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# From poachers to gamekeepers: perceptions of farmers towards ecosystem services on arable farmland

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## Abstract

Management of ecosystem services (ES) is vital to maintain and improve the productivity of agricultural systems in order to meet the food demands of a growing human population. However, some land management practices can severely reduce the ecological and financial contribution of some of these services to agriculture, which in the longer term can offset the ability of farming to produce large amounts of food and fibre. Therefore, to improve the understanding and enhancement of these services, it is crucial to know the opinions of farmers who manage ES on their land. Being in close contact with the land provides them with an opportunity to understand its natural processes and functions as well as to act as its stewards. This paper describes ES associated with arable farming in Canterbury, New Zealand and analyses the results of a survey of farmers' perceptions of these services. There was no

difference between the measured perceptions of these services by organic and conventional farmers except in the case of biological control. However, organic farmers gave a higher score to 16 individual services compared with conventional farmers. Also, for organic farmers, the importance of some of these services increased significantly with the number of years the farmers had been operating under an organic regime.

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## Keywords

- arable farmland,
- ecosystem services,
- farmers' perceptions,
- New Zealand,
- organic farming

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