



## Latin America

### Lifting our sights: encouraging cooperation in an age of reduced certainty

NZIER report to Latin America Centre of Asia-Pacific Excellence

January 2024





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## Key points

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### Understanding New Zealand's relationship with Latin America

The aim of this paper is to understand what it might take to move to a more consistent and durable connection with Latin American countries. The Centre of Asia-Pacific Excellence (The Latin American CAPE) has commissioned the research to:

- Document New Zealand-Latin America's various synergies in multilateral or regional forums and plurilateral initiatives and the values, visions, ideas and approaches that have produced their alliances.
- Discuss the benefits of these collaborations for governments, regional groupings, and people before looking at the potential for:
  - New collaborations on familiar and new issues that confront Asia Pacific communities.
  - Further leveraging the record of collaboration by New Zealand institutions when presenting themselves to potential partners and customers in Latin America.

We cannot pinpoint exactly what those successful connections will be, but we can set out what has been successful and the characteristics necessary to maximise chances of success.

New Zealand is interested in developing durable Latin American connections since it drives further innovation and increases in wellbeing. To connect more successfully requires framing the engagement with Latin American collaborators through the broader lens of shared interest.

### Shifting the dial on Latin American engagement will take political commitment, resources and innovation

New Zealand has a long, though relatively shallow, history with Latin America stretching over a century. With few exceptions, linkages between New Zealand and Latin America have been focused on spasmodic and finite coalitions; we are interested in something more sustained and strategic, capable of shifting the dial.

This is more likely to be achieved if New Zealand:

- Develop a more formalised approach to Latin America with institutional support. How this is done requires more thinking and political engagement.
- Engage in new thinking around how we attract the interest of Latin American countries.

Trade policy has led the way, with the Cairns Group on agriculture playing a prominent role in the 1980s and 1990s and, more recently, with agreements such as DEPA (The Digital Economy Partnership Agreement) and CPTPP (The Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans Pacific Partnership). The latter is of major strategic significance. The agreement contains three Latin American countries (Mexico, Peru and Chile), with other Latin American countries (Costa Rica, Ecuador and Uruguay) seeking to join. The Global Alliance on Agricultural Greenhouse Gases, formalised in 2010, was equally an early model of climate change cooperation with Latin American economies.

## Creating a gentle wind of innovation to diversify our connections and add resilience

The case for enhancing our linkages with Latin America involves the same diversification logic underpinning the successful efforts made by “NZ Inc” to build our links with Asia over the last four or five decades. The objective is to maximise our chances of improving our relationships across a range of activities to provide alternative destinations for New Zealand ideas and trade and add resilience to our economic and social connections.

The Centres of Asia Pacific Excellence (CAPEs) have started in this area, working as connectors, facilitators and thought leaders, bringing expertise in the region's languages, cultures, politics and economics to this challenge. The Latin American CAPE has been instrumental in building awareness of the opportunities in Latin America.

Building capacity and capability, widening our worldview, and being more consistently open to Latin America will assist in improving resilience. But building resilience into any system, from the electricity grid to our external networks, is not costless. We recognise this would require extra resources and a broader NZ Inc. approach (central and local government, universities, not-for-profits, iwi and other parties).

## Further understanding of Latin American stakeholders is critical

What is clear from our previous successful engagements with Latin America is that we are more likely to succeed if the ‘NZ offering’ is folded into a broader objective of more relevance to Latin American countries than simply pursuing an enhanced bilateral relationship with New Zealand. An enhanced bilateral relationship with New Zealand might appeal to their foreign ministries but would excite little interest among other Latin American stakeholders.

Those broader objectives or agendas can be functional and practical, e.g. lifting the game on Antarctica. Some Latin American countries and New Zealand are keenly interested in Antarctic matters (science, climate change, fisheries, etc.). Enhancing those linkages can assist in increasing awareness and forging relationships and could offer a way to broaden the relationship. This is already happening successfully and is a model for other agendas where common interests are identifiable (particularly in the trade policy area).

Such a ‘Latin American’ strategy is not competing with or delinked from our success in developing linkages into Asia over recent decades. Our successes in Asia are of interest to them. Chile’s decision to join what New Zealand and Singapore had started (and which ultimately became CPTPP) had virtually nothing to do with a wish to promote a stronger bilateral relationship with New Zealand; it had everything to do with piggybacking on our Asia-Pacific-focused trade strategy.

It may be worth thinking through clear points of strategic convergence in Latin America’s relationships with China and New Zealand. Given the sharp deterioration in United States/China relations since 2015, we believe this is worth careful reflection. As we seek to navigate politically through this fundamental shift in global politics, having some like-minded and nimble Latin American partners trying to do the same thing may be helpful.



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# 1 New Zealand and Latin America

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## 1.1 We need to trade ideas, not just products, with the world

This paper explores the recent history of collaboration between selected Latin American countries and New Zealand to highlight how we might leverage a range of deeper connections that maximise the chances of fuelling further diplomatic, business, cultural, and social connections.

Latin America is important because it adds further strings to New Zealand's resilience and diversification bow. While we are 'traders with the world', we want to ensure that the resources expended in the rest of the world are consistent with what we do in Latin America.

Maintaining the ability to be traders with the world requires a certain fixed cost. That cost may have increased given the amount of nationalistic fervour that we are now experiencing in our international connections. Extracting full value out of those connections requires institutional support on an ongoing basis.

The objectives/values that New Zealand shares with Latin America and pursues on strategic foreign policy issues include:

- Our respect for democratic values.
- The importance of human rights.
- A free, open and inclusive trading system.
- Support for planetary issues (disarmament, climate change, etc.).
- Other specific issues that support and reinforce international rules.

It also must be noted that for countries to work together requires a meeting of minds. To achieve an objective requires a certain amount of ideological agreement. These commonalities bind the participants and create trust and a degree of togetherness.

## 1.2 Why should we cooperate with Latin America, and why should we do more?

New Zealand is a trader with the world. Our biggest trading entity, Fonterra, trades with 140 countries. It is therefore important to ensure that our institutions and trade and foreign policy actions reflect this fact to maximise chances of better connecting with selected parts of the world. With this alignment, our trade and foreign policy approach can maximise its effectiveness and efficiency.

We are mindful that the trade and foreign policy signals have been blurred, and the policy environment has changed abruptly. Further connections with any part of the world require New Zealand to reflect this approach. Further, three issues are important:

- The world has become a less benign place. New Zealand's trade and foreign policy face stiff headwinds, particularly around multilateral action of any type.

- Resilience has a price. Despite the rhetoric around resilience, a critical issue is that resilience can equal redundancy.
- Opportunism. Trade and foreign policy are about grasping the opportunities in the shifting sands of international relations/agreements. Locking in sound and durable policies and watching the benefits flow is a critical part of the 'game'; e.g. nobody wants to scrap the Closer Economic Relations agreement with Australia despite strong opposition when it was signed.

What this means is that to have the same effectiveness in our trade and foreign policy endeavours will require a reorganisation of our resources to meet the challenges that we face. This does mean looking to leverage our position – on any particular issue – with a coalition of the willing.

It should also be stressed that operating and cooperating in effective and efficient ways New Zealand can create a gentle wind of innovation that benefits all participants. The more activity that is generated, the more likely we can maximise the chances of further activity. Like-mindedness is a good starting point for this process.

Developing connections is only part of the objective. We also have the aim of lowering the transaction costs and barriers to the connection so more connections can potentially pay off.

Latin America is one area in the world where partners in the coalition of the willing can be found – and also where issues that New Zealand has a strong interest in are likely to surface, whether on trade (the Pacific Alliance) or social/political issues (disarmament, Antarctica, Blue Pacific, etc.)

For this reason, having an increased focus on Latin America is worth the political, institutional and economic effort.

### 1.3 Latin America – missed opportunities?

In 1900/1920, New Zealand, Australia, Argentina and Uruguay had among the world's highest gross domestic product. If they were not in the top 5, they were undoubtedly in the top 10.

All these countries had modern institutions inherited from colonisation. These advantages included insurance, finance, shipping infrastructure and other attributes of advanced and sophisticated economies a century ago.

To illustrate the point, there used to be a phrase in French in the 1920s '*être riche comme un Argentin*' (to be as rich as an Argentinian). Wealthy Argentinians would arrive in France for the spring season and stay in the five-star hotels of Paris, Nice and Marseilles. That expression would be incomprehensible to young French people today.

For a set of reasons well beyond the scope of this paper, that early lead was squandered by our Latin American colleagues of the era, while Australia and New Zealand (more so) slipped only slightly off the pace in the relative wealth stakes.

It is harsh to state it, but the political and economic progress of the Latin American region has been erratic. However, there are two important exceptions to this. The first is long-standing: the absence of war among them (the odd border clash and the Falkland/Malvinas war aside) for almost 100 years. Latin America's wars are civil wars.





The second and more recent exception is the significant movement towards democracy buttressed, at least in some Latin American countries, by significant progress on human rights when measured against certain Latin American countries' shocking human rights records in the 1960s and 1970s. There is nothing inappropriate in stating this deeply regrettable historical truth – we have heard it many times from Latin American friends.

