

8/10/2021

Selwyn District Council
c/o Sam Bridgman-Smith
Lincoln, New Zealand

Dear Selwyn District Council

I write in regard to the proposed "Plan change 69 Selwyn District Council", which seeks to develop 2000 residential sites on what I understand to be high quality agricultural land.

Since around 2007 I have written several authoritative books on the history of soil erosion, the importance of fertile soil to sustaining human societies, and the potential for regenerative agriculture to maintain (and improve soil health).

In short, there is ample evidence to support the contention that societies that do not protect their agricultural soils do not last. This conclusion is not only relevant to ancient civilizations but is of concern today. The UN's 2015 report on the status of the world's soils reported that ongoing soil loss and degradation threatens to reduce global food production by a third over the coming century if continued at its current pace.¹ The ongoing loss of the world's best agricultural soils is a concern of global intergenerational importance.

New Zealand's Ministry for the Environment reports that only 15% of the country's land is "good for food production" and "the area of highly productive land that was unavailable for agriculture (because it had a house on it) increased by 54 percent from 2002 to 2019".²

The reclassification of rural (agricultural) lands to residential and industrial lands is a key driving force behind the loss of farmland around the world. As you consider this proposal that will add to the loss, I urge you to consider the long-term interests of future generations in maintaining our most valuable and least valued natural resource — healthy, fertile agricultural soils. Put simply, land with great agricultural soil is best used for agriculture.

Sincerely,



David R. Montgomery

Author of *Dirt: The Erosion of Civilizations* and *Growing a Revolution: Bringing Our Soil Back to Life*.

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¹ (FAO, *Status of the World's Soil Resources, Technical Summary*, Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils, UN Food and Agriculture Organization, Rome, (2015))

² (*Our Land 2021*, p.17, <https://environment.govt.nz/assets/Publications/our-land-2021.pdf>)