

## Case study: Rob Jaeschke, Polish Hill River region

Sustainability is key to the farming enterprise that Rob and Lyn Jaeschke, Hill River Clare Estate, Hill River, run in the Mid North.

The couple and their two sons and families, Craig and Nicole, Grant and Megan and five young grandchildren, run a diverse operation, employing 14 people on 4856 hectares of owned and leased land. It includes producing and processing 10,000 tonnes of export oaten hay a year, 160,000 chickens six times a year, a vineyard and cellar door, cropping 3240ha, running a 4000 head self-replacing Merino flock and lucerne seed and lucerne hay production.



"Sustainability is important to me because I'm a fifth generation farmer working on the property, I've got sons working with me and I've got grandchildren coming along," Rob said.

"I've had the privilege to work my father's farm and we've expanded the business to the level we're at, and both my sons will continue to farm, and I believe we've got a number of our grandchildren, both girls and boys, who could quite easily fit into a role here, and I fully support it.

"I believe that's why we do what we do on the farm, to be able to pass the farm on in better condition than we started and I feel quite relaxed about that.

"I feel we have achieved that, we have diversified the business to the point where a lot of our enterprises have become integrated and support one another, chicken manure is one example, going back on the land. We've set the vineyard up so we can graze it in winter months, to provide more feed for lambing ewes after the early part of winter, and that's working well.

"One pass agriculture, direct drill, has enable us to store more water in the ground. Crop production is higher. Just overall the business has worked well."

The Jaeschkes had a low flow bypass device installed on their property about 20 years ago. They operate a weir on the Hill River and were involved in a Hutt River flood mitigation scheme in the 1980s.

The three megalitre bypass device was installed on a 200 megalitre dam, and runs for nine months of the year.

It has a 100-millimetre pipe, which allows water to flow 300 metres under the ground, from the edge of the dam to the creek below, with a flow rate of up to 160 litres a minute.



"I believe all waterways should be regulated, by that I mean slowed down or restricted to keep the water longer in the valley," Rob said. "The natural environment here is flats, basically swampland before it was drained.

"I think the bypass is a tool to help the environment and help retain moisture levels because the creeks are a way of draining water out of the ecosystem, we should be trying to hold and

retain water for as long as possible.

"Low flows is about accepting the fact that we can't keep it all, we need to allow some water to bypass some of our storage areas. I think slowing the movement of water out of our valley is good for the valley. Water is really gold when you look at production, wherever it falls it does some good somewhere, and certainly having a diverse business where we have summer crops like vines and lucerne, we understand how important it is to conserve water, both on the surface as well as in our paddocks.

"Our production is tied directly to the amount of moisture we can use, not the amount of rain that falls. But the amount we can use, that's available to us.

"It's only right and fitting that we are prepared to give some back, there is a balance there as to what we use, and what goes back to the environment."