



50 Years of the AERU:

A Celebration of the Agribusiness & Economics Research Unit

1962 - 2012



**Lincoln
University**

Te Whare Wānako o Aoraki
CHRISTCHURCH • NEW ZEALAND

New Zealand's specialist land-based university

AERU: An Overview

The core mission of the AERU is to exercise leadership in research for sustainable well-being. Its vision is to be a cheerful and vibrant workplace where senior and emerging researchers are working together to produce and deliver new knowledge that promotes sustainable well-being to make a difference through their research.

The AERU (or Agribusiness and Economics Research Unit, to give it its full name) operates as a semi-autonomous research centre at Lincoln University providing research expertise for a wide range of regional, national and international organisations in the public and private sectors. Its research focuses on economic, resource, environmental and social issues. It employs its own researchers, but also functions as a coordinating body for external agencies wanting to call upon the services of academic staff in any of the university's faculties.

Originally named the Agricultural Economics Research Unit, the AERU began operating at Lincoln College under its founding Director and Professor of Agricultural Economics, Professor Bryan Philpott, in August, 1962. The initiative for a research unit at Lincoln came from the Director-General of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, Bill Hamilton, who wanted to fund a centre of excellence around Philpott's expertise.

Such an initiative required Cabinet approval, which was obtained and then announced by the Minister for Scientific and Industrial Research, the Hon. W.B. Tennent on **August 4th, 1962**. The announcement was reported in many major newspapers and publications across New Zealand. In his statement, the Minister commented:

"Apart from the founding grant from the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR), other significant contributions to the establishment of the AERU came from the Forest Research Institute (for research into land use of forests and agriculture), from the Wool Research Organization, and from a two-year grant provided by the Nuffield Foundation to fund a full-time research assistant."

Hon. W.B. Tennent

In keeping with its original purpose, the AERU has always been an important institution for investigating important economic matters relevant to New Zealand's economic well-being. This built on work already taking place at Lincoln College. Professors Bryan Philpott and Jim Stewart, for example, had been responsible in 1957 for the publication of a nationally recognised report on *Income and Productivity of NZ Farming 1921-56*. This collaborative work was initiated while Bryan Philpott was working with the Economic Service of the NZ Meat and Wool Boards. It was awarded the Royal Agricultural Society prize for the best work in published agricultural economics over the preceding five years.

Building on this, the second research report produced by the new research unit was a discussion paper by the founding Director, entitled *The New Agricultural Economics Research Unit*. In that paper, Professor Philpott explained that "the Unit aims to answer a whole range of questions which can be summarized in the question: 'What are the economic problems of a faster rate of growth of agricultural production?'" This question was then categorised into three main areas of focus: 1) market economics; 2) production economics; 3) agricultural industry relationships.

Fifty years later, the Unit continues to have strong research capability in understanding how New Zealand's land-based sectors contribute to the national economy, but has also developed a broader range of research interests. In recent years, for example, it has led major research programmes on sustainable agriculture, international market trends, technology user innovation (TUI), discrete choice modelling of consumer preferences, food miles, and education employment linkages for young New Zealanders.

On our 50th anniversary, we proudly present this celebratory history publication - *The AERU at Lincoln University: Celebrating 50 Years!* - in which we describe some of the achievements of the AERU under the nine Directors who have led the unit since 1962.

Bryan Philpott '62 - '71

Bryan Philpott arrived at Lincoln University as the country's first Professor of Agricultural Economics in 1959. He became the founding Director of the AERU when it was established in 1962. The unit began with a small number of staff, including Jim Stewart (who became Principal of Lincoln College), Robin Court (who became Principal of Economics at the University of Auckland), Graham Scott (who became Secretary of the New Zealand Treasury) and Bruce Ross (who began as a Masters student and research assistant for Bryan Philpott in 1962 and was Principal when Lincoln College became Lincoln University in 1990). Other first-year staff members were John Ward and Mary Matheson.