There are exceptions to the democratisation trend and any number of reasons why many of their democracies do not quite match undergraduate political theory on desirable procedure. But to deny the importance of the military returning to their barracks and clear evidence in many countries of political change through the ballot box would be to deny a large and positive reality about Latin America today.

Obviously, this is important – mostly for the people of the region. But in the context of this report, this welcome progress has cleared away what would have been a major obstacle for any concerted attempt by New Zealand (and Australia) to deepen linkages with Latin American countries beyond maintaining formal diplomatic relations and minimal representation in some Latin American states.

With respect to Latin America, we are going to have to deal either with individual countries or, in some cases, sub-regional groupings of Latin American states. The phrase 'Latin America' is about a shared geography and history.<sup>1</sup> The region is not even close to an economically or politically integrated reality in the way that the very diverse 27 European States are integrated into the European Union, let alone the 51 states of the United States.

Collectively, they share a certain remoteness (and not just in the geographic sense) from the rest of the world – something they have in common with New Zealand - '*the veritable last tram stop on the planet*'. In a recent analysis, the former president of Chile, Ricardo Lagos, is quoted as saying, '*...in this world of four – China, Russia, the United States and the European Union – we don't exist*' (Lagos 2023).

President Lagos's statement is a deliberate exaggeration to make a larger point. China, for example, has been making concerted efforts of late to deepen its linkages with Latin America. But it is important for us to understand this sense that our Latin American colleagues may have of being 'overlooked' despite their huge population and a collective GDP of around US\$5 trillion.

Paradoxically, this provides a platform for New Zealand to operate in the region since it implies a need for Latin American countries to deepen their ties with the rest of the world. To use one simple example to demonstrate the point: it could be instructive to have a 'deep dive' joint study involving scholars and officials from New Zealand and one or two Latin American countries examining our relationship with China and strategies moving forward.

Latin America has several regional institutions of varying effectiveness. The Union of South American Nations is one, but it is an institution that only a few New Zealand experts on Latin America would have heard of. The broader OAS, or Organisation of American States, is far better known and includes the United States among its 35 Member States. But in reality, the Latin American region has fractured into competing sub-regional groupings. The two that New Zealand has made a conscious effort to develop ties with are Mercosur and, more recently, the Pacific Alliance.

<sup>1</sup> Latin America is a collective term for countries in the Americas region that speak languages derived from Latin (Jimenez 2024).

Established in 1991, Mercosur's full members are Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay. Associate members include Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru and Suriname. Established in 2011, the Pacific Alliance includes Mexico, Colombia, Peru and Chile.

Each is the creature of its time. MERCOSUR is a customs union reflecting mid-20th-century thinking. The Pacific Alliance is much closer to our (and Australia's) strategic thinking today. This is our natural partner. The Key Government made significant efforts from 2010 onwards to develop this relationship, and that effort should be continued.

#### **1.4 What we intend to do**

Our attention in this paper is to:

- Document briefly and selectively the history of New Zealand-Latin American cooperative associations.
- Discuss the benefits of those cooperative associations.
- Understand the common threads of those cooperative associations.
- Illustrate the necessary pre-conditions for further durable engagement, given past engagements.

The aim is to look forward without regret and show one way of moving the dial on New Zealand's current relationship with Latin American nations. This is despite being in the midst of a protectionist and nationalistic boom.



## 2 Growing up is hard to do

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Developing an understanding of how we might deepen the opportunities for further linkages between Latin America and New Zealand requires an understanding of:

- Where are we today?
- Where have we come from?
- What does it tell us?
- What broad approaches should follow over the next decade or two?

This is the framework for our analysis (see Figure 2).

One point needs to be made first and foremost. As mentioned, Latin America is not a homogeneous grouping. The issues the people face, and their interests may or may not coincide, and they may not have common views on regional or global issues.

What adds to the heterogeneity of Latin American nations is that they have significant ethnic and indigenous diversity and changing demographics due to people movement throughout Latin America, both legal and illegal, as well as international migration.

Adding to this is a complex set of regional relationships at play, including those between nations that share a border and regional states within larger countries like Brazil.

For a small player like New Zealand, this heterogeneity needs to be understood when we attempt to connect with one or more Latin American countries. Building coalitions of like-minded players can take time and understanding – it does not fit into an election cycle. It also requires building the capability to understand these intricacies since it is part and parcel of developing coalitions of the willing.

### 2.1 What do we mean by like-mindedness?

The word like-mindedness is often thrown around in diplomatic circles and means different things to different people. There are papers on like-mindedness (Frosby 2023; Douglas, DeMarco, and Muriuki 2022). We will use the working definition '*people that we can work with*'.

Possibly, it does not fulfil or describe all the attributes of like-mindedness, but it does suggest that the values of the countries coming together are aligned. Typically, like-minded countries – the coalition of the willing – want the system to work by aspiring to goals that may or may not be out of reach but are seen as being the right thing to do.

Independence also goes hand in hand with New Zealand's approach to like-mindedness. Independence allows New Zealand and its partners to address the elephant in the negotiating room in each specific case. Given the complexity and heterogeneity described above, New Zealand and its partners (such as but not exclusively Mexico, Chile and Peru) can address issues more directly, that is, in a way that other nations may not be able to do for domestic political reasons. What is the problem, we can ask, and how should we address the issues as they are presented? This allows us to 'fly kites' and develop innovative solutions. This assists in framing and shaping up issues.

Being useful to the process enables New Zealand to influence the life cycle of a negotiating process. This includes building coalitions and managing the situations between and around the negotiations. In this way, consensus can be made to address the issues at hand.

## 2.2 We started the process of connecting with the world in the early 1970s

The conventional – and we believe correct – starting point for strategic analyses of this type is the United Kingdom’s entry into the European Economic Community (the EEC and now the European Union) in the early 1970s.

The governments of the early to mid-1970s brought new ideas about New Zealand’s position in the world. Connections were established with Asia (following Kissinger’s (1971) pathbreaking trip to Beijing), and we reached out to Latin America (opened embassies in Chile (1972), Peru (1973) and Mexico (1983)).

Britain’s accession to the EEC was more than an economic earthquake. It was also a deep cultural shock that forced us to confront what was then a set of contemporary realities and adjust attitudes and policy settings on a wide variety of fronts.

We will touch briefly first on the cultural dimensions and then focus much more deeply on the trade and economic ones. They can be analysed separately, but finally, they are linked: if the generally prevailing cultural view of New Zealanders, especially our elites, business leaders and thought leaders, had remained lodged in an outmoded view of contemporary realities, it is doubtful the material economic benefits of a greater engagement with non-traditional partners in Asia would have been realised.

In 1939, our Prime Minister famously said, *“where Britain goes, we go”* (Savage 1939).

Thirty years later, not much had changed. The Secretary of Foreign Affairs of that era (Frank Corner) used to say habitually in the early 1970s, *“we still think we are an offshore island somewhere in the English channel”*.

Until the late 1960s, middle-class Pākehā New Zealanders would refer to Britain as ‘home’. No male or female newscaster would be employed unless they spoke with an authentic (or excellent imitation of) an ‘Oxbridge’ accent.

Asia was generally conceived of as some vast, amorphous single entity – a source of threat, not opportunity. While some early ‘baby steps’ were being taken in integrating Māori perspectives into national life beyond the accepted (and successful) fields of our military and our principal sporting codes, that agenda was still ahead of us.

To recall, this is not to denigrate the hugely positive contribution British (and European) culture has made to shaping who we are today. Our democracy, most widely used language, institutions and developed country status over more than a century are inescapable testimony to that positive legacy.

That legacy will also underwrite any successful future of New Zealand as we adjust to contemporary realities. For this analysis, we are simply recording the obvious: we, or at least most of us, did not think globally until we were forced to. We were quite comfortable as that offshore island of Britain, culturally and economically.





## 2.3 We were more dependent on Britain than we are now on China

The economic implications of the British belatedly stepping across ‘La Manche’ (as the French call the ‘English’ channel) to join the customs union of the then EEC were potentially catastrophic for New Zealand (see Table 1).

The origins of the phrase ‘export or die’ are contested; the economic realities underlying it are incontestable. The vast empirical literature (e.g. Ksaksoson 2007; Cameron, Proudman, and Redding 2005; and Syverson 2011) on this illustrates in case after case the close linkages between trade and productivity growth (the real determinant long term of any country’s standard of living). That relationship is acutely important for small economies.

In 1950, about 90% of New Zealand’s exports went to the United Kingdom. In the early 1970s, that figure was a little under 45%. Those concerned about New Zealand’s dependence on the China market (see the following table) might reflect on this. However, that single comparative statistic does not begin to describe the challenge New Zealand's governments of that era faced compared with today's.

**Table 1 The current angst on China was nothing like our dependency on Britain**

Sector	United Kingdom trade: Ottawa preference (1932)	United Kingdom trade when Britain joined the EEC	Pre-COVID Chinese trade (2019)
Dairy products	98% <sup>1</sup>	85% <sup>3</sup>	33%
Meat products	99% <sup>2</sup>	80% <sup>4</sup>	40%
Forestry	-	-	60%
Tourism	-	-	19%

Notes (1) An average of butter (97%) and cheese (99%). (2) Sheep meat only. (3) An average of butter (90%) and cheese (80%). (4) Lamb only.

