Use of reflexive interactive design to address challenges to New Zealand dairy farming

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Abstract

The New Zealand (NZ) dairy industry may be required to undergo significant changes over the next decades to ensure it long-term sustainability (environmentally, economically, socially and ethically). The objective of the work was to tackle this challenge by attempting a radical re-design of the dairy systems. To that end, this project has taken a structured approach called Reflexive Interactive Design. The intention of the approach is to address complex trade-offs between competing goals, deliberately targeting structural changes in the systems. Through a series of interviews and design workshops, two concepts were drafted. These concepts are intended to be used as vehicles to construct shared meanings, in conversation with farmers, policy makers, scientists, other influential actors, and the public. Both concepts show that in trying to tackle this design challenge, the boundaries of the ‘system to be designed’ will necessarily have to go well beyond the farm gate. Two findings relevant for consideration in redesigning dairy systems were, firstly, the sustainability issues the industry is facing are interconnected, so solutions to one issue have implications for the others. Secondly, the boundaries of the system to be designed may need to go beyond the farm gate, to include other parts of the value chain, groups of farms and possibly interconnected land uses.