Bryan Philpott, 1962

In **1963**, the AERU published Research Report No. 5, *Economic Implications of Increased Agricultural Production*, written by Bryan Philpott, which observed that if the government target of a 4 per cent increase in agricultural production was to be achieved, a government investment of £40-£50 million per annum in agriculture would be required. This was a good representative example of the input-output modelling work being carried out within the AERU at the time. In **1965**, for example, AERU researchers were highly involved with the New Zealand Agricultural Development Conference, hosted and conceived by the New Zealand Agricultural Production Council. Bryan Philpott and Jim Stewart were keynote speakers at this event, commenting on the state of agricultural affairs in New Zealand.

1965 also marked the purchase of an IBM 1130 computer for use by Lincoln University staff and students. The AERU was the most frequent user group of this computer, reflecting the advanced input-output modelling expertise of Philpott and his colleagues.

During this time, the AERU was regarded as a key institution disseminating agricultural information, especially with reference to farm management and market research, producing reports such as Research Report No. 23, *An Analysis of the Retail Demand for Meat in the United Kingdom*, written by Bryan Philpott and Mary Matheson. Other significant papers in this area include R.J. Townsley's Research Report No. 21, *The Maximisation of Revenue from New*

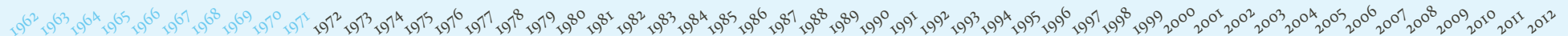


AERU Staff Computer Use, 1963, University of Canterbury

Zealand Butter on the United Kingdom Market, which was accepted into the Australian Journal of Agricultural Economics, and Research Report No. 16 by A.R. Frampton, *A Market Target for the New Zealand Dairy Industry*.

In **1967**, alongside the research goals set by D.S.I.R., the AERU commenced the publication of Discussion Papers and Technical Papers. Over the course of the Philpott Era, the AERU produced 65 Research Reports, 19 Discussion Papers and 14 Technical Papers, both fulfilling goals set by D.S.I.R., and producing a large body of non-D.S.I.R.-designated works.

At the end of the decade, the AERU became heavily involved in analysis for the National Development Conference (NDC) convened by the government in August **1968** and May **1969**. Bruce Ross was enrolled as a PhD student at this time, but was seconded on Bryan Philpott's recommendation to the technical subcommittee of the NDC Targets Committee, where he found himself working alongside people like Henry Lang (Secretary to the Treasury), Alan Lowe (Governor of the Reserve Bank) and Jim Rowe (CEO of the Bankers Association) as the AERU input-output model was used for the NDC's projections.



Sir James Stewart '71 - '74

Sir James (Jim) Stewart, Professor of Farm Management, took over the directorship of the Unit in **1971** when Bryan Philpott left to fill the Macarthy Economics chair at Victoria University of Wellington. Jim Stewart was a pioneering and highly respected farm management expert, with frequent mention in national press and other publications. He directed the Unit until **1974**.

The unit maintained its interest in economic modelling during this period. Significant contributions included T.R. O'Malley's Technical Paper No. 15, *The Application of Linear Programming to Problems of National Economic Policy in New Zealand*. This paper provided four key conclusions, determining that markets should maintain and invest in farming at a high level to ensure a high standard of living for New Zealand. A follow-on paper by O'Malley, Technical Paper No. 16, *A Linear Programming Model for Economic Planning in New Zealand*, used an inter-sectoral model to demonstrate potential implications of a range of different conditions imposed on the economy.



Sir James Stewart, c. 1975

A new series of Market Research Reports reports were introduced at this time, which gave rise to new research endeavours - particularly Graeme Kitson's work examining Japan as a potential key trade partner for New Zealand. These reports were some of the first academic works in New Zealand to investigate Japan as a strong trade partner, indicating the forward-looking spirit of AERU staff and associates.

Under Stewart, the AERU produced three Research Reports, three Technical Papers and five Discussion Papers dealing with pressing and interesting matters in relation to New Zealand's primary production and other sectors. The AERU also increased its research capacity and diversity during this period, with the inclusion of locational studies (spatial analyses determining optimal locations of wool-processing plants and freezing works in New Zealand).

Post-AERU, Jim Stewart became Principal of Lincoln College in **1974**. Two years later he was awarded the Bledisloe Medal for distinguished contributions advancing New Zealand's land-based interests. In **1983**, the year Stewart retired from Lincoln College, he was knighted by the Queen for his services to agriculture and education. He maintained his links with Lincoln University as an Emeritus Professor until his death in 2010.