Source: Trafford (2021)

Today, we indeed have a large ‘dependence’ on China – but this is because China outbids other markets open to us. If, for whatever reason, the Chinese radically reduced their imports of, say, New Zealand sheep meat, our economy would certainly ‘take a hit’. But we could divert our sheep meat exports to, say, the European Union and receive lower returns. That would be unfortunate but hardly life-threatening for our trading economy and, thus, our standard of living.

That is an option today because of the considerable success in our trade policy over the last four decades: we have legally guaranteed access to the European Union market for our sheep meat exports that is underwritten by both the WTO Uruguay Round bindings of 1994 and augmented by the FTA with the European Union (when it is ratified and enters into force).

In the mid-1970s, it is only a small exaggeration to say that in terms of our core export strengths of meat and dairy (wool was better placed), we had no markets other than the United Kingdom. Even Australia was effectively ‘closed’ to such exports.

## 2.4 First steps: CER – then Asia

The negotiation of CER, initiated by the Australian and New Zealand Prime Ministers in March 1979, was the first concerted attempt to adjust the New Zealand economy to the new realities. The history of CER is well-trodden ground,<sup>2</sup> and we will not repeat it here beyond making a few fundamental points.

Second, the long and difficult CER negotiations were far more than a ‘foreign policy’ exercise – they required New Zealand to change its trade policy settings completely. The developed world’s last remaining comprehensive import licensing system, a system of performance-based export subsidies (almost certainly illegal in terms of our then GATT commitments, had any Government bothered to challenge them) all had to go in the long term.

New Zealand’s current ‘free trade’ position – today largely accepted across the political spectrum – is almost the opposite of pre-CER policy settings. This does, of course, facilitate a deepening of linkages with Latin America today, since if CER has worked for New Zealand, why not other trade agreements of a similar quality?

The second step after CER – a determined focus on Asia – flowed from that deliberate ‘reframing’ of our country’s linkages away from an almost sole focus on the UK/Europe. Japan, the largest economy in Asia throughout the 20th century, was our initial main ‘target’ for obvious trade and economic reasons. As the economic development process spread to the ‘Four Tigers’ (Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea and Singapore), our efforts to build economic links in Asia also broadened. China emerged as a serious economic partner only in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

## 2.5 Do similar values play a part in collaboration?

The above analysis implies that the primary driver to our diversification was and remains trade/economic. That, we believe, is correct. However, closer links with any country or region do raise issues about cultural and value systems and associated behaviours in formal and informal contexts.

Seemingly shared values mean we can start on the same page. In people-to-people connections, right through to diplomatic connections, the idea that we can deliver effective cooperation rests on such shared values.

Acknowledging the role of ‘shared values’ should not obscure a realpolitik focus on ‘interests’. Interests will generally trump values in the world of foreign policy. We have many shared values with the United States, for example. The reason why we do not have an FTA with the United States, despite numerous attempts to put an FTA in place, is no longer explained by our rupture in the mid-1980s over nuclear issues but because the United States has strong domestic opposition to an FTA with New Zealand (largely around dairy policies) and insufficient interest in the small New Zealand market to offset that domestic political interest.

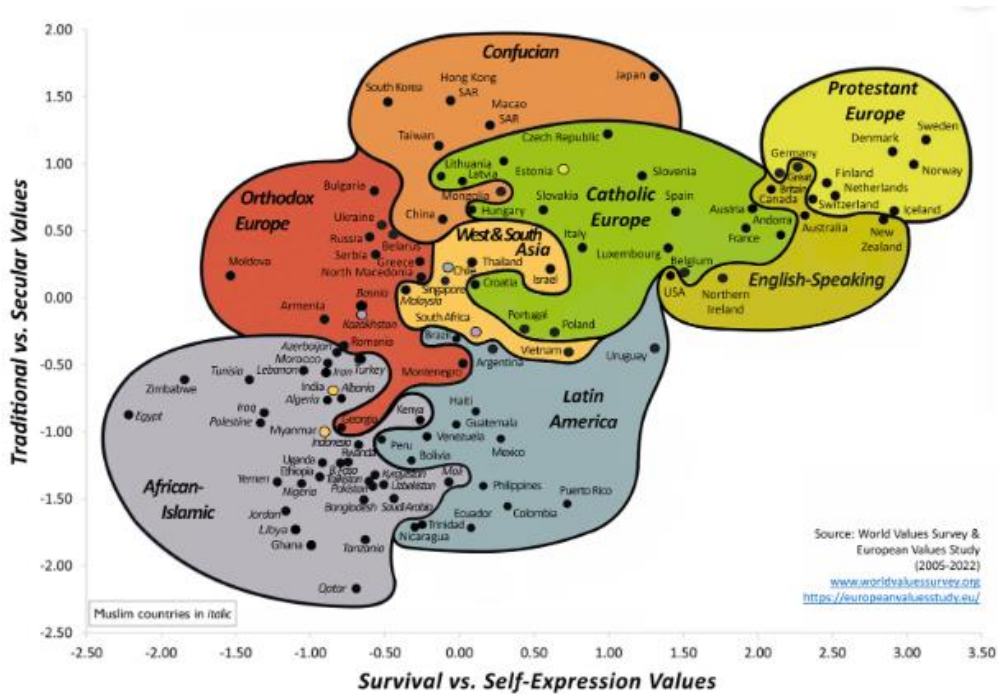
There was once a pathway to an FTA with the United States, but it will no longer be via a standard bilateral FTA. That was why the TPP agreement, signed by the then United States Trade Representative (USTR) in Auckland in December 2015, offered such promise until the

<sup>2</sup> See, for example Nixon and Yeabsley 2002.

United States formally withdrew in 2017 – it was an indirect FTA with the world’s largest economy until it wasn’t.

With respect to Latin America, it is worth reflecting on a well-established mapping of values, the Inglehart-Welzel world cultural map. Sharing the same values may only be part of the picture for successful collaborations to flourish (see Figure 1). The 2023 map below illustrates that values from English-speaking regions are different from West and South Asia and Latin American regions. Values may help us establish relationships and can be very useful in some types of collaborations. However, the overriding need for durable and one-off collaborations is to deliver benefits to participating parties.

**Figure 1 The Inglehart-Welzel World Cultural Map 2023**



Source: World Values Survey (2023)

### 3 Framework

Developing and enabling connections with other parts of the world is one way of achieving a country's objectives/goals effectively and efficiently, whether social, economic, cultural or environmental. For medium and small-sized countries, this is important and has become more pressing and urgent given the following:

- To ensure a durable and quicker recovery after the pandemic.
- To improve the appetite for further cultural, social, trade and political contact in a time of greater uncertainty.

How we approach our connections is described in the diagram below (see Figure 2). By applying this approach, we hope to set out logically:

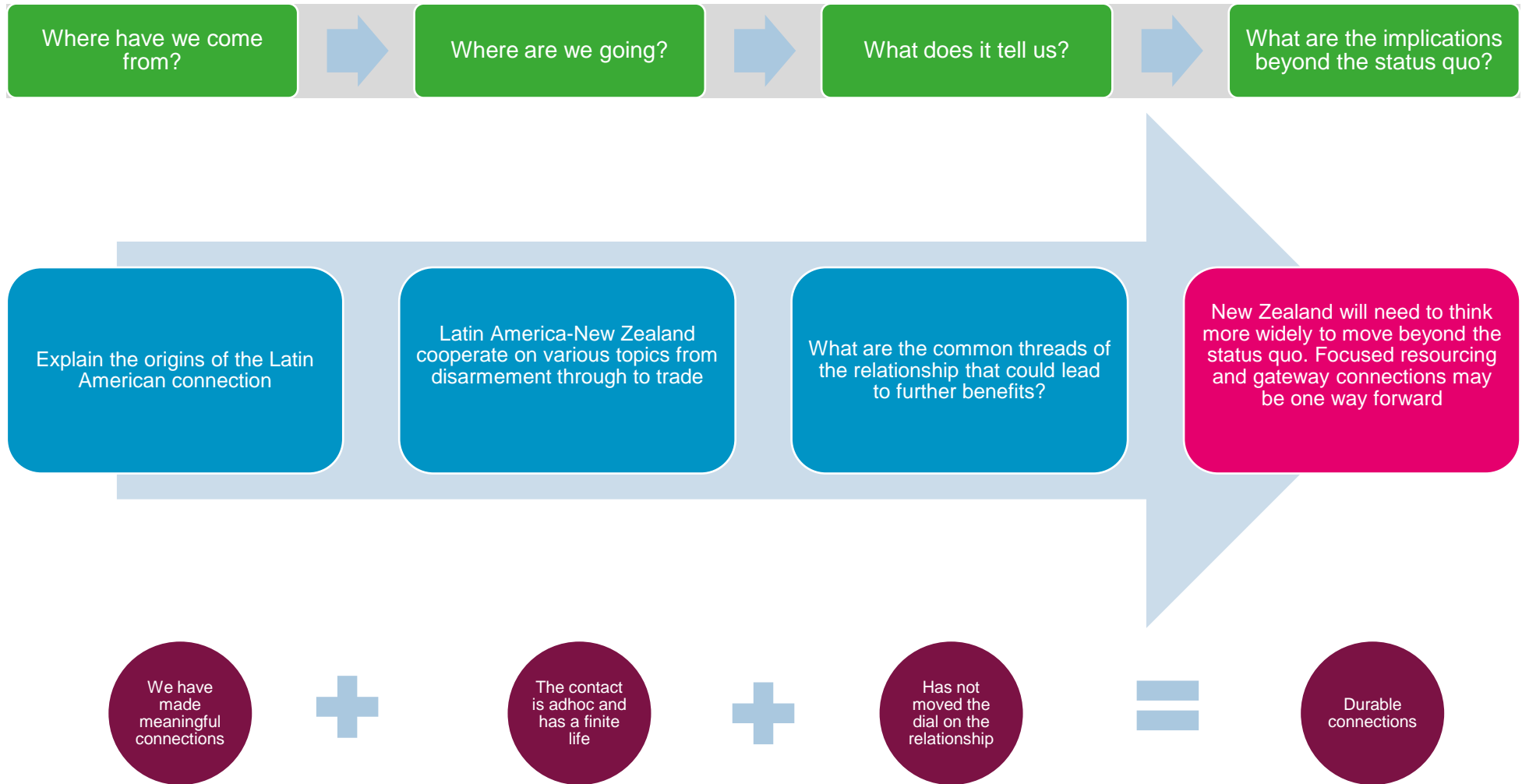
- How we have connected to date with Latin America (relative to the rest of the world).
- What those connections look like (could be any collaboration and how they connect to the concept of like-mindedness).
- The implications of the status quo (what might motivate us to change things).
- What may be required to kick start and grow those connections (the resources, the degree of organisation, how big the collaboration is, its importance, etc.)?

