

TREE PLANTING PARTNERSHIP FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



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Open Country

TREE PLANTING

Q: Can I choose the trees?

A: Yes. It is important to plant the right native tree in the right place. You can choose species using recognised planting guides or advice from your nursery. Trees must have woody stems to capture and store carbon, which means flax and carex are not eligible under this programme. Some nurseries offer recommended “carbon mixes”. Larger canopy species such as rimu and matai generally need to establish beneath nurse trees and may not be suitable as initial plantings.

Q: What classifies as a tree? What can I plant?

A: Eligible trees must be NZ native species with woody stems that capture and store carbon. Examples include mānuka, kānuka and tōtara. Plants such as flax and carex are not eligible under this programme.

Q: Is there a minimum or maximum number of trees I need to plant?

A: There is no fixed minimum or maximum. Larger planting areas are encouraged where possible, as they make validation more efficient, but smaller plantings will also be considered when applications are assessed.

Q: Who owns the trees?

A: The farm owner owns the trees from the moment of purchase.

Q: What am I required to do to protect the trees?

A: All plantings are permanent and must be protected from stock (e.g., fenced). Trees must also be protected from pests and weeds, particularly while young, as weeds can smother new plantings and reduce survival.

Q: When should the trees be planted?

A: We recommend planting in autumn, once soil moisture has been restored after summer. This gives trees the longest possible period to establish roots before the next dry season, increasing survival rates.

Q: What happens if some of my trees die?

A: The programme requires a 95% survival rate. If survival drops below this level, replanting (to restore survival to 95%) is required at the farmer's cost, using the same species. This is why good-quality trees, appropriate species selection, early planting, and ongoing weed/pest control are important.

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NURSERIES AND PLANTING SERVICES

Q: Can I buy trees from any nursery?

A: Yes. You can purchase trees from any commercial nursery. We recommend sourcing good-quality trees to maximise survival. Some regional councils provide lists of suitable nurseries and planting guidance.

APPLICATION, AUDITING AND PAYMENT

Q: Do I need to apply before planting?

A: Yes. You must apply for and receive approval before planting begins. By applying, you agree to the programme Terms and Conditions. Plantings completed without prior approval may not be eligible for funding.

Q: What is involved in the auditing process?

A: Auditing includes a site visit by QCONZ or an authorised third party to visually verify that trees have been planted in accordance with the approved application. This may include checking species, planting locations, protection measures, and estimated survival, as well as taking photos for records.

Q: How often will my planting be audited?

A: Plantings are expected to be audited annually for the first three years following planting, when establishment risk is highest. After Year 3, audits are expected to move to a five-year cycle, out to a total of 20 years. At the end of Year 3, QCONZ will be asked to review findings and recommend whether annual audits should continue or whether a five-yearly cycle is appropriate.

Q: Who orders and pays for the trees?

A: You, the farmer, order and pay for the trees and planting services upfront. Once planting has been completed and verified, Open Country will reimburse 50% of eligible tree and planting costs, including some integrated maintenance services.

Q: When will I receive the 50% reimbursement?

A: Reimbursements are made once per year via your milk payment. To meet payment timelines, invoices must be submitted by the end of September. Verification must be completed before any payment is made.

Q: Are any maintenance costs included in the reimbursement (e.g., spraying or fencing)?

A: Some maintenance costs can be included where they form part of an integrated planting service (such as pre-spray, planting, and post-plant release spraying) provided by a nursery or contractor. Fencing costs are not included in this funding.

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CARBON AND CONTRACTUAL MATTERS

Q: Am I losing out by giving my carbon benefits to Nestlé?

A: By participating in this programme, farmers agree that the carbon benefits from the funded tree plantings (including any carbon credits that could otherwise be claimed under the New Zealand Emissions Trading Scheme) vest in Nestlé under the programme Terms and Conditions. This means farmers will not be able to register or claim ETS carbon credits for these plantings.

In return, farmers receive a significant upfront benefit through 50% funding of eligible tree and planting costs. In many cases, plantings will also be below the minimum area or configuration required to qualify for the ETS. Importantly, participation in this programme does not prevent farmers from using the carbon stored in these trees to offset obligations under any future New Zealand agricultural emissions pricing or levy system, should one be introduced.

Q: What happens if I leave Open Country?

A: If a farm stops supplying Open Country within five years of planting, the funded portion of the trees must be repaid. After five years, farms can exit the programme at no cost.

Q: How long does the programme run for?

A: Carbon sequestration from this project is expected to be counted for up to 20 years, reflecting the long-term nature of permanent native tree plantings.