



Left: Lessons learned too late: note the band aids in the form of exotic pine trees, applied after all native cover had been destroyed. Photo: Di Lucas

Below Left & Right: Working with nature: Cabbages, interplanted with dill plants to reduce aphid attack on the cabbages. Whitefly in glasshouses can be controlled with yellow sticky boards. Photos: Lincoln University Entomology Dept.



the European Community maximum residue level for DDE (the breakdown product of DDT).

New Zealanders are rightly proud of their record as efficient food and fibre producers, but claims that New Zealand is "clean and green" and our produce fresh and natural are to a degree unfounded. On average 3,500 tonnes of pesticides per year are used in this country. A large proportion of these pesticides are applied to comply with the requirements of overseas consumers, who are more interested with the way that food looks, rather than how healthy it is.

Growers often must follow spray schedules supplied by producer boards which have a monopoly over exports, protected by law. Failure to spray might mean crops are rejected for export. The other side of the coin is that produce with spray residues above the importing country's maximum residue levels is also turned away.

The Ministry for the Environment's recent pesticides report concluded that, given New Zealand's levels of pesticide use, problems such as residues in domestic food, ground-water and soil contamination, spray drift and pest resistance were inevitable.

Every year around the world up to 20,000

people die from pesticide poisoning, almost all of them in developing countries, while a further 1 million suffer seriously.

Perhaps up until now most conservationists have been content to see conservation in terms of setting aside areas of bush and not bothered themselves with what goes on behind the farm gate.

Such attitudes are changing fast. It is inevitable that the green consumer tide sweeping around the world will soon wash up on New Zealand's shores. Farmers will not change unless consumers start to demand organic produce, and once supermarkets see there is money in selling food with a Biogro or Demeter label on it, they will help accelerate the trend.

Commercial agriculture is a legitimate land use essential for the well being of urban New Zealanders. But until the community recognises that agriculture must be sustainable to be viable, it will not have a guaranteed future.

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