The approach described has been deliberately kept simple. To do this, we have abstracted from the full details of the actions required. That is, the analysis contains sufficient detail with enough complexity and reality to capture and illustrate the important issues.





Figure 2 Framework for engagement



Source: NZIER



## 4 Identifying the areas of cooperation

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Whether for individuals, groups or countries, the key motive for cooperation is the belief that working together is more effective than working individually. Therefore, partnerships should be formed, bringing together different actors in collaborative actions and efforts to effect change. Cooperation responds to the general idea of societal progress, where – in this case, countries – can work together towards a common goal.

Practically, it also increases economies of scale. More resources can be focused on the collaboration relative to one country doing things on its own. On a broader scale, cooperation can be a powerful tool to improve the quality of life for the societies involved in the collaboration.

Below, we look at clusters of different efforts where New Zealand has connected with Latin American countries to illustrate the potential wins that can be achieved.

### 4.1 Trade and economic integration

#### 4.1.1 The World Trade Organization is still the main game

New Zealand has a strong interest in the World Trade Organization (WTO). Our Latin American partners in the Pacific Alliance and most in the MERCOSUR agreement broadly share those interests. There are outliers still wedded to high protective barriers and deep suspicion of international trade commitments, but they have lost ground steadily over the past 40 years as the evidence of the benefits of freer trade has become more and more obvious.

The stakes are enormous. There is no FTA between the European Union and the United States or between Japan and the United States, let alone between the United States and New Zealand.

The trillions of dollars invested in those trading relationships are based on the commitments negotiated over half a century of eight successful ‘rounds’ of multilateral negotiations. It is essential for all our interests to work together to uphold past achievements, even if it appears highly unlikely, we can move forward in the WTO on a faster and more comprehensive basis in the foreseeable future. That vision should never be abandoned, but we are focusing on New Zealand's medium-term agenda here.

The multilateral process has been one of small to medium-sized nations' most effective lobby successes. In Box 1 below, we look at the impact of the Cairns Group of nations to which New Zealand and several Latin American countries belong.



### **BOX 1 Cooperation between agricultural exporters in the GATT Uruguay Round multilateral process**

In 1986, the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade was launched in Montevideo, the capital city of Uruguay. New Zealand hoped the failures of previous GATT rounds to put agriculture into the Agreement would be avoided.

New Zealand realised that something needed to be done to pressure the European Union and the United States into an agreement that included New Zealand's main interest: agriculture. Crucially, New Zealand and other non-subsidised agricultural traders decided they needed to develop a lobbying effort to have an impact on the negotiations. Under these conditions, the Cairns Group was formed.

The aims of the Cairns Group were clear. In the first instance, the Group sought to get agriculture included in GATT provisions and, secondly, reduce European Union agricultural subsidies. For New Zealand, getting its 'temporary' quota allocations enshrined in the GATT agreement would be a large benefit.

Fortunately, the intellectual groundwork had already been completed at the OECD. There was now little argument that subsidised agricultural production destabilised world markets and significantly hurt non-subsidised agricultural producers. This was a big deal, and there was a lot at stake.

Meeting in the northern Queensland city of Cairns, 13 countries formed a coalition around a single issue. The countries were Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Fiji, Hungary, Indonesia, New Zealand, Philippines, Thailand and Uruguay. This amounted to a strong contingent from Latin America and the Pacific Rim. Having a diverse group of countries was an advantage since they could play different roles in different fora.

The range of countries involved was a major trump card. It meant:

- The amount of intelligence from the United States and European Union that members received had improved. This helped with tactics.
- Common interest was high. While these nations competed against each other, the focus was on liberalising markets along most favoured nation lines. This simple approach strengthened the resolve of Cairns Group members and thwarted efforts to pick off various countries with side deals.

Importantly, it was also understood that Australia had the resources to coordinate the Group. Coordination came at some cost, and Australia had the capabilities (mainly in terms of human resources) to cover those costs in a way that other players did not.

The Uruguay Round lasted nine years. The Round went through periods of highs and lows as the 'sands shifted' in the negotiating process. At times, the major parties would not talk to each other, and it was a struggle to keep the Round afloat. What made the Cairns Group effective was the experience that New Zealand and Australia had in putting together a well-structured agreement (world's best practice in CER) and Latin American understanding of what was needed to succeed. While New Zealand and Australia had the technical understanding, they lacked the ruthlessness necessary to ensure that the United States and the European Union delivered on their promises. This turned out to be an effective combination of Latin American brinkmanship and Australasian know-how, with others usefully chipping away around this strategy.

While the United States made bold statements on the reform of agriculture at the beginning of the Round, resolve waned in the face of Congressional opposition and opposition from lobby groups.

The success of the Uruguay Round was by no means clear. Many things contributed to the outcomes that were finally agreed upon. The existence of the Cairns Group, however, meant that the major powers could not slip away from promises made earlier in the Round since there were credible threats of a substantial withdrawal. There would be no deal without agriculture, and the Cairns Group stood behind this objective.

The Uruguay Round negotiations represented the high water mark of the political influence of the Cairns Group in multilateral trade negotiations. It still exists today – indeed new members have joined since the end of the Uruguay Round negotiations. However, without an active negotiation taking place, the profile of the Cairns Group is much less influential in global trade politics. This of course is related to far deeper problems facing the WTO which for reasons beyond the scope of this paper is able to advance only with baby steps taken at a glacial pace.

**Table 2 Roles played by Cairns Group participants**

	Role	Strengths	Links
Argentina	Strong supporter	Played a vital brinkmanship role. Kept agriculture on the agenda.	Had roles in G77, UNCTAD, and other fora
Australia	Leadership and coordination	Provided the resources and capabilities	Good relations with the US and other ag. exporters
Brazil	Leadership role in the developing world	Played a vital brinkmanship role. Kept agriculture on the agenda	Had leading roles in G77 and UNCTAD
Canada	Had a moderating influence	Played a leadership role on selected issues. Access to the US	Access to the G7 and Quad and the US.
Chile	Strong supporter of the Cairns Group	Had a strong relationship that bridged Latin America and Asia Pacific	Links to the United States and other agricultural exporters
Colombia	Strong supporter of the Cairns Group activities	Added weight to developing country interests	Strong relationships with other Latin American producers
Fiji	Supporter	Added diversity	Linkages to Pacific Islands
Hungary	Large agricultural player	Only European member of the Group	Broaden the range of views within the Group
Indonesia	Represented developing country interests	Provided an Asian view	Linked to ASEAN and APEC
Malaysia	Represented developing country interests	Provided an Asian view	Part of ASEAN and APEC
New Zealand	Founding member	Useful to the process of negotiations	Good links with all the major players
Philippines	Represented developing country interests	Provided an Asian view	Part of ASEAN and APEC
Thailand	Represented developing country interests	Provided an Asian view	Part of ASEAN and APEC
Uruguay	Key member and host of the Uruguay Round	Good access to all the major players. Walked out of the mid-term Ministerial	Round host

Source: NZIER Adapted from Nixon and Yeabsley (2002)





#### 4.1.2 FTAs are connected at the hip with a multilateral system

To reinforce the point, it is an illusion to see ‘FTAs’ (and their more modern ‘economic partnerships’) as divorced from those past GATT/WTO achievements. When, for example, the European Union concluded its recent FTA with New Zealand, it had provisions dealing with, amongst other matters, anti-dumping. However, the European Union did not create a new anti-dumping system (or other instruments of contingency protection) for the remote possibility of using them with respect to imports from New Zealand under the FTA. In most cases, the FTA provisions dealing with trade rules are a modest extrapolation of the relevant WTO agreements.