Owen McCarthy '74 - '76

William (Owen) McCarthy (Professor of Agricultural Economics at Lincoln College) took over the directorship in **1974** after Sir James Stewart left the AERU to become the Principal of Lincoln College. McCarthy was an expert in international marketing, and brought extensive knowledge and experience with him to this position. Under McCarthy, the AERU published eight Research Reports and 12 Discussion Papers.

It was around this time that the AERU began to publish its successful, long-running report series across a wide range. For example, several authors contributed to the *Cost of Production* series of reports, which presented detailed analyses of production costs and management implications, including studies conducted on process peas and beans, town milk supply farms and other commodities. Similarly, John Pryde produced a long-running series relating to farmer attitudes, opinions and intentions, utilised by government, policy informers and social researchers.

Bruce Ross continued to be involved in the unit's research programme. This included AERU Discussion Paper No. 26 on productivity measures, which was featured in the Canterbury Chamber of Commerce *Economic Bulletin*. In addition, AERU staff and associates were key speakers at many seminars, conferences and other public events.



Barry Dent

'77 - '80

In **1977**, Barry Dent, Professor of Farm Management and Rural Valuation at Lincoln College, took over the directorship from Owen McCarthy. Dent described the AERU at this time as having an “atmosphere... of some excitement and enthusiasm”, as many of the staff of the Unit at this time had extensive international experience in their fields, as well as other key researchers such as John Pryde “joining a strong, already-existing and talented team.”

A very notable achievement by John Pryde was the establishment and founding direction of the Kellogg Rural Leaders programme at Lincoln College in **1979**, supported by a grant from the US-based Kellogg Foundation. The grant aimed at developing solid leadership skills, teaching an understanding of how political, cultural, social, economic and physical forces impact on New Zealand agribusiness, and to establish networks from New Zealand. This Leaders programme continues to the present day.

During this time, many of the AERU's ongoing series of reports continued, with the inclusion of regular reports detailing consumer interests (including consumer surveys of wine, bread, fish and potatoes), economic surveys of New Zealand wheatgrowers (directed by R.D. Lough) and economic surveys of New Zealand town milk producers (R.G. Moffitt).

Peter Chudleigh '81 - '84

Up until Barry Dent's departure, the AERU Directorship had always been held by a Lincoln College Professor of Agricultural Economics or Farm Management and Rural Valuation. This changed, however, when Peter Chudleigh, took over the directorship of the Unit in **1981**. Peter Chudleigh had been appointed Deputy Director of the AERU under Owen McCarthy in 1975, so this was a natural step up.

Under Chudleigh, the AERU produced 47 Research Reports and 37 Discussion Papers, signalling a very productive era for the Unit. According to one of Chudleigh's colleagues of the time, "[the Unit] was his life - he had a good team, good rapport with all the people wanting jobs, and funds and so on. He made it happen."

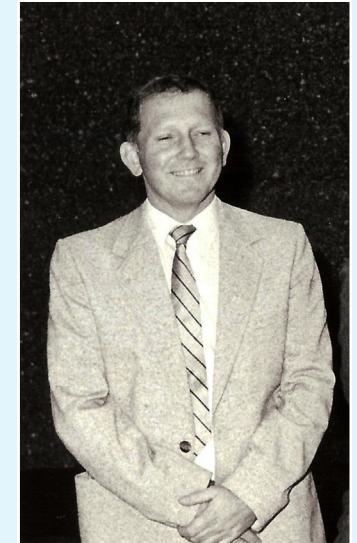
Periodical research efforts also continued in recurring series' directed by AERU staff and associates through Chudleigh's directorship, providing further funding and producing important and comprehensive research. Some important research endeavours completed at this time include:

- John Pryde's Research Report No. 118, *Survey of the Health of New Zealand Farmers, October-November 1980*, and Discussion Paper No. 86, *Financing New Zealand Horticulture*, indicating some of the first publications produced by the AERU expanding into horticultural research;
- Ron Sheppard's and D.E. Fowler's Discussion Paper No. 80, *Deregulation: Impact on the Christchurch Meat Industry*;

- Tony Zwart's Research Report No. 127, *The New Zealand Pastoral Livestock Sector: An Econometric Model (Version Two)*, closely linked with Discussion Paper No. 54, *The New Zealand Pastoral Livestock Sector: A preliminary econometric model*.

