

Geographic Information Systems at AgResearch

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ABSTRACT

AgResearch is New Zealand's largest Crown Research Institute and undertakes research in the areas of pastoral agriculture and environment, applied biotechnologies, and food and textiles. While there is a great deal of scope for geographic information systems to support the science AgResearch carries out, the uptake of it within the company has followed a rather piecemeal and uncoordinated pattern. There are a number of people within the company who are using GIS to support their science but these individuals represent "islands" of knowledge and experience within the company. Access to GIS software is far from universal, as too is access to fundamental data sets that are required to support research projects.

The company has (at last, some may say) seen the light and now recognises the need to provide a more holistic approach, and seeks to establish a company-wide geographic information *service*. A service that provides consistent access to software, core data sets, a GIS-specific support service, and in-house training across all four of its campuses distributed around the country. GIS potentially provides so much benefit to such a wide range of the research undertaken by the company, as well as its commercial products, that AgResearch can simply no longer afford to continue to view GIS as a project- or departmentally-based resource alone. An enterprise-wide view is required if AgResearch is to realise the potential GIS has to offer.

Such a view is by no means a new way of looking at GIS – many local government organisations and private companies are very familiar with enterprise-level GIS – but it is perhaps a novel view for a CRI to take; it is for AgResearch at least. But it is a view that fits in well with other IT initiatives occurring within the company – a linkage to the KAREN high speed network, partnership in the KiwImage whole of government imaging project, and the establishment of a 120 processor grid computing facility at Invermay.

An outline of how GIS is currently being used at AgResearch will be given, and some projects using it will be described. The bulk of the talk will cover how AgResearch is preparing itself to transition to enterprise-level GIS to support its research and science.