There is a strong tradition of cooperation between Latin American countries and New Zealand based on shared trade interests. This continues in the WTO today, with its customary focus on our shared agricultural-exporting interests.

#### 4.1.3 APEC has facilitated deeper integration

Under successive governments, New Zealand has always been willing to explore bilateral and plurilateral routes to closer economic cooperation. In the late 1980s, the establishment of APEC (Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation) allowed New Zealand and other like-minded countries to move the reform agenda forward. It eventually expanded to include a number of Latin American economies – Mexico, Peru and Chile.<sup>3</sup> This again illustrates a central theme of our report: our ‘Asian strategy’ is not divorced from our ‘Latin’ strategy of building new opportunities.

APEC is ostensibly an ‘economic cooperation’ agreement and has successfully encouraged practical economic cooperation among its members. But its efforts to promote trade liberalisation have succeeded indirectly.

Its focus on trade liberalisation from the mid-1990s was the Bogor goals – a commitment to full trade liberalisation for developed economy members by 2010 and 2020 for developing economies. But without any framework for achieving this goal – other than an exhortation – this was always likely to fall way short of the mark. Given the political realities in, say, agriculture, there was never any realistic possibility of, for example, Canada unilaterally removing its highly restrictive policies on dairy or of the United States unilaterally removing high levels of protection on sugar, cotton or certain dairy products or Japan and Korea liberalising their regime on rice.

This reality led New Zealand to design the foundation stone of a reciprocity-based, formal negotiating set of modalities that evolved from the New Zealand/Singapore FTA into CPTPP, described elsewhere in this report. In that sense, APEC contributed indirectly to freer trade amongst the economies concerned.

APEC was deliberately conceived as an ‘economic cooperation’ agreement precisely to shield its members from any overt claim that it was a ‘political’ organisation. At the time, this was particularly sensitive within the ASEAN country grouping. The reality, of course, is completely different: Some of the most valuable contributions of APEC have been overtly political. For example, providing a framework for bringing China and Chinese Taipei into the APEC fold and providing a framework for a peaceful solution for East Timor.

<sup>3</sup> For Chilean motivations to join the P4 and CPTPP see (Salazar 2005). Chilean objectives are very much aligned with New Zealand’s objectives.



Given the Latin American presence in APEC, this forum continues to be a useful tool in our 'Latin American toolbox', and that is more likely to be in the context of reinforcing personal networks between Latin American and New Zealand leaders and shared political perspectives than in promoting trade.

#### **4.1.4 The CPTPP is the hook to pursue deeper integration**

Our focus on trade liberalisation has thus shifted away from the APEC framework to CPTPP while acknowledging the indirect linkage to APEC's original objectives. Moreover, with the United Kingdom coming into CPTPP (and the intriguing application of Ukraine to join), CPTPP is beginning to evolve beyond its 'Asian Pacific' roots. With more Latin American economies wanting to join CPTPP, this agreement is, at least for the present, the central forum for enhancing trade integration with Latin America.

The Pacific Alliance (Mexico, Chile, Peru and Colombia) should also continue to be a focus of our outreach to Latin America. The outward-looking nature of this sub-regional grouping is a more natural 'fit' for New Zealand than MERCOSUR. There is a high degree of overlap here with CPTPP regarding membership. We should continue to seek associate membership. By engaging with like-minded Latin American nations and developing common trade disciplines/rules, we can improve our social and trade connections further.

#### **4.1.5 The DEPA will draw in more members**

DEPA (Digital Economy Partnership Agreement) is an excellent extension of our engagement strategy. It is based on the same concept as P4,<sup>4</sup> launched as it was by New Zealand, Singapore and Chile. The playbook for DEPA is the same as the P4. You bring together a coalition of the willing, structure a high-quality agreement, and work out a strategy for going forward, including how you bring along other nations.

It aims to fill a large and growing vacuum created by the relative inability of the WTO to move far and fast enough on 'new' issues like digital trade. It must be emphasised that all three countries are not doing this outside of the WTO because that is our preference – exactly the opposite is closer to the reality. This agreement has real potential to attract larger players into it.

### **4.2 United Nations collaboration**

Historically, New Zealand and Latin American countries have always focused strongly on the United Nations. New Zealand and 20 Latin American countries were among only 51 countries to sign the United Nations Charter in San Francisco in 1945.

New Zealand has much in common with many other Latin countries regarding its voting patterns and approach. Despite cultural and linguistic differences, it is clear that there are many commonalities in outlook and approach as post-colonial states in the geographical south are keen on a peaceful and stable international environment.

Part of the reason for that focus was to uphold international laws. As nations without significant international power, maintaining international rules and norms is an important way of lifting standards and improving social, cultural, environmental, and/or economic wellbeing.

<sup>4</sup> The P4 was the Trans-Pacific Strategic Economic Partnership consisting of New Zealand, Singapore, Chile, and Brunei Darussalam. It was the forerunner to TPP and CP-TPP.



One of the UN's first actions was to support the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted in 1948.

Within the framework of the United Nations system, New Zealand has looked to coalitions of the willing to support the aims set out in the United Nations Charter, and we have found willing and able partners in Latin America.

#### **4.2.1 Bridging the gap between disarmament and the Arms Trade Treaty**

One of the longest-running collaborations between New Zealand and some countries in Latin America has been on disarmament and the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT, 2014).<sup>5</sup> New Zealand has 'form' on disarmament issues, particularly with the Lange Government in the 1980s banning nuclear-powered ships from New Zealand. Latin American countries also have a keen understanding of the issues (O'Meagher 2023).

In Box 2, we look at disarmament as a case study of how New Zealand and selected Latin American countries can cooperate.

<sup>5</sup> The ATT is an international treaty that regulates the international trade in conventional arms and seeks to prevent and eradicate illicit trade and diversion of conventional arms by establishing international standards governing arms transfers.



## **BOX 2 Cooperation between selected Latin American nations and New Zealand on disarmament**

New Zealand has long taken a proactive stance in the United Nations on disarmament, including as a partner in the New Agenda Coalition (NAC), a grouping formed along cross-regional lines, including two major Latin American countries (Brazil and Mexico).

In the first instance, the NAC was formed to counter the North-South divide developing in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) over the lack of progress on nuclear disarmament.

The NAC's first major success came at the 2000 NPT Review Conference, where – despite considerable opposition from the five nuclear-weapon States – it brokered an outcome package comprising 13 practical steps. Although this approach was adopted, almost 25 years later the latter have yet to fulfil their undertakings on nuclear disarmament by achieving all of the practical steps.

The NAC has continued to be critical of this and to play a significant role to the present day in providing leadership among many non-nuclear weapon states in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) process and in seeking ways to achieve agreed progress on nuclear disarmament there and in the UN General Assembly First Committee through an annual resolution exercise.

The greater understanding and trust developed in the context of the NAC between officials from New Zealand and Latin American states such as Mexico and Brazil has yielded broader dividends in the disarmament and international humanitarian law space.

These states have collaborated in other contexts, such as the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions (Mexico and New Zealand were, along with Peru, members of the core group that steered the process toward adoption of the latter in 2008).

Over the last decade, a global campaign highlighting the catastrophic humanitarian and environmental effects of the use of nuclear weapons culminated in the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) at the United Nations in July 2017 in negotiations presided over by Costa Rica. Mexico and New Zealand were also among the core group of countries driving this process, and as of 2023 the two countries co-chair aspects of the TPNW's implementation process on verification together.

While disarmament remains a difficult issue to gain traction on within the United Nations, New Zealand has derived significant benefit from the opportunity for coalition building with states from other parts of the world, namely Latin America, that see value in upholding the international rule of law and trying to create a more stable and peaceful global environment with lower levels of armaments. Brazil and Mexico, in particular, are among New Zealand's closer disarmament partners.





## 4.2.2 Climate change cooperation

New Zealand has actively developed international responses to climate change, trade and sustainability, and these responses have attracted interest from Latin American governments.

At the global level, as President Obama's special envoy on climate change, the Hon. Todd Stern made clear in a landmark speech to Harvard University in 2014 (Goldenberg 2014) the core concept of the eventual long-term global agreement on climate change (the Paris agreement) – the 'NDC' or nationally determined contribution – emerged from the 'New Zealand proposal,' developed by the Key government after the collapse of the 2009 Copenhagen Climate Change summit.

Shortly after that, the Chinese government indicated it could accept the New Zealand proposal (essentially a legal/political hybrid concept) instead of the original concept of a global version of the Kyoto Protocol.

Trade agreements now routinely contain provisions and work programmes linking trade, climate change, and related sustainability agendas. The CPTPP agreement linking New Zealand to Mexico, Peru and Chile is no exception.<sup>6</sup> Chapter 20 (environment) of the CPTPP contains a wide framework for cooperation among the parties on multilateral environmental treaties and agreements, protection of the ozone layer, marine environment, trade and biodiversity, fishery management issues (including specific provisions relating to stressed fishing stocks, fishery subsidies) and other issues besides. It could be said that these provisions alone provide the political framework for almost any conceivable work programme or cooperative activity with the Latin American members of CPTPP that we might need.

