



**A Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust
Report**

Award sponsored by

The John Oldacre Foundation

**Supporting farmer wellbeing:
addressing mental health
in agriculture and horticulture**

Aarun Naik

September 2016

**NUFFIELD
UK**

NUFFIELD FARMING SCHOLARSHIPS TRUST (UK)

TRAVEL AWARDS

“Nuffield” travel awards give a unique opportunity to stand back from your day to day occupation and to study a subject of interest to you. Academic qualifications are not essential but you will need to persuade the Selection Committee that you have the qualities to make the best use of an opportunity that is given to only a few – approximately 20 each year.

Awards are open to those who work in farming, growing, forestry, or otherwise in the countryside, and sometimes to those working in ancillary industries, or are in a position to influence those who do. You must be resident in the UK. The normal age range is 25 to 45 but at least one younger candidate each year will receive an Award. You must have spent at least 2 years working in a relevant industry in the UK. Pre- and post-graduate students are not eligible for an Award to support their studies.

The Nuffield Arden Award is unique in that there is no age restriction and the subject is set by the Selection Committee. An Arden Award is offered every 2 years.

Full details of all Awards can be seen on the Trust’s website: www.nuffieldscholar.org. Application forms can be downloaded and only online submission is accepted.

Closing date for completed applications is the 31st July each year.

A Nuffield (UK) Farming Scholarships Trust Report



Date of report: September 2016

*"Leading positive change in agriculture.
Inspiring passion and potential in people."*

Title	Supporting farmer wellbeing: addressing mental health in agriculture and horticulture
Scholar	Aarun Naik
Sponsor	The John Oldacre Foundation
Objectives of Study Tour	<p>To explore and better understand issues of stress, depression and mental ill health in general amongst farming communities, and some of the unique factors that influence these issues.</p> <p>To learn from the range of different approaches other countries have taken to address the same challenges</p>
Countries visited	United Kingdom; France; Republic of Ireland; Finland; Sweden; Denmark; Australia; New Zealand
Messages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farming communities across the world are struggling with issues of stress and mental ill health and the pressures faced by farmers appear to be increasing. • Mental health in farming must be tackled both 'upstream' and 'downstream'. In addition to downstream approaches supporting those in immediate or emergency need, those upstream also need to be targeted with preventative, awareness-raising measures. • Pre-emptive measures to support the mental and emotional health of affected communities can be front-loaded as part of industry responses to acute farming crisis • There are now well understood, science-based, strategies and behaviours known to help build mental and emotional resilience. Farmers adopting such measures are likely to be better placed to cope with the many stresses and pressure of farming. • Farmers speaking out publicly and openly sharing their own personal experiences of mental health difficulty can be a hugely effective way of engaging fellow farmers on the topic and help to erode stigma. • Achieving cultural and behavioural change in mental health and wellbeing will take time. It requires long-term vision, investment and commitment.

Contents

Executive Summary.....	1
Chapter 1. Personal Introduction.....	2
Chapter 2. Background to my study.....	3
Chapter 3. My study tour.....	4
Chapter 4. Understanding mental health.....	5
4a. Stress.....	5
4b. Depression.....	5
4c. Stress and farming life.....	7
4c.i. Remoteness and isolation.....	7
4c.ii. Changing rural life.....	7
4c.iii. 24/7 cycle.....	7
4c.iv. Fusion of work and home.....	8
4c.v. Financial pressure.....	8
4c.iv. Regulation and red tape.....	8
4c.v. Weather.....	8
4c.vi. Visibility.....	8
4c.ix. Disease.....	9
4c.x. Injury and physical pain.....	9
4c.xi. Agrochemicals.....	9
4c.xii. Intergenerational disputes.....	9
4d. Stigma and the farming man.....	10
Chapter 6. Routes to engagement.....	13
6a. Developing and improving the evidence base.....	14
6b. Raising awareness.....	15
6b.i. Dedicated campaigns and initiatives.....	15
6b.ii. Awareness events.....	19
6b.iii. Targeted training.....	21
6c. Developing facilities and services.....	26
6c.i. Farmer welfare services.....	26
6c.ii. Financial guidance.....	27
6c.iii. Occupational Health Services.....	27
6c.iv. Health and wellbeing checks.....	27
6c.v. Counselling services.....	27

6d. Reducing stigma.....	28
6d.i. The power of farming voices	28
6e. Promotion of skills and strategies supporting healthy behaviour	29
Chapter 7. Opportunity in crisis	31
7a. Peer support in Denmark	31
7b. Lessons from kiwifruit country.....	33
Chapter 8. Ways to wellbeing	37
8a. 'Connect'	38
8b. 'Be Active'	40
8c. 'Take Notice'	42
8d. 'Keep learning'	42
8e. 'Give'	43
8f. Other factors.....	43
8f.i. Time away.....	43
8f.ii. Nutrition.....	45
8f.iii. Sleep.....	46
8f.iv. Religion and spirituality.....	47
8f.v. Celebration.....	47
Chapter 9. Getting strategic.....	48
9a. The power of partnership.....	48
9b. Effective linkage	49
9c. Mapping the rural wellbeing landscape	49
9d. DairyNZ: Farmer Wellness and Wellbeing Programme	50
9e. New South Wales Farmers Blueprint for Mental Health and Wellbeing	52
9f. Moving forward with measurement	53
Chapter 10. Building the business case for wellbeing	56
10a. Repositioning the mental health message	56
10b. Resilience	56
10c. Putting the person in the business plan	59
Chapter 11. Discussion.....	62
11a. A global problem	62
11b. From anecdote to evidence	62
11c. Upstream to downstream	62
11d. Readyng for crisis	63

