

Skills to help farmers comply with rules

Environmental reporting a job for rural startup

A three-hour commute, a new baby and spying a gap in the market convinced Emma Buchanan it was time to start her own business.

When Hawke's Bay Regional Council's Plan Change 6 was announced, requiring farms to produce nutrient management plans, the environmental resource management specialist decided there was good opportunity for her skills.

Plan Change 6 affects about 1000 farms in the Tukituki basin, including her family farm, and was designed to accompany the beleaguered Ruataniwha Dam.

Soter Rural Compliance works with those affected to produce farm environmental management plans (FEMPs).

"More and more is being asked of farmers," she said.

"For many, FEMPs are just another thing to add to the list. Soter steps in and takes care of the environmental reporting, giving farmers one less thing to worry about.

"I realise it might sound like an odd passion but I studied environmental and resource management at university, and saw the opportunity to help farmers and make use of this by launching my own business."

Her business is a success, helped by Business Mentors New Zealand volunteer Lisa Metcalfe thanks to the fully subsidised Rural Mentor programme, in conjunction with New Zealand Young Farmers and funded by DairyNZ and the Red Meat Profit Partnership.

"It proved invaluable. Having

someone to bounce ideas off and hold me accountable to my goals made such a difference.

"I created the business as a way of improving my work/life balance and do a job I love. Moving to the region made me reassess what was happening in my life and what was important. I was spending too much time commuting and not enough enjoying my young family."

National Rural Business Network co-ordinator Daile Jones said the organisation was looking for other farming-related startups to match with business mentors, so they could benefit from the free help and support.

Business Mentors New Zealand has helped more than 70,000

businesses over 25 years.

"Mentors are selected based on their experience in the sector so no matter your business, chances are Business Mentors New Zealand have someone who can provide the know-how necessary to take your business to the next level. Even successful businesses can benefit."

With new environmental rules soon to be rolled out across the country, Ms Buchanan is feeling positive about the future.

"Making a success of the business hasn't been easy, but it's been very rewarding. I'm now an approved provider for HBRC and thanks to the support I've received, I'm in a great position to grow."



TRANSITION: Emma Buchanan credits Business Mentors for helping make Soter Rural Compliance a success.