Countries like Mexico see the CPTPP as a building block for further international environmental cooperation with New Zealand (Martinez, Mora, and Morfin 2023). As the technology improves, New Zealand could assist Mexico in mitigating agricultural emissions. This could lead to further environmental cooperation (particularly around ecosystem conservation, renewable energy, and conservation of genetic resources) that could create bilateral and wider environmental benefits. This cooperation process has been made easier with the signing of a memorandum of understanding between Mexico and New Zealand in 2019 on sustainable development in the agricultural sector.

The number of Latin American participants in CPTPP is also about to increase: Ecuador, Costa Rica, Uruguay, and Colombia have either formally submitted their applications or expressed strong interest in applying. This could broaden New Zealand's trade and environmental connections, particularly around agricultural and environmental issues.

Another complementary agreement in the climate change/sustainability space is the Agreement on Climate Change, Trade and Sustainability (ACCTS), which was put together in 2019.<sup>7</sup> Costa Rica and New Zealand are both founding members of the ACCTS.

The specific aims of the ACCTS initiative were to:

- Remove tariffs on environmental goods and new binding commitments for environmental services (to quicken uptake and access of these goods and services).
- Eliminate fossil fuel subsidies.

<sup>6</sup> 25% of the CPTPP members are Latin American.

<sup>7</sup> Participating nations are Costa Rica, Fiji, Iceland, Norway, Switzerland, and New Zealand.



- Develop guidelines for ecolabelling. It is of critical importance to ensure transparency and avoid greenwashing.

ACCTS is a practical attempt to ensure that trade rules are in harmony with climate change objectives. In this way, it will support multilateral solutions. We do not have to 'invent' any new frameworks to ramp up cooperation with Latin America in areas covered by the CPTPP and its 30 chapters or the 'ACCTS' agreement – just put these frameworks to better use. The danger with many international agreements is that they sit on the shelf once negotiated.

Climate change associated with agriculture is a major issue for New Zealand and Latin America. It is also clear that reducing emissions from agriculture is likely to require a scientific solution, either by reducing emissions from livestock or substituting livestock for other crops. Box 3 looks at how New Zealand and Latin American nations supported the Global Research Alliance. The Global Research Alliance and the FAO are at the forefront of attempts to reduce methane emissions from agriculture.



### **BOX 3 Development of the Global Research Alliance (GRA)**

New Zealand has been well aware that meeting the climate change challenge as an agriculture-dependent country would require a significant worldwide investment in research and development.

With respect to our more specific shared interests in agriculture emissions with many Latin American countries, the Clark Government (1999–2008) created a very useful first step – the ‘LEARN’ network (livestock emissions and abatement research network). Its focus was research, including on measurement and abatement technologies for greenhouse gas emissions from livestock agriculture. It involved close cooperation with Latin American beef-producing countries (Uruguay and Argentina in particular).

The Key Government then turbo-charged this early initiative on livestock emissions into what became the Global Research Alliance (GRA) Agricultural Greenhouse Gases – a systematic inter-governmental agreement designed to encourage cooperative research across the agriculture sector as a whole. This was first proposed in November 2008 to the climate change COP 14 (conference of the parties) in Poznan, Poland.

Uruguay was the first country to support New Zealand in establishing the GRA. Uruguay had good reasons for this since 80% of its emissions profile comes from methane.

Two years later, some 40 countries signed the GRA agreement at the FAO Ministerial Meeting in Rome. This was done with strong support from Latin American countries. It again illustrates the importance of framing our engagement with Latin American economies through the broader lens of shared interests. The 67 countries now in the GRA include almost the whole of Latin America, which makes it the region best represented in the Alliance.

New Zealand has made important contributions to the GRA, starting with \$45 million for its establishment. Based in Montevideo, the GRA secretariat has been heavily supported by New Zealand. New Zealander Hayden Montgomery was also appointed as GRA’s Special Representative to assist with connections to international and regional organisations, NGOs and the global agricultural sector. AgResearch has been heavily involved in this process, and in 2023, New Zealand hosted the Indigenous Research Network’s first annual meeting.

Another example of international cooperation involving Latin American countries was the Cartagena Dialogue for Progressive Action, established in 2009 after the failure of the Copenhagen Climate COP. This group formed a constructive middle ground in the negotiations, away from a toxic North-South divide, and was thus able to play a useful role in the achievement of the Paris Agreement.

Rather like the GRA, the rationale for this group was a common interest – in this case an ambitious, comprehensive and legally binding regime in the UNFCCC, and being committed, domestically, to becoming or remaining low carbon economies.



### 4.2.3 Biodiversity

Biodiversity is a term used to describe the variety of life on Earth, including the variety of species, genetic diversity within those species, and the different ecosystems and habitats in which they exist. The United Nations has actively addressed and promoted biodiversity conservation and sustainable use.

Many climate change cooperative initiatives between Latin American countries and New Zealand have been anchored in United Nations treaties and protocols. Cooperation has occurred on:

- Marine conservation: New Zealand and several Latin American countries have a strong focus on marine conservation, particularly around the Blue Pacific. The framework comes from the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). It is an international treaty governing the use of the world's oceans and resources.
- The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. This framework is closely associated with the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 15) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). COP 15 and the Kunming-Montreal Framework are part of the CBD's ongoing efforts to set new global targets for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use after the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, which were adopted in 2010, were not fully met by 2020.

Indigenous communities play a crucial role in biodiversity conservation. Collaboration might include sharing experiences on engaging indigenous communities in conservation efforts and respecting traditional knowledge and practices. This is elaborated in section 4.4 below.

It's important to note that the nature and extent of cooperation between New Zealand and Latin American countries on biodiversity conservation may evolve. We expect more collaboration in this area, given the ongoing climate crisis with its impacts both on land and in the Pacific.

### 4.2.4 The agenda broadens with social changes and gender rights

The UN Gender Action Plan aims to advance gender equality and empower women and girls. It is a framework for action within the United Nations system to ensure that gender considerations are integrated into all aspects of the organisation's work and that gender equality is promoted internally and externally.

New Zealand and Latin American countries have fully supported its introduction, enshrined in the United Nations Charter, and it is also one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 5). As well as New Zealand's domestic goals, the Gender Action Plan 2021–2025 aims to increase New Zealand's principal investment in gender.

New Zealand and a core group of nations have been active in establishing a group focusing on LBGTQI+ rights. A North-South group co-chaired by Argentina and the Netherlands has been active in pushing for prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation.<sup>8</sup>

This has provided a framework for New Zealand to work with a large group of Latin American countries on human rights issues. As part of an all-embracing attempt for inclusion, the

<sup>8</sup> The core group includes among others Argentina, Australia, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru and Uruguay.



member states drove studies that set out the problem and its costs: the widespread discrimination and variable treatment of LGBTQI+ issues and people.

**Table 3 Summary of United Nations activities involving New Zealand and selected Latin American countries**

Cooperation	Aims and objectives	Comment
Nuclear disarmament	Hold nuclear-armed countries to account and stop the spread of nuclear weapons.	Based on the work of the New Agenda Coalition, which includes New Zealand and Mexico.
Climate change and agriculture	Highlights the importance of bringing all goods and services that impact climate change under internationally consistent laws.	Based on the Global Research Alliance and ACCTS activities.
Biodiversity	Halt the destruction of the environment.	Better utilisation of the frameworks for joint action in CPTPP plus building on a variety of separate resolutions examining the oceans, ending plastics pollution, and promoting the use of indigenous knowledge.
LGBTQI +	Highlight and halt discrimination.	An ongoing effort between many countries (including many Latin American nations, New Zealand, and Australia).

Source: United Nations (2017); (O’Meagher 2023); Templeton (2000) and Leading Science Partnerships (2012)

### 4.3 Regional environmental initiatives

Regional initiatives focus on the Blue Pacific and Antarctica and have been for most of the 20th century (see Templeton 2000).

#### 4.3.1 The Blue Pacific

The centrepiece of cooperation in the region that physically connects New Zealand to Latin America is the ‘2050 Blue Pacific Roadmap’<sup>9</sup> (see, for example, Pacific Community, n.d.). The 2050 Blue Pacific Roadmap was developed by regional participants (Pacific Island countries and territories) to address the challenges and opportunities related to the sustainable management of their vast maritime domain, often referred to as the ‘Blue Pacific’.

The roadmap is a strategic framework that outlines the collective vision and goals of the Pacific Islands in managing and conserving their ocean resources and protecting the marine environment. The Blue Pacific concept emphasises the Pacific Ocean’s significance to the region’s identity and wellbeing.

Key components and objectives of the 2050 Blue Pacific Roadmap include sustainable ocean management, climate resilience, conservation of marine biodiversity, sustainable blue economies, empowerment of local communities, and respect for cultural and indigenous values. This is of significant interest to Latin American nations and New Zealand.

<sup>9</sup> The Blue Pacific Roadmap’s full name is: 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent & Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable Development.





The 2050 Blue Pacific Roadmap reflects the collective aspirations and commitments of the Pacific Islands to protect their marine resources and advance sustainable development. By addressing challenges such as climate change, overfishing, and marine pollution and by promoting sustainable economic growth, the roadmap aims to secure a prosperous and resilient future for the Pacific Islands and the wider Blue Pacific region.

Latin American nations also have a strong connection to the Road Map. Chile and Cuba are among the Forum's dialogue partners and attend the Forum's meetings, the latest being in the Cook Islands in December 2023.