11e. Learning to build resilience	63
11f. The power of industry leadership	64
11g. Educating upstream	64
11h. Upskilling the rural workforce.....	65
11i. Supporting emerging generations.....	66
11j. Speak out to break down stigma	66
11k. In for the long haul	67
Chapter 12. Conclusions	68
Chapter 13. Recommendations	69
Chapter 14. After my study tour	70
Chapter 15. Acknowledgements and thanks	71
References	75

DISCLAIMER

The opinions expressed in this report are my own and not necessarily those of the Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust, or of my sponsor, or of any other sponsoring body.

CONTACT DETAILS

Aarun Naik

Merseyside

Email: aarun10@gmail.com

Tel: +44 151 733 6897

Mobile: +44 7732 974 696

Nuffield Farming Scholars are available to speak to NFU Branches, Agricultural Discussion Groups and similar organisations

*Published by The Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust
Southill Farmhouse, Staple Fitzpaine, Taunton TA3 5SH*

Tel : 01460 234012

email : director@nuffieldscholar.org

www.nuffieldscholar.org



Executive Summary

There is a growing concern over the high levels of stress, suicide and poor mental health within UK agriculture and horticulture. With my Nuffield Farming study I set out to explore how other countries were addressing this challenge in their farming communities. I visited countries in northern Europe as well as spending time in Australia and New Zealand. During my tour I met with a wide variety of stakeholders including academics from the research community, farmers and growers, rural professionals, health practitioners, faith-based agencies, advisers working in farm extension and farmer support services.

I found that approaches to address the issue were focussed in a number of key areas: conducting research and gathering meaningful, practical data; raising awareness of mental health amongst farming communities and those in the wider farming supply chain; developing support services and facilities appropriate to the farmer population; promotion of skills and strategies that support healthy behaviour. Running through all of these approaches was the importance of reducing stigma in order to normalise the issue so that choosing to seek help becomes easier. I found both Australia and New Zealand to be quite advanced in addressing rural and farmer mental health. Both countries were pioneering a number of innovative initiatives. Much of this had been achieved through a strategic approach which involved the support and collaboration of leading organisations within the agricultural sector.

My Nuffield Farming experience confirmed to me that issues of stress and mental health are a global problem in farming. Enabling farmers to openly and unashamedly share their own personal experiences of mental health difficulty can be a hugely effective way of engaging fellow farmers on the topic and eroding stigma. The issue of mental health in farming must be tackled both 'upstream' and 'downstream'. This involves both essential emergency-type response work as well as pro-active, preventative initiatives. There are now well understood, science-based strategies and behaviours known to help develop mental and emotional resilience. Several impressive initiatives I encountered during my study tour were concentrating on promoting such measures to farmers.

The findings from my study tour suggest the UK would benefit from more research and gathering of practical data on farmer mental health. This would help to further develop the evidence base in the area as well as help guide approaches to address the issue. There is scope for leading farming organisations to play a more active role in imparting pro-active, preventative messages. UK farming would also benefit from a dedicated, farmer-specific, educational initiative on wellbeing. This should be preventative-focussed and concentrate on promoting practical steps farmers can put in place to help them manage everyday stresses and pressures of farming. It is important to accelerate efforts to upskill frontline rural professionals in mental health awareness. Structured training can be used to develop their ability to spot warning signs of distress and improve their knowledge and confidence of how to respond appropriately. Facilitating farmer champions to develop their profile and publicly speak out about mental health will help to raise awareness of the issue, break down stigma and highlight available support services. Finally, it must be recognised that achieving cultural and behavioural change in mental health and wellbeing will take time. It requires long-term vision, investment and commitment.



Chapter 1. Personal Introduction

I consider it a most unlikely route that eventually led me to undertake a Nuffield Farming Scholarship. I do not come from a farming background. I spent most of my early life in a city. However, I always harboured a fascination for farming and a love of the countryside. My degree in Applied Biology featured a strong focus on crop protection. Consequently, I was led to undertake work experience placements in the agrochemical industry as well as a stint on the prairies with Canada's department for agriculture. After leaving university in 1997 I worked for several years in cereal and vegetable field trials with ADAS and then Cambridge University Farms before swapping crop protection for the world



Figure 1: In a kiwifruit orchard during my visit to New Zealand

of policy advocacy. I went to work on rural and farming policy for the sustainability think tank, Forum for the Future, before going on to spend a decade in a number of roles at the National Farmers Union (NFU).