In **1982**, Glen Greer joined the AERU as one of four assistant research economists in the unit. As the AERU celebrates its fiftieth anniversary, Greer is now a Senior Research Officer and the unit's longest-serving staff member. Over thirty years, her research has included a wide range of economic studies typically related to land-based issues on- and off-farm.

Chudleigh resigned at the end of September **1984** and for the rest of that year, John Pryde served as Acting Director until Ralph Lattimore took over at the beginning of **1985**.



Peter Chudleigh

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Ralph Lattimore '85 - '87

Prior to his engagement as Director, Ralph Lattimore had been an economic consultant to the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, after which he accepted the position of Associate Professor of Agricultural Economics at the University of British Columbia in Canada. His specialties were in agricultural policy, price analysis and marketing.

That same year, the AERU appointed staff member Ron Sheppard as Deputy Director, to assist in ongoing research activities at the Unit. Lattimore himself declared in the press at the time that the AERU would have a “broader agenda” with the change of directorship. Some examples of this broader agenda included these publications:

- John Fairweather’s first work with the AERU, Research Report No. 165, *Land Policy and Land Settlement in New Zealand: An Analysis of Land Policy Goals and an Evaluation of their Effect*, and Discussion Paper No. 99, *Farm Structure Change in New Zealand and Implications for Policy*;
- M.T. Laing, S.A. Hughes and Ron Sheppard’s Research Report No. 173, *The Competitive Position of New Zealand Fresh Fruit Exports*; and
- Ralph Lattimore’s Discussion Paper No. 94, *New Zealand Economic Development: A Brief Overview of Unbalanced Industry Growth*.



Ralph Lattimore, 1985

Other on-going research efforts continued through Lattimore’s directorship, including farmer opinion surveys, consumer surveys, the national wheat-growers surveys and other works. The AERU also played a key role in the successful operation of the New Zealand Branch of Australian Agricultural Economics Society Annual Conference with several contributions from key AERU staff and associates.

New Zealand’s decade of economic reforms between 1984 and 1994, which included the removal of farm subsidies and the lowering of import barriers as part of a radical restructuring of the New Zealand economy, had its impact on external funding of the AERU. This resulted in many full-time staff members accepting redundancy or returning to a full-time academic position in other parts of Lincoln College.

The AERU was among the leaders of the land-based sectors responding to the economic reforms. A landmark publication in **1987** was the Discussion Paper No 109, *Rural New Zealand – What Next?*, edited by Tim Wallace and Ralph Lattimore. This contained 30 invited contributions from experts throughout New Zealand, including many past and present AERU staff, finishing with an overview by the two editors entitled “Tough Decisions Ahead”.

It was also in **1987** that the AERU, which until this point had been known as the Agricultural Economics Research Unit, changed its name to the Agribusiness and Economic Research Unit, reflecting the increasing diversity and scope of AERU research works.

Lattimore stepped down from his position as Director of the AERU during **1987**, to accept the position of Reader in the Department of Agricultural Economics and Marketing. John Pryde again accepted the role of Acting Director for the remainder of the year.



Tony Zwart '88 - '97

In **1988**, the Unit's new Director was Tony Zwart, who was Professor of Marketing and later head of department in the Department of Economics and Marketing. Zwart's directorship adopted a more supervisory role. This was very effective as the Unit remained productive during this era, with 49 Research Reports and 38 Discussion Papers published.

Some examples of significant works during this era include:

- T.P. Grundy, Ralph Lattimore and Tony Zwart's Research Report No. 192, *New Zealand Livestock Sector Model: 1986 Version, Volume 1 and 2*;
- a series of Economic Evaluation Reports, investigating Biological Control of Rose-Grain Aphid, Sweet Brier and Hieracium in New Zealand (Research Reports No. 200, 201 and 202), as well as Glen Greer and Ron Sheppard's Research Report No. 203, *An Economic Evaluation of the Benefits of Research into Biological Control of Clematis Vitalba* (commissioned in part by the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research); and
- John Gibson's Research Report No. 193, *An Economic Analysis of the 1986 Deregulation of the New Zealand Egg Industry*.
- John Fairweather and Hugh Campbell's Research Report No. 207, on *Public Drinking and Social Organisation in Methven and Mt Somers*, which was featured with some controversy on the national current affairs television programme hosted by Paul Holmes.