Supporting the Blue Pacific objectives is the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (SPRFMO). Chile and Peru are members.<sup>10</sup> The SPRFMO has been established to manage and conserve the fishery resources in the high seas of the South Pacific Ocean. It was formed in 2013.

The work of SPRFMO is essential in ensuring the sustainable use of fishery resources in the South Pacific, balancing the interests of various parties, and minimising the negative impacts of fishing on the marine environment.

#### 4.3.2 Antarctica

Latin America and New Zealand see the protection of Antarctica as a crucial global environmental goal due to its unique and pristine ecosystems, its role in regulating climate and sea levels, and its potential for scientific research. Several international agreements and mechanisms are in place to safeguard Antarctica, the most notable of which is the Antarctic Treaty System.

- The Antarctic Treaty was signed in 1959 and entered into force in 1961. It established a framework for the governance of Antarctica, emphasising peaceful cooperation, scientific research, and environmental protection. The Treaty prohibits military activities, nuclear testing, and mineral mining on the continent.
- New Zealand, Australia, Chile, Cuba, Ecuador, Panama, and Argentina worked on the key clauses that were aimed at protecting Antarctica from commercial exploration and promoting peaceful cooperation (Templeton 2000).
- Supporting the Antarctic Treaty System are five Antarctic gateway cities. These are Christchurch, New Zealand; Hobart, Australia; Ushuaia, Argentina; Punta Arenas, Chile; and Cape Town, South Africa. The cities support international and New Zealand Antarctic priorities as articulated through the Antarctic Treaty System and New Zealand's responsibilities regarding the Ross Dependency.

#### 4.4 Indigenous peoples

Globally, there has been a major step change in efforts to integrate issues relating to indigenous peoples into appropriate and robust international frameworks. This most certainly includes the indigenous people of New Zealand and numerous indigenous peoples of the Americas. It is a point of contact that can be further developed in the context of an upgraded relationship with Latin America.

<sup>10</sup> There are 16 countries involved in the SPRFMO. They are Australia, Belize, Chile, China, Cuba, Ecuador, the European Union, Vanuatu, Kingdom of Denmark in respect of the Faroe Islands, Korea, New Zealand, Panama, Peru, Russia, Chinese Taipei and the United States.



In terms of formal trade agreements, the first ‘treaty’ (of Waitangi) clause was inserted into the ‘chapeau’ (headnote) of our commitments under the new GATS (General Agreement on Trade and Services) agreement in 1993 by the Bolger government to make it clear that in taking on these new international commitments, they should not stand in the way of future New Zealand governments fulfilling its obligations under the foundation stone of our country – the Treaty of Waitangi.

Subsequent trade agreements have elaborated that initial concept into fully fledged ‘chapters’ designed to encourage greater cooperation on indigenous issues, including those that involve Latin American countries. There is, of course, the UNDRIP framework (United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People).

Cooperation between New Zealand and Latin American countries in this sphere can and should go beyond these statements of principle. They can include deliberate efforts to create commercial links among indigenous people and private companies with a special focus on this matter. An example is the Inclusive Trade Action Group (ITAG). New Zealand, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador and Mexico are driving a more inclusive and sustainable trade agenda through ITAG. ITAG members work together to help make trade policies more inclusive and ensure that the benefits of trade and investment are more broadly shared.

## **4.5 Business engagement**

### **4.5.1 Historical business links based on agriculture and agritech**

There is a long history associated with our trade connections between Latin America and New Zealand. One of New Zealand’s first trading connections was the sale of Corriedale sheep breeding stock to Menendez Holdings in Patagonia (Pheasant 1992) in 1910. The agri-tech theme continued with the work of Dr McMeekan, who spent many years introducing New Zealand farming systems into Uruguay. Agri-tech systems and advice are still part of New Zealand’s Latin American trade offering today.

While there was a flurry of activity when embassies were opened in Chile (1972), Peru (1973) and Mexico (1983), the amount of trade was minimal. We also have posts in Argentina, Brazil and Colombia. Airlinks began with Aerolíneas Argentinas with direct flights in 1981. Lan Chile (now LATAM) and Air New Zealand also began flights. LATAM has resumed its flights to Auckland in the post-COVID period.

The New Zealand Dairy Board dominated exports to Latin America in the 1980s. Sales of dairy products and some meat products to Mexico, Venezuela, Cuba, Chile and Argentina were substantial (Pheasant 1992). Major imports to New Zealand from Latin America were bananas and Brazilian industrial products.

The main economic activity, however, was New Zealand company investment in Chile. Fletcher Challenge, Carter Holt Harvey and the New Zealand Dairy Board invested heavily in Chile. The New Zealand Dairy Board purchased a controlling stake in Soprole (which it just sold in 2023), and Carter Holt Harvey and Fletcher Challenge bought fishing and forestry assets.

### **4.5.2 The post-COVID outlook**

In the post-COVID recovery phase, business activity is focused on six Latin American markets: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Peru and Mexico. New Zealand does around NZ\$1.1 billion



in trade with Latin America, with little change over the past ten years. This trade is about six times less than what we trade with ASEAN (NZ\$6.9 billion). Exports to Mexico (NZ\$400 million), with its connections with the United States market, lead the pack, while Chile (\$200 million), Peru (\$100 million), and Brazil (\$100 million) have been relatively steady over the past ten years. Colombia and Argentina are much smaller trading partners.

The latest Economist Intelligence Unit (2023) suggests that Mexico will likely strengthen its economic position because of its strong connections and integration with the United States. Mexico will benefit from the United States' efforts to shorten its supply chains, reducing its reliance on China. New Zealand companies such as Fisher & Paykel Healthcare already have substantial investments in Mexico, and these are likely to benefit from the United States' actions and potentially grow.

#### **4.5.3 Latin America opportunities are many and varied, but it is not a place for a quick buck**

These Latin American markets are quite different and need to be understood individually. Export New Zealand commented that individual Latin American markets require a considerable amount of effort and experience before you can turn a profit. Export New Zealand advises businesses to focus on long-term business relationships and understand the market niches they wish to fill.

There has, however, been considerable innovation in sectors – from the traditional agtech (Gallaghers) to manufacturing (Maxiloda) to Commstech (Tait), to gaming (PikPok) to mining software (Seequent) to cinetech (Vista), for example (see CAPEs 2024).

Sense Partners (2022) commented that the trade costs to Latin America (except for Mexico) from New Zealand are higher relative to ASEAN and China. According to Sense Partners (2022), these trade costs include language barriers, tariffs, cultural differences, etc. We would also note that transport links between New Zealand and Latin America (except Mexico) are much more difficult relative to Asia.

The key to unlocking the potential of specific Latin American economies is to connect with the cultural and business practices over time. New Zealand has typically focused on a few of those economies as economic circumstances have waxed and waned. Latin American economies have taken a back seat to more lucrative markets.

The Latin America New Zealand Business Council is the main private sector vehicle for promoting business growth opportunities. Independent of the Government, its role is to:

- Connect New Zealand and Latin American businesses by promoting bilateral and multilateral agreements that encourage joint ventures and technology transfers.
- Become a point of reference for people and businesses interested in doing business in Latin America.
- Organise multi-sector events that interest its members, promote their businesses and provide networking opportunities.
- Provide members with up-to-date and timely information relevant to trade with the region and act in an advisory capacity on issues affecting trade.



- Maintain links with New Zealand and Latin American governments to promote and encourage exports and investments.

## 5 Criteria: common threads that may bind to produce benefits

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From the connections we have made, what gives the relationships a particular shape or potential that both Latin American countries and New Zealand can build on for the future and produce the desired social, economic, and environmental benefits?

If the aim is to strengthen relationships across the board, we can build resilience and diversify trade, social, cultural and environmental connections. We are well aware that increased connectivity is strongly and positively associated with increased economic activity, awareness of other cultures, and other metrics of social progress. These are the benefits we are looking for as a result of our engagements.

### 5.1 If connectivity improves wellbeing, then what should we be focusing on?

Through the literature and interview process, we have identified several criteria or areas where we can deliver ‘wins’ for all participants involved in any particular engagement or agreement to act. Some of these connections of mutual interest overlap, and some are only of interest to selected countries.

These include:

- Developing international rules. This is an area where New Zealand and individual Latin American countries, notably Chile and Mexico, have consistently come together to continue the development of a rules-based system. Examples of collaboration include trade initiatives (APEC and plurilateral engagements such as the P4, TPP, CPTPP and the DEPA) and social issues (gender rights, LBGTQI+ equality, etc.)
- Reinforcing international rules. The current big country approach to international rules has not been encouraging. Therefore, the role of smaller nations (New Zealand and selected Latin American countries) is to attempt to strengthen existing rules around disarmament, APEC and the multilateral trade system in general. This is a fruitful area of cooperation where smaller countries can be highly successful (e.g. Cairns Group and cooperation on disarmament at the United Nations).
- Neighbourly relations. Looking after the Blue Pacific and Antarctica are key activities for a number of Latin American countries and New Zealand. This connection and cooperation are likely to become more important in the future as pressure on the environment increases, and there is a need to ensure regional and international rules are strengthened and enforced.
- Trade facilitation. How we bring down barriers to contact, drive new trade initiatives, and forge freer trade agreements is critical for the business community. This is a clear imperative and objective of New Zealand and has been for some time. Unfortunately, the rhythms of achieving FTAs (for example) are highly dependent on the domestic policy of prospective partners. These have little to do with New Zealand’s trade policy effort. Progress has been made and will continue to be made, but setting timeframes is problematic.



