

NZARES 2020 Conference Summary

Due to the disruption of Covid-19, the New Zealand Agricultural and Resource Economics Society (NZARES) annual conference was held virtually over Zoom from Wednesday 26th to Friday 28th of August 2020. The online conference drew more interest than the committee anticipated, with close to 140 registrations. On the final day of the conference, three regional hubs were held to facilitate in-person interaction among small group of people while attending the online conference. The Ministry for Primary Industries sponsored the conference and the Agribusiness and Economic Research Unit at Lincoln University kindly offered to cover catering costs for the regional hub event held there.

A panel on the economic impacts of Covid-19 opened the conference which covered the impacts on New Zealand's primary sectors and supply chains during lockdown and a case study look at the impacts on Kaikoura as a tourism dominated area.

The conference held 5 contributed paper sessions over the three days, with close to 40 paper presentations from across New Zealand, Australia and other overseas countries. Cameron Birchall was awarded the NZARES First Time Presenter Award for his presentation on externalities, regulation and lobbying in a fishery. The Best Paper Award was awarded to Tarek Soliman for his paper on valuing the impact of soil erosion on productivity. Lydia Farrell also received the NZARES post-graduate award.

Ramilan Thiagarajah began his term as president of NZARES and Nazmun Ratna joined the committee as president-elect, with Meike Guenther also new to the committee this year.

The final day of the conference included a panel on water reform covering the Essential Freshwater Action for Healthy Waterways that was released by the Government early this year. Catherine Leining from the New Zealand Climate Change Commission provided her insight into New Zealand's transition to a low-emissions economy and the challenges ahead. Sarah Wheeler the president of the Australian branch (AARES) closed the conference with her talk on water markets in Australia covering stakeholder participation, benefits and market failures.

The online conference was well received with positive feedback from participants particularly on digital delivery and regional hubs. It has opened up the option to hold online conferences in future, particularly if disruptions from Covid-19 continue.