John Gibson went on to complete a doctorate at Stanford University in the United States, and was later appointed to personal chairs in economics at the University of Canterbury and the University of Waikato. Hugh Campbell completed his doctorate at Charles Sturt University in Australia, and is Professor of Sociology and founding director of the Centre for the Study of Agriculture, Food and Environment (CSAFE) at the University of Otago.



AERU Staff under Tony Zwart, c. 1989

Ross Cullen

In **1998**, resource economist Ross Cullen took over the directorship of the Unit. Like Tony Zwart, Cullen reaffirmed that his role would be more supervisory in nature, and by no means a full-time engagement. At this time, the AERU staffing remained minimal, with only a handful of full-time researchers on-board, including John Fairweather and Glen Greer.



Ross Cullen, c. 2001

Significant works during this era include:

- Ross Cullen, Ken Hughey, Geoff Kerr and Ali Memon's Research Report No. 250, *Criteria to Evaluate the Application of Policy Instruments Designed to Internalise Externalities from Commercial Fisheries*, a report to the Ministry of Fisheries;
- John Fairweather and Hugh Campbell's Research Report No. 238, *The Development of Organic Horticultural Exports in New Zealand*; and
- John Fairweather's co-authored Research Report No. 243, *New Zealand Farmer and Grower Intentions to Use Genetic Engineering Technology and Organic Production Methods*.



Agribusiness & Economics Research Unit, 2012. Photograph by David Hollander

Back Row: John Fairweather, Paul Rutherford.

Middle Row: Meike Guenther, Jane Higgins, Lyn Minchington, Michelle Marquet, Tim Driver, Glen Greer.

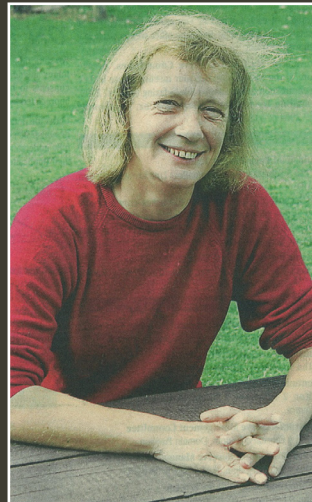
Front Row: Teresa Cunningham, Lesley Hunt, Patrick O'Neill, Caroline Saunders, Peter Tait, Paul Dalziel.

Caroline Saunders '01 -

In **mid-2001**, Lincoln University determined that there was an opportunity to revitalise the work of the AERU with the appointment of a full-time Director. Ross Cullen returned to the Commerce Division and Caroline Saunders, Professor of Trade and Environmental Economics, was appointed as his successor. Saunders describes herself as a very hands-on Director and became highly involved with the research work of the Unit.

The unit has expanded considerably under the leadership of Caroline Saunders. At the beginning of its jubilee year, the AERU was comprised of more than twenty researchers and support staff:

- Professor Caroline Saunders (Director)
- Professor Paul Dalziel (Deputy Director)
- Professor John Fairweather (who retired after 28 years of service in March 2012)
- Glen Greer (Senior Research Officer)
- Dr Jane Higgins (Senior Research Officer)
- Patrick O'Neill (Senior Research Officer)
- Dr Hazel Phillips (Senior Research Officer)
- Dr Lesley Hunt (Research Officer)
- Moana Mitchell (Research Officer)
- Dr Peter Tait (Research Officer)
- Meike Guenther (Junior Research Officer)
- Tim Driver (Research Assistant)
- Michelle Marquet (Research Assistant)
- Paul Rutherford (Research Assistant)
- John Saunders (Research Assistant)
- Tremane Barr (PhD Researcher)
- Sini Hakola (PhD Researcher)
- David Liu Qing (PhD Researcher)
- Bill Kaye-Blake (Adjunct Associate Professor)
- Ron Sandrey (Adjunct Associate Professor)
- Andrew Barber (Adjunct Senior Researcher)
- John Reid (Adjunct Senior Researcher)
- Simon Worthington (Adjunct Researcher)
- Teresa Cunningham (Administration)



Current AERU Director Prof. Caroline Saunders, 2009



AERU Staff under Caroline Saunders, c. 2001

This expansion in the size of the unit has been recognised by Lincoln University. In **2009**, the AERU took over full use of The Lodge (formerly the Principal's Lodge and then the University Staff Club). In **2011** the AERU was removed from under the wings of the Commerce Faculty to become one of two semi-autonomous research centres reporting directly to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (the other is the Bio-protection Research Centre).

