



RURALINSIGHT

NZ'S #1 RURAL REAL ESTATE BRAND

JUNE 2019

LESSONS FROM EUROPE IN NZ'S FOOD-FARM OPPORTUNITIES.

Countries like Italy and France are renowned for the way they have interwoven their history, farming and food into an attractive, romantic cultural heritage that millions of people from around the world come to savour and enjoy.

New Zealand's rapidly maturing tourism market offers some exciting opportunities for farmers and food producers here to take inspiration from their European counterparts, becoming a similar tourism and cultural destination for the Southern Hemisphere with farmers woven into the mix.

The latest Trenz tourism conference in Rotorua the industry revealed plans to make it a \$50 billion industry in the next six years, up from today's \$40 billion a year sector which is almost at the goal of \$41 billion it aimed to achieve by 2025.

The latest priority areas released by the industry provide some inspiration for how farmers tasked with running the wide open spaces so coveted by tourists, and the food producers who process their hard work, could work more closely.

Tourism NZ chief executive Chris Roberts outlined priority areas that include embedding greater sustainability into the sector, managing destinations and engaging with communities in a bid for the sector to improve the quality rather than just the quantity of visitors to New Zealand.

The sector's goals match closely to findings from ANZ and Ministry for Primary Industries released last year.

The report highlighted opportunities lying relatively untapped for the farming sector to link up with a tourism market keen to not only sample local cuisine, but understand the story behind its creation.

In turn the 3.9 million visitors expected this year have been identified as potential brand ambassadors, capable of broadcasting New Zealand farmers' and food producers' stories to their friends and relatives back home.

The report highlighted the gap between tourists' expectations about having food experiences in New Zealand, and what was on offer.

“ The ANZ and Ministry for Primary Industries report highlighted opportunities lying relatively untapped for the farming sector to link up with a tourism market keen to not only sample local cuisine, but understand the story behind its creation. ”

New Zealand ranked low in the report as a food and beverage destination, with only 30% regarding it positively, and 60% with a “neutral” view of this country's food offering.

This compared to 80-90% having a “positive” view of Italy or France when it came to food.

John Bennett, ANZ commercial and agri manager said there was plenty of potential for New Zealand to change this, and that New Zealand was not doing anything particularly badly.

Instead he argued the perception of being a food destination is simply not as great as it could be, and offered a good opportunity for the sector.

Other industry luminaries including NZ Tourism Council chief executive Judy Chen and renowned food writer Lauraine Jacobs agree there is plenty of room for greater collaboration between the farming and tourism sector, with food the glue that bought the two together.

Jacobs pointed to high country sheep stations now offering farm

stay tours, matched with cuisine often sourced locally or in the case of red meat, from the station itself.

This was a market she believes has considerably more potential, and one that could emulate the Agriturismo network in Italy.

This comprises lodges and homesteads that maintain traditions and quality artisan food production techniques, often giving guests the opportunity to participate in farming life and cooking.

The network exists under a national law that includes authenticity standards to ensure a realistic experience that reflects that country's strong regionality.

In a New Zealand sense Jacobs has pointed to the potential that sits within iwi ownership and the growing appreciation for Maori cuisine and native food sources.

This in turn sits closely with Tourism New Zealand's aim to embrace Tikanga Maori more closely and to match that with visitors who meet New Zealand's cultural expectations.

Duncan Ross, Bayleys country manager said there were a variety of food-farming related businesses that occasionally come onto Bayley's books ranging from road side farm based cafes to cheese making businesses with a shop on the site.

These offered operators the opportunity to expand beyond the farm gate and benefit from the boom being experienced in tourism throughout the provinces.

“ A variety of food-farming related businesses ranging from road side farm based cafes to cheese making businesses with a shop on the site, offer operators the opportunity to expand beyond the farm gate. ”

“In the past six months we have had a number of wealthy offshore parties show interest in investing in the agri-food sector. Their focus has been upon destination-high end farm resorts.

“They are aiming at visitors interested in the paddock/orchard to plate story, where the entire food experience while visiting is sourced from the property they are staying upon.”