Behind all this there is another story. I come from a family where there is a history of depression, addiction and mental health problems. During my late twenties into my early thirties I began to experience sudden and unexpected periods of intense anxiety and general depression. At times this became extremely debilitating and in one case prompted me to quit my job and left me feeling unable to work for nearly a year. These experiences were the catalyst that forced me to undertake considerable personal development work including counselling and group therapy in an attempt to better understand myself and my struggles, behaviours and beliefs. This in turn launched the development of my new interest in the mind, emotions and the human condition. It therefore seemed a natural step to pursue my education in this area. After three years of training during my spare time, I achieved my diploma in Transpersonal Counselling Psychology in 2013. Having initially embarked on this path purely for my personal interest it was never my intention to practice as a therapist. However, I began to see clients in my spare time outside my everyday role with the NFU. Over the last few years my counselling practice has developed considerably and I have also taken on a number of clients from the farming sector.

I am most grateful to the Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust and my sponsor, the John Oldacre Foundation, for giving me the opportunity to improve my knowledge and understanding in this area. In doing so I hope this raises the profile of an important issue, shining light and propagating ideas and thinking.



Chapter 2. Background to my study

Whilst farmers are renowned for the attention they give to their livestock, crops and machinery, unfortunately they do not have a such good track record when it comes to taking care of themselves and their own wellbeing. It is widely acknowledged that agriculture and horticulture can be a highly stressful occupation and the industry is exposed to a unique set of circumstances and stressors. With a shocking number of fatalities each year, farming is now classed as the most dangerous occupation in the UK. Stress is often a key factor in many of the accidents, injuries and illnesses taking place on farms. Meanwhile, levels of depression are thought to be increasing and suicide rates in farmers are among the highest in any occupational group. The situation is compounded by the fact that farming tends to be an innately conservative culture and there is often stigma and taboo attached to mental health. This can hinder people's willingness to speak about the issue and to seek help for themselves.

Whilst it was once seldom spoken about, in recent years the UK farming community is now beginning to speak out more about the concerning levels of stress, burnout, depression and suicide amongst those working in the industry. With our farming charities working to continually publicise and raise awareness of the issue, and articles on the topic appearing more regularly in the trade media there is now an increasing recognition of the problem and a growing effort to educate the farming community on this important topic. Yet it is clear that this issue remains a considerable challenge for the industry. There remains a real and genuine need for greater understanding of how to support the wellbeing of our farmers.

The importance of this issue has been brought more sharply into focus for me by recent events. Since beginning my Nuffield Farming study in 2015 I have observed the UK industry enter a period of gradual, sustained crisis. Successive years of declining farm gate prices have left almost all sectors of the industry struggling. Many farmers are no longer making a living from farming itself. Many farming families are carrying huge levels of debt and working long hours in a desperate attempt to cut costs. Farming charities have been inundated with calls for help and are reporting high levels of stress and mental health difficulties amongst farmers during this extraordinary time.

There is much debate in the industry about the many difficulties that farming will face in the future if it is to prosper and meet the challenge of feeding the rising global population. Yet perhaps the most important and influential asset in a farm business is its people – the farmers and farmworkers themselves. Without also adequately addressing the issue of supporting their mental and emotional health how are we going to be able to respond to the challenge of growing and developing our farming industry for future generations? It is certain that we cannot have profitable and productive farm industry without a healthy, sustainable workforce.

Many other farming communities around the world are grappling with similar challenges of mental health and wellbeing. I wanted to use my Nuffield Farming opportunity to look at this issue more closely and to see what could be learnt from the way other farming nations are approaching this important issue.



Chapter 3. My study tour

Country	When	Reasons
Belgium and France	March 2015	The 2015 Nuffield Farming Contemporary Scholars Conference (CSC) was held in Reims, France. This brought together the 2015 year group of Scholars from all countries in the Nuffield Farming family to explore some of the challenges facing global agriculture. It gave me the opportunity to discuss with fellow Scholars some of the issues relating to my subject in their respective countries. As part of the Pre-CSC, I travelled to Brussels with UK scholars to learn about policy making in the EU. We also visited Waterloo battlefield to study key leadership challenges in the context of events at the famous battle.
Ireland	September 2015	I wanted to explore how the issue was viewed and being addressed by one of the UK's nearby neighbours. I met with farmers, academic researchers, health experts and the country's research and extension service, Teagasc.
Finland, Sweden, Denmark	October 2015	I was interested in how the issue of mental health and wellbeing among farmers was viewed in other European states and how cultural attitudes may influence this. Finland is one of the most rural countries in Northern Europe. Farmers have to manage the challenges of tough weather conditions, remoteness, isolation and varying daylight. They therefore require a certain level of inner resilience. In Sweden I meet with researchers of psycho-social wellbeing. I visited Denmark as I had heard that high levels of debt meant many people were having to sell their farms. I was interested in how this was impacting on the wellbeing of farming families.
Australia	February 2016	Australia has been struggling with the issue of mental health in farming for many years. The extreme rural remoteness of the country, traditional masculine attitudes, strong drinking culture and pressures such as drought are understood to be contributory factors. There has been much publicity about the number of Australian farmers dying by suicide. Widespread concern about rural mental health has meant many initiatives and resources have been developed to address the problem.
New Zealand	March 2016	Similar to Australia, much of New Zealand is rural, remote countryside exposing many farm communities to a level of isolation. Now a strong dairy producing nation, recent volatility in global milk price has seen dramatic falls in farmer incomes and put livelihoods under great pressure. Much attention has also been drawn to the numbers of farmer suicides. In response to all these issues New Zealand is pioneering a number of wellbeing initiatives.
UK	Throughout	To further develop my understanding of the picture in the UK I met with individual farmers, farmer groups, farmer welfare charities and organisations working in the area of wellbeing.



