

**Media Release  
April 6 2010**

**LAMB INDUSTRY CREATES CARBON FOOTPRINT BENCHMARK**

The New Zealand lamb industry now has a strong understanding of how it can improve its emissions performance, thanks to a new and comprehensive study\* examining the full carbon footprint of New Zealand lamb exported to and consumed in its key European market.

The AgResearch study was funded by the Meat Industry Association, Ballance Agri-Nutrients and Landcorp, and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry's greenhouse gas footprinting strategy. It was conducted to create a benchmark understanding of where greenhouse gas emissions are occurring across the supply chain, including production, processing, transportation and consumption of lamb in a key export market.

The footprint was estimated at 1.9kg CO<sub>2</sub> equivalents for a 100g serving of lamb meat. This can be broken-down across the supply chain as follows; 80% from contributions on-farm, 3% from meat processing, 5% from transportation and 12% for the consumer phase. The overall breakdown of the carbon footprint, and the dominance of the on-farm component, were in line with expectations and broadly consistent with other global studies of products derived from farmed livestock.

The New Zealand sheep industry has already made great progress in reducing its emissions during the last 20 years, mainly by producing more meat from less pasture. Less pasture consumed means less emissions.

Compared to 1990, New Zealand sheep farms now produce slightly more lamb meat by weight, but from a 43% smaller national flock. Researchers estimate this productivity improvement has reduced the carbon footprint of New Zealand lamb by more than 20% over that period.

New Zealand Meat Industry Association Chairman, Bill Falconer, says the study is an excellent piece of science and the industry has welcomed the results, particularly noting key areas where efforts for improvement should be focused.

"Our industry has invested in, and is proactively working to understand, its own environmental impact and how we can improve. We want to use this study as a platform from which to move forward and improve the footprint from the farm, through processing and in transport."

"The biggest opportunity to reduce the lamb footprint is on-farm, and there is already considerable investment into research in that area. But we are all playing our part – right across the supply chain."

Mr Falconer added that New Zealand can be proud of its pastoral-based farming systems, which have been sustainably producing lamb for export for more than 125 years. Animals raised on pasture produce high quality, lean and nutritious meat which contains high levels of omega 3s.

Mr Falconer said that until there is a globally-agreed methodology for 'footprinting', it is hard to assess how New Zealand's footprint compares to

[Embargoed until 2pm Tuesday 6 April]

others. "We're not aware of overseas studies with a comparable scope or level of detail in the methodology".

"However, in the area of on-farm emissions, which are common to all sheep producing nations, we are confident New Zealand's low-input and efficient farming, along with our high proportion of renewable energy and temperate climate, mean New Zealand lamb will compare very favourably in terms of its emissions performance. And it is likely that the small proportion of the footprint contributed by transport and processing costs – 8% together – will also compare well."

"This does not lessen the need for our industry to remain on the front-foot in our approach to GHG emissions, and we certainly know there is a need for continual improvement. Importantly, we now have a science-based benchmark against which to measure progress"

Initiatives underway to help reduce lamb's carbon footprint include:

1. Strategic, large-scale research aimed mostly at livestock emissions such as that by the Pastoral Greenhouse Gas Research Consortium, the Global Research Alliance and the recently announced New Zealand Agricultural Greenhouse Gas Research Centre.
2. Meat processing initiatives through improved waste-water treatment systems, energy efficiency programmes and exploration of alternative fuels for boilers, including woodchips and waste.
3. Meat exporters working with individual shipping lines to identify ways to reduce the oceanic shipping component of the footprint – currently at approximately 5%.
4. Educating the consumer on energy-efficient purchasing, cooking and storage methods.

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*\* For this study, AgResearch used the Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) approach, which is consistent with the PAS2050<sup>1</sup> published standard for greenhouse gas footprinting. Life cycle assessment seeks to examine the impacts of a product from production to consumption. On-farm emissions analysis undertaken for this study is consistent with New Zealand's GHG accounting methodology as submitted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and is based on the average New Zealand sheep farm.*