



Local Focus: Wairoa forestry scaring the hell out of this community

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It wasn't far from anyone's lips at the recent East Coast Farming Expo - big money being paid for farms, with Wairoa District getting more than its fair share of forestry because its land is suitable and at the right price.

The trend, from pasture to plantation, is accelerating thanks to trees being eligible for carbon credits.

The credits can be sold in advance for good money, offsetting pollution through the Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS).

Wairoa Mayor Craig Little said farming no longer outpaced forestry in Wairoa.

"Probably eight or nine years ago I thought we had got over this forestry speed hump and farmers were outbidding foresters," he said.

"The Billion Trees [programme] has come along but it's not the issue - it is these carbon credit farms that are going in.

"They are not going through the Billion Trees because you have to give some of your carbon away. So they are planting these forests, never to be harvested."

Forests planted without provisions for harvesting leaves land that may never be worth the effort of replanting or re-pasturing because of the cost of removing the low-value wood and loss of farming infrastructure.

Little said more than 7 per cent of Wairoa farmland has been sold into forestry over the past six months.

If much more goes the same way, he said, it would mean fewer jobs, fewer communities and fewer farmers spending their money in town.

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