Chapter 4. Understanding mental health

To many, the term mental health conjures up words and images associated with mental ‘ill’ health. Yet mental health is a state of wellbeing. The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines Mental Health as *‘a state of wellbeing in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community’*.¹ The UK’s Mental Health Foundation characterises good mental health as a person’s ability to feel, express and manage a range of emotions; the ability to form and maintain good relationships with others; the ability to cope with and manage change and uncertainty². It is common for mental health to change as circumstances change and people move through different stages of life. Not all of us experience good mental health all of the time as our mental wellbeing is on a continuum and we move backwards and forwards along this continuum throughout our lives.

This broad concept of Mental Health is markedly different from the concept of ‘mental illness’ or ‘mental disorders’, which sit at the other end of the spectrum. These terms tend to be used to cover clinical diagnoses which enable professionals to deliver appropriate care or treatment. For example, these may range from personality disorders to types of dementia.

Struggles with stress, anxiety and depression are perhaps some of the most common mental health difficulties seen in farming.

4a. Stress

Stress is understood to be a natural physical reaction to changes or events that make us feel threatened or upset. In response to danger – whether real or imagined – our natural defences of freeze, fight or flight kick into gear. This is the body’s way of protecting us from harm. Stress is a necessary part of everyday life. It allows us to stay focussed, energetic and alert. It can be an important and powerful motivator enabling us to take pleasure in challenges and to achieve goals. However too much stress over a long time gradually becomes damaging and starts to impact our physical and emotional health. This in turn affects our mood, productivity, relationships etc. Constant exposure to high levels of stress that we cannot cope with is also thought to increase the risk of developing depression.

4b. Depression

From a strictly medical standpoint, there are various types of depression recognised as distinct conditions, with different diagnosis. Yet in its simplest terms depression is characterised by a sad, hopeless state which leaves people regularly feeling down and gloomy. According to the WHO, depression is *“characterised by sadness, loss of interest or pleasure, feelings of guilt or low self-worth, disturbed sleep or appetite, feelings of tiredness and poor concentration. Depression can be long-lasting or recurrent, substantially impairing an individual’s ability to function at work or school or cope with daily life. At its most severe, depression can lead to suicide. When mild, people can be treated*



without medicines but when depression is moderate or severe they may need medication and professional talking treatments”.

The term depression is often used very loosely. It is common for people to say they are depressed generally, or feeling depressed about something, when actually they are simply experiencing a normal reaction to situations and circumstances they may be facing in their lives. Feeling down in response to difficult situations is normal. Everybody will tend to experience moments where they feel down, sad, dissatisfied, lacking in motivation etc. Such feelings usually pass in time. However, when such experiences last for long periods of time, are intense, persistent and don't go away even when circumstances improve is when it can become debilitating depression. Often people with depression may also experience anxiety and panic - a feeling of constant unease, worry or fear. Poor mental health can affect anyone at any time regardless of age, background, culture, gender and economic status. Stress, depression and anxiety do not discriminate and are more prevalent than many think.

In their own words: Farmers and depression

“Looking back I can see where the wheels started to fall off, but at the time I didn't realise it. The pressures of long hours, physically demanding work, constantly worrying about production, animal health compliance issues, cash flows, high debt levels and living on the job 24/7 had taken a toll. My life had spiralled down into sheer hell for me. I wasn't sleeping; I wasn't eating. I couldn't finish anything I started and I was stressed by everything around me”.

John White: Dairy Farmer, Taranaki, New Zealand

“As a young man I never thought I would do anything but succeed in life. Failure was never on my radar. Nowhere in my life story was failure supposed to exist. The self-recognition that not only the business had failed but that I had failed really hurt. When I was in my bad place I never imagined things could be so bad. Emotionally I took it all the wrong way. I didn't have the skills to manage what was going on in my life. So I started self-destruction, which is what depression is. You get a bad thought that multiplies until such time that you have no nice thoughts left. I went down that tunnel. I had totally isolated myself in my own little cesspit on the farm, resigned from all organisations that I was involved with and my poor wife was the only friend I had.”

Doug Avery: Livestock farmer, Marlborough, New Zealand

“What was going on internally? I didn't want to get out of bed in the morning. I had no appetite for work on the farm. I was a pain in the house. They were dark days. I didn't really care about anything in life. I never saw myself getting better. I thought I am stuck with this for the rest of my life. People would tell me that I would get better over time but I would never believe them. At the time it was absolute doom & gloom. I withdrew from society and all of the things I was involved with in life. I just wanted to pull the curtains, go to bed.”

David Kerr: Dairy farmer, Ireland

“I was working but not coping. I lost my ability to make a decision, I simply didn't have the energy. I couldn't concentrate on anything, not even a conversation. I'd spend hours and hours in my truck, driving around terrified. I was an emotional wreck and avoided everybody and everything, even my family. You get to a point



*where you simply can't function. I became a person I didn't know. I basically had no desire to carry on"*³.

James Drury: Farmer, South West UK

4c. Stress and farming life

It is generally acknowledged that the unique circumstances of farming mean that farmers, farm workers and family are exposed to a wide range of stressors. This is exacerbated by a sense that many of the stressors are out of farmers' control. Whilst by no means an exhaustive list, the following gives a brief flavour of some of the common inter-related sources of stress and anxiety.