The growth has been built on the AERU's involvement in a number of large research programmes funded by the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology (FoRST, now the Ministry of Science and Innovation, soon to be the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment) as well as a wide range of smaller research projects for regional, national and international agencies.

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In **October 2003**, for example, the AERU was heavily involved in the establishment of the Agriculture Research Group on Sustainability (ARGOS) – an unincorporated joint research venture between The AgriBusiness Group, Lincoln University (AERU) and University of Otago, mandated to examine the environmental, social and economic sustainability of New Zealand farming systems. The general goal of ARGOS research is to facilitate innovation and improved performance in primary production systems. It secured funding for nine years from FoRST, specifically interested in lowland sheep and cattle farms, high country farms, kiwifruit orchards, as well as other areas in land holdings and farming. Numerous AERU staff members have been involved in the ARGOS project; including Lesley Hunt, Glen Greer, John Fairweather and Caroline Saunders.

Another large programme has been the Education Employment Linkages (EEL) research led by Paul Dalziel between **2006** and **2012**. The aim of this research has been to answer the question: How can formal support systems best help young New Zealanders make good education employment linkages to benefit themselves, their communities, and the national economy? It finishes with an international colloquium in Wellington in August 2012.

In the two years before his retirement, John Fairweather led a FoRST-funded research project on Technology Users Innovation (TUI). An example of the outputs from that research was his publication with Simon Lambert (Research Report No. 320) on *The Socio-Technical Networks of Technology Users' Innovation in New Zealand: A Fuzzy-Set Qualitative Comparative Analysis*.

Another key staff member during the Saunders era was Associate Professor Bill Kaye-Blake, who completed his PhD in 2006 and quickly rose to be Deputy Director of the unit before he resigned to take up a Principal Economist position at the New Zealand Institute of Economic Research in August **2010**. Kaye-Blake was a highly significant contributor within the AERU, leading high-level research on economic impacts of technological development and economic modelling. His research has examined consumer, producer and economy-wide impacts of new agricultural technologies, and estimated the economic value of specific novel products, in addition to the authorship of a wide range of other related literature.

Early in her tenure, Saunders obtained the New Zealand licence for the VORSIM trade model developed Dr Vernon Oley Roningen in the United States Department of Agriculture. Under her direction, PhD and other researchers in the AERU have extended the trade model to include environmental effects such as carbon emissions and the emissions of other greenhouse gases. The LTEM (“Lincoln Trade and Environment Model”) is an important research tool that has been used for a series of policy relevant research projects over the last decade.



Patrick Aldwell and Caroline Saunders, AERU 45th Anniversary (2007)

A significant piece of work was Research Report No. 285, *Food Miles – Comparative Energy/Emissions Performance of New Zealand’s Agriculture Industry*, published by Caroline Saunders and Andrew Barber in **July 2006**. The report recognised that it is not food miles that should be assessed per se, but the total energy used from production to plate. The analysis showed that New Zealand products compare favourably with lower energy and emissions per tonne of product

delivered to the United Kingdom compared to other UK sources. This research has withstood close scrutiny from a wide range of overseas academic and government bodies concerned with trade and the environment. It has been very widely cited, including a reference in a special report and accompanying editorial in *The Economist* of December 9-15 2006. For these outstanding contributions, Professor Saunders was presented with the prestigious NZIER Economics Award in **2007** and was made an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit in the New Year’s Honours List of **2009**.

Other recent projects in the AERU include: qualitative analysis of submissions on a number of post-earthquake recovery plans for CERA and the Christchurch City Council (Patrick O’Neill); discrete choice modelling analysis within the context of environmental and natural resource management (Peter Tait); economic development analysis, international market surveying (Meike Guenther); agricultural/horticultural studies, national resources, policy and institutional analysis, and cost-benefit analyses (Glen Greer); and public acceptance of biotechnology and sociological analysis (Lesley Hunt).

