UNDERSTANDING FRESHWATER FARM PLANS

After initial pilot projects ran last year, freshwater farm plans are expected to be ready for roll out from mid 2023 with a focus on the Waikato, Gisborne and Southland regions first.

Freshwater farm plans are part of the government's Essential Freshwater package and the aim is to stop any further degradation of New Zealand's freshwater resources, improve water quality within five years, and bring New Zealand's freshwater resources, waterways and ecosystems to a healthy state within a generation.

Government has emphasised that freshwater farm plans are meant to offer a practical, flexible way for farmers to achieve good environmental outcomes, and should align with and support (but not replace) regional plans and consents. Freshwater farm plans can be developed by individual farmers and growers but it is expected that in most cases, support will be needed from local advisors, regionals councils, and primary sector and/or catchment groups.

WHO NEEDS A FRESHWATER FARM PLAN?

Farmers and growers who need a freshwater farm plan are those who have:

- 20 hectares or more in arable or pastoral use
- 5 hectares or more in horticultural use
- 20 hectares or more of combined use

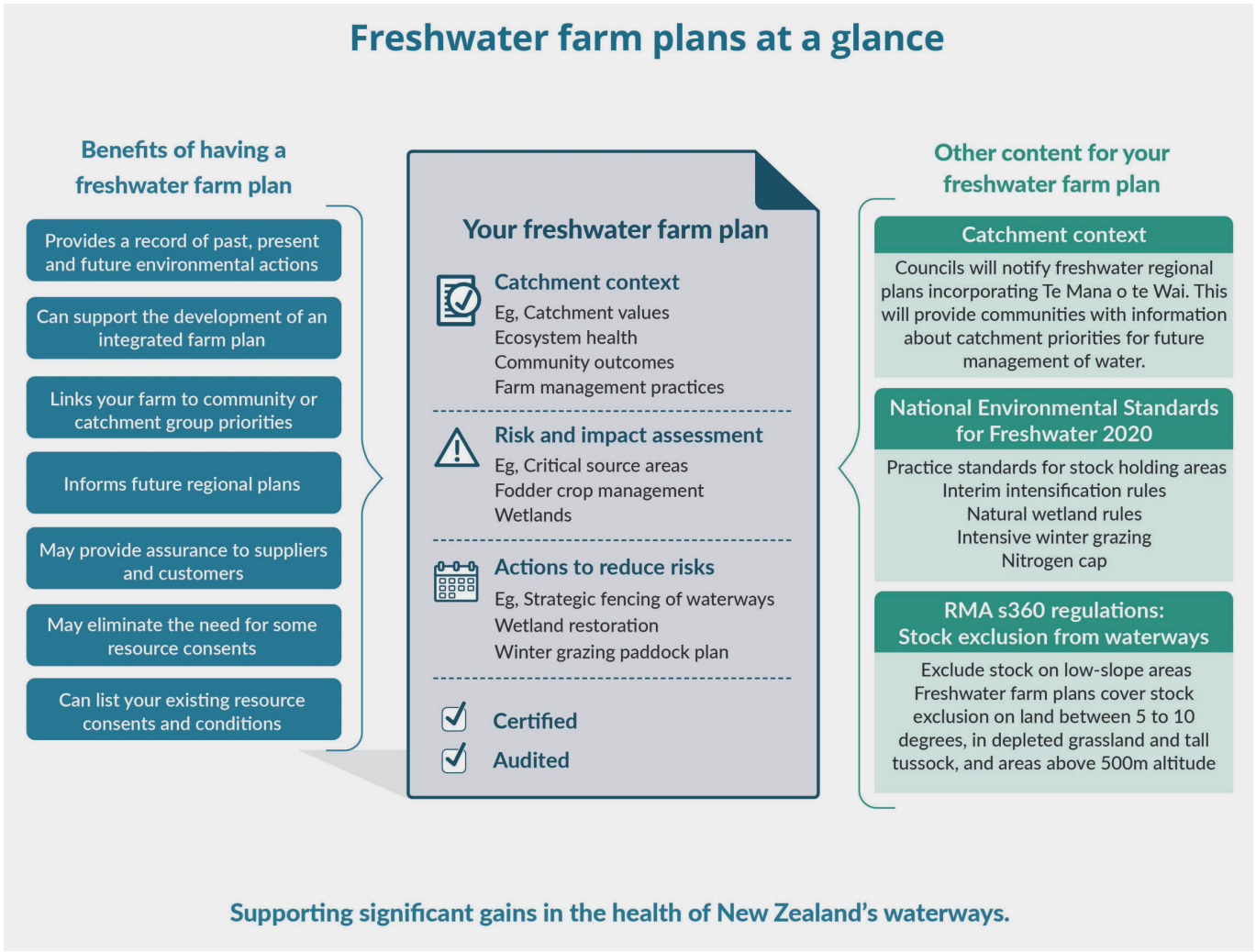
WHAT NEEDS TO BE INCLUDED IN A FRESHWATER FARM PLAN?

Freshwater farm plans should include:

- pollution risk identification and impact assessments for your farm
- details of your plans/existing strategies to mitigate risks
- details of your plans/existing strategies to meet the National Environmental Standards for Freshwater (NESF)
- details of your plans/existing strategies to exclude stock from waterways to meet the stock exclusion regulations
- details of your plans/existing strategies to comply with any local/regional planning and consent requirements related to your farming activity
- details on the water quality issues most relevant for your water catchment area — this information should be available from your regional council.

If you have an existing farm environment plan this can be used as the basis for your freshwater farm plan — and you should continue to use your existing farm environment plan to manage any environmental risks until you have a freshwater farm plan in place.

It is also important to note that your freshwater farm plan will need to be certified by a qualified certifier who will then advise your regional council when the plan is fit for purpose. Advisors and certifiers are still being identified in some regions — get in touch with Ministry for the Environment for information on your area: freshwaterfarmplans@mfe.govt.nz



HOW CAN P&F GLOBAL HELP YOU GET STARTED?

Our team is committed to supporting our customers as they adjust to new requirements. One of the ways we can help is after you have identified wet areas as high risk for leaching and want to drain the area to minimise that risk. Our free farm drone mapping service identifies your farm drainage needs and can help you create a plan to manage risks for freshwater contamination.

For more information about freshwater farm plans you can visit the Ministry for the Environment website or email freshwaterfarmplans@mfe.govt.nz