4c.i. Remoteness and isolation

Farmers often work in isolation and can spend long hours alone with little human contact. Not all farmers have social or family networks to provide a level of contact and support or people to talk with to help them stay connected to the world outside the farm. Some farmers speak of how the vet or the tanker driver can be the only people they may see for days. In addition, more remote rural areas lack many facilities taken for granted in populated urban areas. The remoteness of many farming communities means they are often geographically distant from mainstream health services, which may limit their access to support.

4c.ii. Changing rural life

In parts of the UK countryside much of the traditional rural fabric is being eroded. The closure of rural pubs and village shops has been well publicised. Other once familiar parts of the social fabric such as rural churches, schools and sports clubs are also under threat. This can add to the sense of loneliness and isolation experienced by farmers. Whilst once farmers may have been the centre of their communities, today rural villages are often populated with those who have migrated to the countryside, may commute to work in far off places, have little understanding of the farming world around them and little interaction with farmers. For farmers, this can perpetuate a sense of their disconnection from wider society; a sense that they are not valued or recognised by the non-farming community. This can add to the experiences of stress and isolation.

4c.iii. 24/7 cycle

The 24/7 nature of farming means that it never really stops. There is always work to be done on farm. Farming demands long hours of work, often spent alone. Seasonal peaks such as harvest or lambing can be especially stressful and at these times of the farming calendar it is not uncommon for farmers to work up to 15-20 hours a day. Many farmers are working under pressure for years without a proper break. Often those who want to get away from the farm for a while struggle to do so since in smaller family units there is often nobody to cover the work and they may have difficulty sourcing skilled relief labour. Sometimes farmers are working on through sickness and injury. The concept of 'sick leave' is



simply not an option as often there is nobody else available to cover the work. Livestock still need to be fed and tended to; cows still need to be milked.

4c.iv. Fusion of work and home

Running a farm business typically means that work coexists at the same place as family life. Home is work; work is home. Work colleagues are family members; family members are work colleagues. There is often little opportunity to fully switch off.

4c.v. Financial pressure

In recent years rising input costs, volatile commodity markets, downward price pressure from retailers and various other factors have meant many farming businesses struggle to sustain regular healthy returns from agriculture alone. Family labour, support payments through the Common Agriculture Policy and off-farm income are often propping up farming businesses. Some are carrying significant levels of debt and with this can come huge anxiety. Debt has been shown to be correlated with and probably a contributory cause to clinical levels of depression and in extreme cases suicide⁴.

4c.iv. Regulation and red tape

One of the most common complaints I hear from farmers is about the plethora of regulatory red tape that result in mountains of paperwork, form filling, record keeping requirements and so on. Having to comply and keep on top of this can be especially stressful and burdensome for smaller family farms. Increasing regulatory complexity continues to impact on the mental health of already stressed farming populations.

Stress and frustration becomes heightened by a sense that many regulations and decisions directly impacting their business are made by faceless decision makers in faraway London or Brussels through a process over which farmers have little control or input.

4c.v. Weather

From unpredictable weather patterns to extreme events, farmers frequently cite weather as a hugely stressful factor as it is completely out of their control. In recent years terrible flooding in the UK has caused much damage and distress to some farming areas. During my visit to Australia I visited the northern part of New South Wales which had been suffering through a severe drought for successive years. Australian farmers I talked to spoke about the psychological impact of watching day in day out as drought decimated the farm.

4c.vi. Visibility

Farming areas are by their nature smaller communities. This can mean there is a high level of local knowledge and visibility among residents. If farmers are struggling emotionally they may feel extra



pressure from this 'glass bowl' effect. Similarly, this level of visibility may dissuade people from seeking help from local professionals due to their concerns over maintaining anonymity and confidentiality.

4c.ix. Disease

It has been widely reported how the UK's devastating outbreak of Foot and Mouth disease in 2001 caused much prolonged psychological and emotional distress to farming families. These days the on-going spread of Bovine Tuberculosis (TB) in England causes immense emotional impact for farmers and their families⁵. A Farming Community Network report highlighted how living with TB and the corresponding testing regime causes considerable stress on farmers and their families. The report noted farmers' reactions ranging between feeling the pressure but coping, through to actual physical illness caused by stress and in some cases feelings of not wanting to carry on. Some indicated a desire to come out of farming or even end their lives because under the current control regime they see no light at the end of the tunnel.⁶

4c.x. Injury and physical pain

Many farmers and farm workers are working through physical pain without proper medical attention. Carrying untreated physical pain can itself be a source of stress and lead to depression.

4c.xi. Agrochemicals

There is research to suggest that long-term exposure to certain organophosphate and organochlorine pesticides is linked to depression and mental health problems in farmers and farm workers⁷. For instance, the health problems faced by UK farmers as a result of using organophosphate-based (OP) chemicals to protect their sheep against parasites has been well documented.

4c.xii. Intergenerational disputes

For many farming families the issue of succession has become a particularly distressing topic causing ongoing stress and anxiety for both generations.