In addition, the AERU houses several research assistants who provide support for the Director and staff members across a broad range of projects.

As well as these national projects, the AERU also does work for international clients. Recent examples include three separate projects for the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development in Paris and for the Food and Agriculture Organisation in Mexico. The most recent project involving the LTEM is a substantial commission from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) in the United Kingdom to provide it with advice on trade policy between the European Union (EU) and the MERCOSUR region in South America.

The AERU *Statement of Intent* includes a commitment to educate and mentor students, researchers and future leaders as part of the unit’s leadership mission. We see ourselves as a place where senior and emerging researchers can work together and learn from each other. It has three PhD researchers doing work in the unit (Tremaine Barr, Sini Hakola and David Liu Qing).



Mary Woods and Paul Dalziel (2007)

Previous PhD students have done very well in their subsequent careers. Selim Çağatay, for example, is now leading the Policy Analysis and Modeling Group (PAMG) in the Economic Research Centre on Mediterranean Countries at Akdeniz University in Turkey. Anita Wreford was appointed after graduation as a senior researcher at the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research in the United Kingdom before joining the Scottish Agricultural College in 2008.

Looking To The Future

Reflecting on the back catalogue of AERU research publications over the last fifty years, it is clear that the AERU has always been closely involved in current issues of importance to New Zealand. While its research focus has shifted over time in response to the changing external environment, the Unit has remained true to the reason for its foundation in 1962 – to be a centre of research excellence providing and supporting expertise to promote New Zealand’s economic well-being.

In the early years of the AERU under Bryan Philpott, many research efforts focused on the need to increase primary production in New Zealand in order to encourage a higher quality of life for its citizens through agricultural export-led growth in gross domestic product. Reinforcing that vision, the unit between **1971** and **1975** published many reports related to farm management and the effective use of rural resources, including costs of production studies and producer surveys. Between **1976** and **1985**, market research reports were commissioned by industry entities to help determine market demand and projections. During the late **1980s** and early **1990s**, the AERU was at the forefront of research to help land-based producers adjust to the new economic environment after the economic reforms initiated by Roger Douglas. Throughout the **1990s**, the unit’s outlook broadened in line with these developments when, in addition to traditional research on agricultural economics, publications pertaining to producer and public perceptions of food and modern concerns in agriculture, such as pesticide use, were published.

In recent years, under the directorship of Caroline Saunders, the Unit has been looking into areas that strongly affect New Zealand’s quality of life and economic performance, such as original market research on the attributes of products that are now seen as desirable in correlation in international markets. The AERU is now heavily involved in the production of concise and pertinent research in areas such as well-being economics, sustainability and climate change, bio-control and tourism, and other important economic and sociological topics.

It has not been possible to catalogue the vast scope of the AERU’s research record in this short summary. A longer report that provides a detailed chronicle of the Unit’s past works is also available. It and the AERU Research Reports published since 1994 can be downloaded from the units website at <http://www.lincoln.ac.nz/aeru>.

The AERU Statement of Intent records the unit’s vision: The AERU is a cheerful and vibrant workplace where senior and emerging researchers are working together to produce and deliver new knowledge that promotes sustainable well-being. The document continues:

Integral to the way the AERU operates is its ‘spirit’, based on people being empowered to work together in a cheerful and vibrant environment, confident in their ability to make a difference through their research.

We are conscious that we cannot promote sustainable well-being on our own, and that producing new knowledge is only part of our work. It is essential that new knowledge is delivered to the right people who can use it to make a positive difference to well-being. Consequently, integral to the Centre’s vision is maintaining strong networks through academia, industry, policy circles and wider society.

We are also aware of the need to educate and mentor students, researchers and future leaders as part of our leadership mission. We see ourselves as a place where senior and emerging researchers can work together and learn from each other.

In that spirit, the members of the AERU thank you for celebrating our proud 50-year history with us. We look forward to what the next 50 years have to offer!

This document was prepared by Tim Driver and Paul Dalziel with help from current and former members of the AERU. 1 June 2012.



Agribusiness & Economics Research Unit
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