natural resources is to split your farm into different land management units. The chart below shows how to do this.

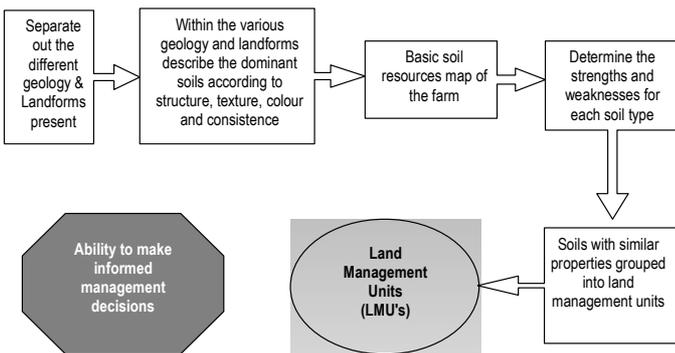


Fig 1. A simple approach to sustainable farm management

Splitting your farm into various Land Management Units gives you the ability to make more informed management decisions and the confidence to ask those important 'what if' questions. Consideration must also be given to other features and natural resources such as watercourses, shelter, and the farm infrastructure.

Intensification is only a viable option if land is managed as Land Management Units and paddocks generally consist of only one Land Management Unit. If a paddock contains more than one Land Management Unit then the land within that paddock can only be farmed to the limitations of the poorest unit without compromising its sustainability. Under this regime the production potential of the better Land Management Unit can never be realized.



Fig 2. A poorly thought out bull finishing 'techno-system'

Figure 2 shows poorly thought out bull finishing 'techno-system' that contains three Land Management Units; dry flats, wet flats, and hill sidlings all within the same cell. Each unit has its own unique strengths and weaknesses, and to maximize the production from each unit in a sustainable manner, they need to be managed differently.

For further advice or information about sustainable land management, contact:

The Land Management Section,
 Taranaki Regional Council,
 Private Bag 713
 Stratford
 Ph: 06 765 7127 Fax: 06 765 5097