Mental health and farming: A snapshot

- One in four people in the UK will experience a mental health problem in any given year.⁸
- According to the 2010 Global Burden of Disease Study, the most predominant mental health problems worldwide are depression and anxiety.⁹



- Suicide is now the single biggest cause of death for men aged 20-49 years in England and Wales. In 2012, more than three quarters of deaths by suicide were by men.¹⁰
- Every year around 50 British farmers die by suicide.¹¹
- England's national suicide prevention strategy identifies farmers as one of the occupational groups with the highest risk of suicide.¹²
- British farmers are twice more likely to contemplate suicide compared with the general public.¹³
- In the USA, farmers together with foresters and fishermen have the highest suicide rate of any profession.¹⁴
- Depression and suicide amongst farmers is a global problem. Research has suggested the suicide rate among French farmers is 20 percent more than the French population as a whole¹⁵. Suicide amongst farmers in India has been described to be at epidemic levels where the rate for farmers is 48% higher than any other profession.

4d. Stigma and the farming man

I certainly do not want to give the idea that all farmers are highly stressed or depressed. Yet poor mental health in agriculture is now acknowledged as a serious issue. Though society's attitudes to and awareness of mental ill health are slowly changing, the issue is nevertheless often viewed with stigma and judgement. Shame and taboo around the subject seems to particularly persist in the farming community.

While more women are becoming more involved in agriculture and farmer's wives and partners continue to play an important and often unsung role in farming business, it nevertheless remains a male-dominated profession. Across society in general, it is understood that compared with women, men stereotypically have more difficulty admitting to feeling fragile or emotionally vulnerable. Whilst farming men may talk about their bad back or bad knees they are less likely to talk with family, friends or health professionals about difficult feelings that may be bothering them. Furthermore, within the world of farming, a level of social conditioning over generations, particularly amongst men, is thought to have encouraged an innate culture of self-reliance, stoicism and independence. This means many farmers may hold a traditional view of masculinity whereby men are expected to be tough, powerful and successful. Consequently, they often carry unrealistic expectations that they should be able to cope and handle their problems on their own.

I have often heard farmers describe how farming is somehow 'in the blood'. American farmer and psychologist Michael Rosmann has proposed the concept of 'The Agrarian imperative' to describe the in-built calling that drives farmers to the land¹⁶. This is the idea that, "*humans have an innate drive to work the land and produce food for their families and communities – farmers take significant risks to satisfy that drive and if they are unsuccessful they develop a deep sense of failure. The same traits that*



motivate farmers to be successful are associated with depression and suicide if their farming objectives aren't met".

Indeed, farming is a multigenerational way of life and many have had farms passed down through generations. With this many feel they are carrying an inner burden that they must not be the one that breaks the chain; they must not be the first generation that fails and destroys the legacy. This is felt deeply and emotionally by many farmers. This 'Patrilineal burden' can mean that men's view of their gender identity is linked to their generational positioning as belonging to the land. Therefore, they may believe that if this is threatened then so, potentially, are they.¹⁷

These aspects of farming culture are thought to exacerbate the stigma around mental health as it means that admitting to struggling mentally and emotionally and having to ask for support is taken as evidence of personal failure. This also brings with it a fear of being judged by others as being somehow weak. Whilst farmers are very willing to offer help to others, ironically they are often unwilling to ask for help themselves. Instead they may tend to keep concerns bottled up and attempt to rationalise what they are feeling as a normal response to difficult situations. They may socially withdraw, isolate themselves and wrestle with feelings of shame and guilt. They will commonly put off going to see a doctor or admitting they need help until they are close to breaking point. Such deep-rooted attitudes are another barrier when attempting to address the problem.

- A study by the Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy found the farming community the group least likely to talk to a friend about stress or depression with just 31% saying they had done so compared to the national average of 49%. Just 7% of respondents from the farming community said they would speak to a doctor and only 5% said they would speak to a counsellor or psychotherapist about personal problems compared to a national average of 21% and 13% respectively.¹⁸
- 72% of Irish farmers surveyed would not want others to know if they had a mental health problem; 39% of farmers would hide a diagnosis of a mental health problem from friends; 29% believe that friends would distance themselves as a reaction to a mental health problem; 33% would delay seeking help for fear of having to let others know about it. 22% believe that a partner would end relationship as a reaction to a diagnosis with mental health problem.¹⁹²⁰
<http://link.springer.com/book/10.1007%2F978-3-319-27839>

Living with continual stress or struggling on without care and attention to mental and emotional health all comes at the cost of the lives of farmers and their families who are affected psychologically, socially and economically. There is also the cost in the long term to the agriculture industry and the wellbeing of its people. Stress and mental health is often a factor in farm accidents as people are prone to risky decisions or driven to carelessness when tired, stressed and lacking sharpness. Poor mental health is likely to increase the risk of injury or accidental death.²¹



One of the most tragic consequences is the number of farmers who end their lives by suicide. Whilst most people who are stressed or depressed do not kill themselves, it is important to recognise that untreated, unaddressed depression can increase the possible risk of suicide. Sadly, every year we hear stories of farmers dying by suicide. It has also been suggested it is possible that some deaths reported as accidents or death by misadventure may in fact be suicide as it can be difficult for coroners to reach an irrefutable conclusion.

