

John Austin controls from behind his desk

Precision agriculture to create natural products

Sitting at the dining room table and monitoring my farm is a possibility and reality for me. We are already using global positioning equipment, yield monitoring and precision agriculture in New Zealand. In the next 40 years, farming in New Zealand won't change as much as farming in China will.

Precision farming will become normal across the globe. Computers will move from just notifying us to do the work, to triggering machines to do the work. Computers will tell us when it is time to plant, time to fertilize and time to harvest. Even my herding dogs will probably be wearing wrist watches and remote headsets. Precision, automation and computerisation will monitor and control all processes, and will not allow for waste.

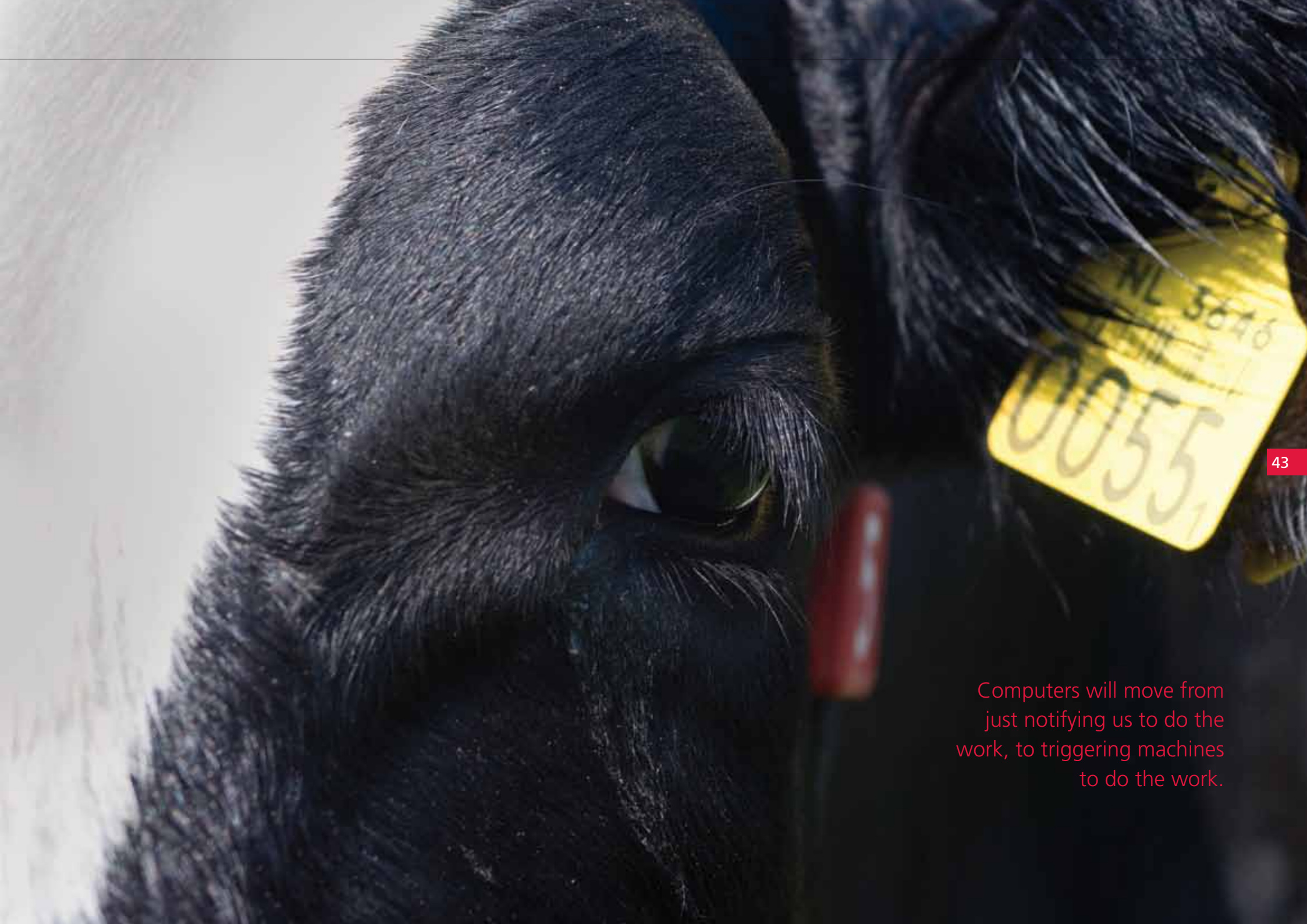
The future of farming is what we do with the waste, not just what is produced on the farm, but all waste. Tons of now unused waste will become valuable fertilizer and more effort will be made to change waste into energy to run production. We won't be wasting waste.

Of all modern equipment, the robotic milking machines will still be around, maybe in a different form or on a larger scale. Milk still does a lot of traveling before it gets to the consumer. Instead, the milk could go directly from the cow to being processed into a product. From the utter, one line goes to make yoghurt, one for butter, one for fresh milk, and of course, most importantly one line goes to make ice cream. I love ice cream. If this machine isn't going to make ice cream, then what is the point in creating it?

Moving processing to the farm could be a way forward. Although production and processes are becoming more automated, the consumer will still want a healthy, natural product.



John Austin, owner of John Austin Ltd situated in Te Awamutu, New Zealand, an agricultural contractor since 1980 whose current equipment includes 22 tractors, 2 combines and 3 forage harvesters.



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