- **Opportunism.** Small countries must maximise their attributes to drive international agreements and connections. Grabbing the opportunities by being useful to the process is critical to that success. Being useful to the process acknowledges that we cannot set the international agenda, but we can identify the real problems, inform the process by providing innovative solutions, show how agreements will work in practice, and develop strategies and tactics that demonstrate what success looks like.
- **People-to-people contact.** These play a central role in developing closer relationships, evolving into binding commitments. Trust is key, and we need to demonstrate trust through action. From that basis, we can develop business-to-business connections, develop tourism links and reach out in social, cultural, environmental and economic ways that are impossible without that ongoing trust.

If New Zealand is going to focus on values or interests-based collaborations on enduring or emerging issues between New Zealand and Latin American entities (including commercial or technological responses where relevant), then we need to focus on the criteria set out above as a basis for further connection.

We cannot pick collaboration winners since what will be successful is uncertain. However, we can learn from our past encounters to leverage approaches of past possibly successful collaborations and connections with potential partners and customers in Latin America.

In this way, we can frame our engagements (focused on the criteria above) with Latin American countries – the coalition of the willing – through a broader lens of shared interests. This will likely maximise the chances of durable connections that benefit all.



## 6 Connectivity is associated with innovation and increased wellbeing

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### 6.1 Generating a gentle wind of innovation

Building international relationships, connections and agreements across the board is about innovation. We want to create a gentle wind of innovation in our relationships with Latin America and worldwide to strengthen links, grow, and build durable relationships.

This means:

- Innovation is uncertain. We do not know where the payoff will occur or in what timeframe. To maximise success requires a longer-term commitment.
- We do not want a separate strategy for Latin America; we want it to be consistent with how we do things in other parts of the world. We need consistency and transparency of approach to gain respect from those we connect with and those we hope to connect with. A gentle wind of innovation can only be consistent over time if the politics, relationships and institutions align.
- Developing a connection is one part of the objective, as more connections can potentially pay off.
- Participants are looking to take advantage of dynamics. Once a connection is made, it may open more connections we have not anticipated. This drives further connections.

Over time, the benefits for nations, business, society and people from the gentle wind of innovation is the single most important result from the engagements discussed in this paper since it will drive further connectivity. Innovations drive further connectivity, which is associated with increases in wellbeing.

While most commentators focus on specific advances typically involving step changes, what is far more important is the year-on-year incremental advances that create the conditions for self-sustaining activity. It is from these conditions that New Zealand and its Latin American partners can maximise the benefits of social, economic and environmental advancement.

### 6.2 Resilience equals redundancy

The conversations around building resilience into our social and economic activity need more consideration. There are few serious conversations in New Zealand around what resilience means since it means building capability that we may or may not use.

In Latin America, resilience needs to be thought about in terms of building capacity to support our connections across all our activities. We also need to accept that the payoff is a long-term effort. The CPTPP began with an agreement to negotiate with Singapore in 1999. A quarter of a century later, it is still in play and (with new membership applications) still evolving over many New Zealand governments and four turns of the electoral cycle (Bolger-Shipley/Clark/Key/Ardern governments). This illustrates a vital principle: when it comes to external linkages and long-term strategies, there needs to be wide bipartisan (and preferably multi-partisan) support.

Other examples underline the importance of slowly building constituencies. The most important objective may well be trade growth, but the pathway to that is likely to involve a





range of activities that are far more indirect. For example, and with New Zealand's Australian cousins in mind, Export New Zealand emphasised that the Australian-Indian partial FTA took 15 years to get to the point where they could negotiate the Australia-India Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA). Australia started with a plan of frequent Ministerial visits, student exchanges and other cultural exchanges.<sup>11</sup> In the Latin American context, persisting with the Pacific Alliance objectives seems like an important part of the New Zealand agenda from now on.

Making this happen will require:

- The political will through successive governments to support capacity building to help develop further connections in Latin America.
- The institutional willingness and resources to back up those connections. This includes government, local government and universities.
- The activities undertaken to build a lasting connection. The candidate areas are set out in section 5. This is an *a la carte* approach to policy – taking advantage of the situations and forming coalitions of the willing.

We should also emphasise that high-level political support, while essential, is not enough. Mike Moore, John Key, and Helen Clark all gave strong political support to furthering our links with Latin America. Mike Moore and John Key both led trade missions to Latin America. Helen Clark launched a New Zealand–Latin American strategy in 2000 (Clark 2000). These initiatives were well-meaning and aimed at galvanising interest in Latin America, yet they have not resulted in a consistent relationship with Latin America.

### **6.3 Investment is required, given prospects for FTAs and the prevailing international mood amongst the major economies**

In an era of booming protectionism and heightened nationalism, New Zealand needs to invest in a position which takes advantage of the changing conditions when the mood becomes more positive.

This is a time to be more aspirational in a world looking in another direction. Lifting our sights and looking beyond the present mood is a critical policy stance that New Zealand needs to embrace.

### **6.4 What will move the dial?**

To maximise the chances of a stronger connection with Latin America will require resources. The resources are required to build a process or institutional approach that can bind and coordinate the connections made, like binding threads of a rope.

The work by the CAPEs shows how we must better equip New Zealanders to engage across Latin America and Asia-Pacific. It represents an efficient and effective 'full court press' as connectors, facilitators and thought leaders. It brings expertise in the region's languages, cultures, politics and economics to equip New Zealanders to operate across the Asia Pacific.

<sup>11</sup> Interview with Export New Zealand.



We need to build on the work of the CAPEs to increase New Zealand’s resilience. The next step is to develop an institutional structure with a mandate for deepening our linkages with Latin America.

Behind this is a large and practical question of resources in our small country. It is primarily about financial support – recall our observations above about ‘resilience is not costless’ – but it is broader than that. In a country of 5 million people, the same people interested in our country’s external linkages routinely come up in any conference, seminar, or discussion dealing with the matter. There is no place for a forest of think tanks and like institutions as there are in, say, Washington or Paris.

Finally, as we have stressed throughout this report, the ‘Asian’ diversification strategy and a more modest attempt to replicate this with respect to Latin America are deeply linked. The underlying logic is the same (see section 4), the techniques of sustainable engagement would be the same, and the people's skill sets are similar.

Furthermore, as argued in this paper, a significant part of the ‘New Zealand offering’ to Latin America, particularly in the most important area of developing our economic ties, lies in the success of our move into Asia. A number of the resultant agreements (CPTPP and DEPA) involve growing numbers of Latin American countries wishing to develop their links with Asia.

## 6.5 We cannot anticipate the issues, but the characteristics of ‘what makes an issue to cooperate on’ can be further understood

Below, we set out characteristics that can assist in furthering the objectives of both Latin American partners and New Zealand. The characteristics are designed to understand when it is beneficial for Latin American partners and New Zealand to coordinate their activities to create the gentle wind of innovation that benefits all.

One way of showing how collaboration could take place is through a shared interest approach. This involves making individual efforts to collaborate and working through the following questions on strategic fit and value:

- How important is it to maintain control? Cooperating may reduce control over the objective. A key question for each participant is how comfortable it would be with less control:
  - In the case of the Cairns Group, this was not an issue. Countries can play different roles in advancing all the participants towards a common objective (such as in the Cairns Group, where the objective was to ensure agriculture was subject to international trade disciplines under the WTO).
  - In a commercial setting, control over product launches and how a product is presented may require much more control. The specifics of these issues need to be examined carefully by supply chain partners.
- Are the objectives clear? The clearer the objectives, the more likely collaboration will occur successfully. Values do not have to be aligned, but they cannot interfere with or hold up the ability of parties to play their part:
  - The important interests need to be aligned, such as under the GRA, where New Zealand and Latin American partners are investing in R&D to solve their methane emissions problems.



- In a commercial setting, the objectives tend to be much clearer, although we do note Export New Zealand’s caution that New Zealand companies must take a long-term view of profit maximisation in Latin American markets. This means being aware of the motivations of supply chain partners.
- Macro trends also could drive further connection, e.g. the United States’ attempts to shorten their supply chains will benefit Mexico. Some New Zealand companies will benefit from this including Fisher and Paykel Healthcare.
- Are there sufficient commonalities?
  - Will any compromises need to be made? A common understanding of what is considered a success without relitigating outcomes is required. Cooperation on Antarctica is a good example where a clear vision and set of objectives assisted in providing a successful conclusion on the future role of Antarctica.
  - Combining with countries that can make a difference within a loose team structure. Cooperation between New Zealand, Mexico and other Latin American partners played a significant role in the development of disarmament protocols and treaties.

Other considerations include feasibility and flexibility (i.e. can the collaboration pivot towards the new challenges relatively quickly) and what degree of structure and governance is required to make the system go (e.g. New Zealand led this initiative by putting \$45 million into making the GRA work.) Providing the initial resources was a strong statement of support and was warmly welcomed by Latin American countries along with locating the headquarters of the GRA in Uruguay.



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