I am not in any way suggesting that all farmers are depressed or suicidal. However, it is now clear that the high levels of stress and poor mental health are an issue of concern for UK agriculture. Consequently, I believe the industry needs to continue exploring how to address this issue and how to prioritise the issue of farmer wellbeing so that we reduce the risk of harm and suicide as well as improving farmer productivity and the quality of life for our farming families.



Chapter 6. Routes to engagement

Many farming communities around the world are also concerned about the mental health of their farmers. During my Nuffield Farming study tour, I encountered many inspiring initiatives aiming to address the subject. In general, initiatives in this area are engaging along common inter-related themes:

- Developing and improving the evidence base
- Educating and raising awareness
- Developing appropriate services and facilities
- Reducing stigma
- Improving awareness and knowledge of skills that support healthy behaviour

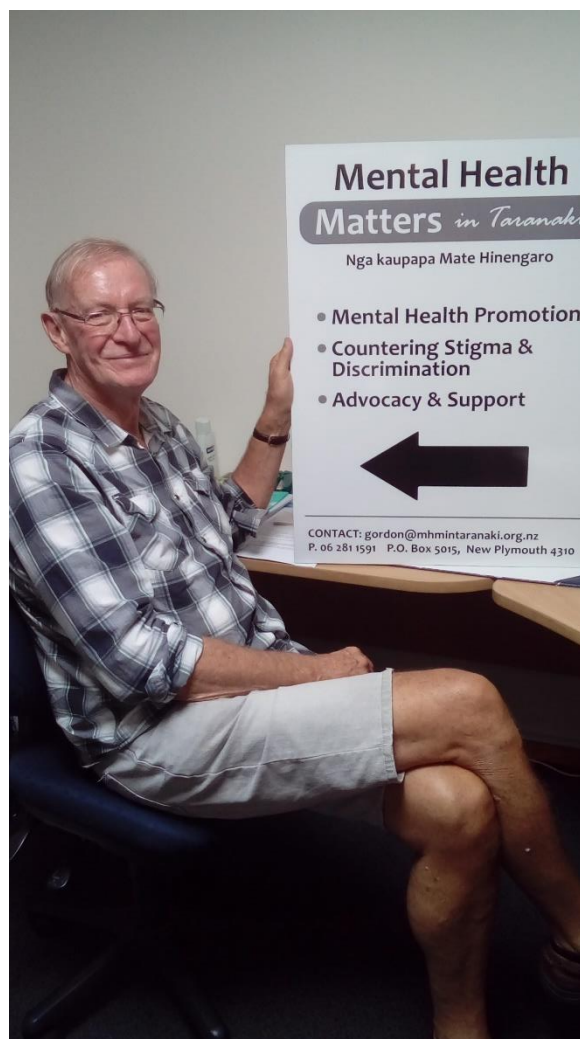


Figure 2: Gordon Hudson: Mental health advocate in Taranaki, rural New Zealand



6a. Developing and improving the evidence base

Getting a clearer idea of the scale of the problem and being able to separate fact from myth would seem to be an essential part of the development of effective strategies to address farmer wellbeing. The Australian farming community has been fortunate that it can draw upon specialist research capability from well-funded institutes such as the Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health and the National Centre for Farmer Health. Both of these centres focus on research translation and the development of intervention strategies for rural mental health and wellbeing. The fact that the country has such facilities is perhaps reflective of its vast rural nature, the importance of agriculture to Australia's economy and culture, plus the urgent concern over rural mental health. Consequently, Australia seems to be generating a good body of evidence and research to inform its policies and intervention.



Figure 3: Visiting Trevor Hazel (left) at Australia's Centre for Rural & Remote Mental Health in Orange, New South Wales

Yet even still, many of the initiatives I encountered had clearly ventured beyond the headlines and high-level academic studies and augmented their anecdotal knowledge by gathering their own meaningful, practical data. New Zealand has a system of 'Health Pitstops' which provide farmers the opportunity for a general physical and mental health check. These Pitstops are present at major industry events such as agricultural shows and field days. Farmers are assessed on factors such as height, weight, blood pressure, cholesterol and blood glucose. The check also incorporates an emotional wellbeing assessment looking at issues such as stress, fatigue and depression. Nearly 3,000 Health Pitstop Checks were undertaken in New Zealand between 2010-2014 (Source: DairyNZ). Australia's National Centre for Farmer Health has been providing similar free 'Health and Lifestyle Assessments' at farmer gatherings since 2009. In addition to common physical factors these also aim to assess social and emotional wellbeing using a screening tool called 'The Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10)'. This simple checklist is used to measure to what degree one may be affected by issues such as nervousness, anxiousness, depression, stress. On-going measurements of these factors amongst farming populations across both countries has provided a rich source of hard data as to the levels of stress, exhaustion, burnout, depression and anxiety present in the industry and have been instrumental in shaping approaches to address the topic.



Another important factor for those initiatives working on farmer wellbeing is the careful consideration of the views of farmer populations. What is their assessment of their own needs? What is it that they value? Effective consultation with farmers as to what they believe would help and support their wellbeing is another part of the picture in building up the evidence and ensuring that approaches are grounded in farmer experience. This for instance has been a key feature behind the approach of New Zealand's farmer wellbeing initiative, 'Farmstrong.' (See figure 4 below). Such findings have guided the shaping of its strategy, helped it target activities to match farmer needs and ensure that the programme remains grounded in farmer experience.

