Minister of Agriculture Damien O’Connor opened day two of the conference with a reference to his West Coast-Tasman electorate, saying people there now appreciated the impact of climate change more as a result of recent severe weather events.

Now, there is an opportunity for New Zealand to make progress and the results of the Nielsen survey revealed that farmers were open to change. The Minister also praised the work of the 56-member Global Research Alliance in this area.

He said that while afforestation could be one of the options available to farmers in adapting to climate change, the one billion trees programme did not require those trees to be sown on good farmland. It is a question of “the right tree in the right place”.

Minister O’Connor recognised the good environmental stewardship that many farms throughout the country have already implemented, while emphasising the need for farmers to access the latest science and technology to ensure rural communities can continue to thrive.

Looking ahead, the Minister said that as the world changes, overseas countries would need New Zealand produce and might have to pay more for it, but would do so knowing our food supplies came from an ethical and sustainable source.