TOPICS INTERESTED IN	Total 251 %
Balancing work and family and getting time off the farm	47
How to manage tiredness and fatigue	35
How to get the best out of employees	34
Understanding legislation relating to farming	33
How to manage stress	31
How to use computers, tablets/smart phones	30
Techniques to stop worrying about work all the time	29
Succession planning	27
Financial planning	25
Time management/how to use time most efficiently	24
How to resolve conflict	24
How to plan for retirement	23
Techniques for solving problems	23
Business planning	22

Figure 4: Results of 2014 survey undertaken by New Zealand's farmer wellbeing project, 'Farmstrong', showed farmers wanted more information on how to look after themselves and their families.

Nearly half of respondents to the survey wanted advice on how to achieve better work-life balance and over a third wanted to know more about managing tiredness and fatigue. (Source: Farmstrong)

6b. Raising awareness

A central part of campaigns and initiatives was the need to increase farmer knowledge and understanding of the subject of mental and emotional health. A variety of approaches was being used to communicate practical information, break down stigma and generally create more publicity on the issue.

6b.i. Dedicated campaigns and initiatives

During my visits to Australia and New Zealand it was particularly interesting to see the considerable number of educational initiatives and awareness-raising campaigns on the issue of mental health and



wellbeing. Specialised literature, information websites, social media, educational workshops, themed events and training initiatives as well as communication through trade media were all being employed.

Both countries seemed awash with a range of excellent literature targeted specifically at farmers. In addition to factsheets, handbooks and information leaflets there were also a number of more in-depth publications. 'The Glovebox Guide to Mental Health' is a quarterly free magazine distributed widely across rural Australia. It is produced by the Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health in partnership with Australia's leading rural weekly newspaper, 'The Land'. Similarly, in New Zealand a number of local regions have developed 'Down on the farm' publications. Both are packed full of information. In their pages, farmers and members of the rural community share first-hand accounts of their experiences of stress, depression and attempted suicide whilst mental health professionals offer advice and information. There is also lots of information signposting readers to other types of support available in the rural sector. Both publications tailor their material to a farming audience using simple, non-clinical language in easy to read magazine-style format. Both aim to encourage people to talk as openly about mental health as they do about other common farming challenges.

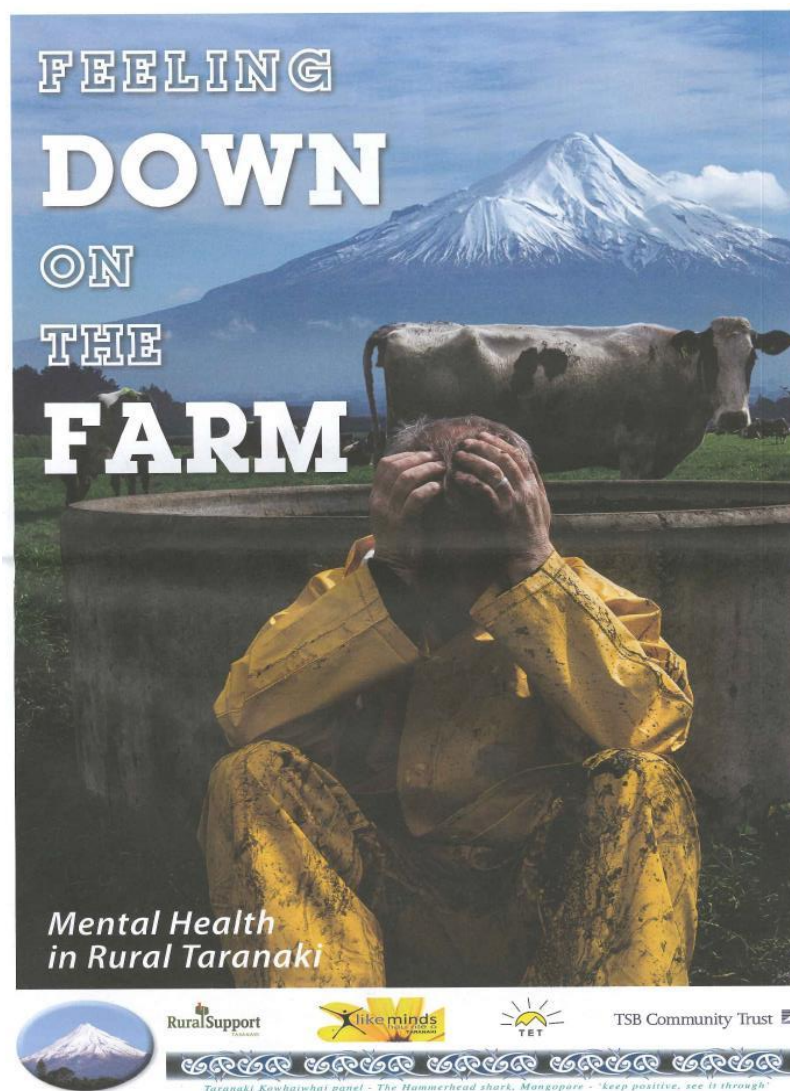


Figure 5: 'Feeling Down on the Farm' – Award-winning New Zealand publication aiming to raise mental health awareness amongst Taranaki's farming community

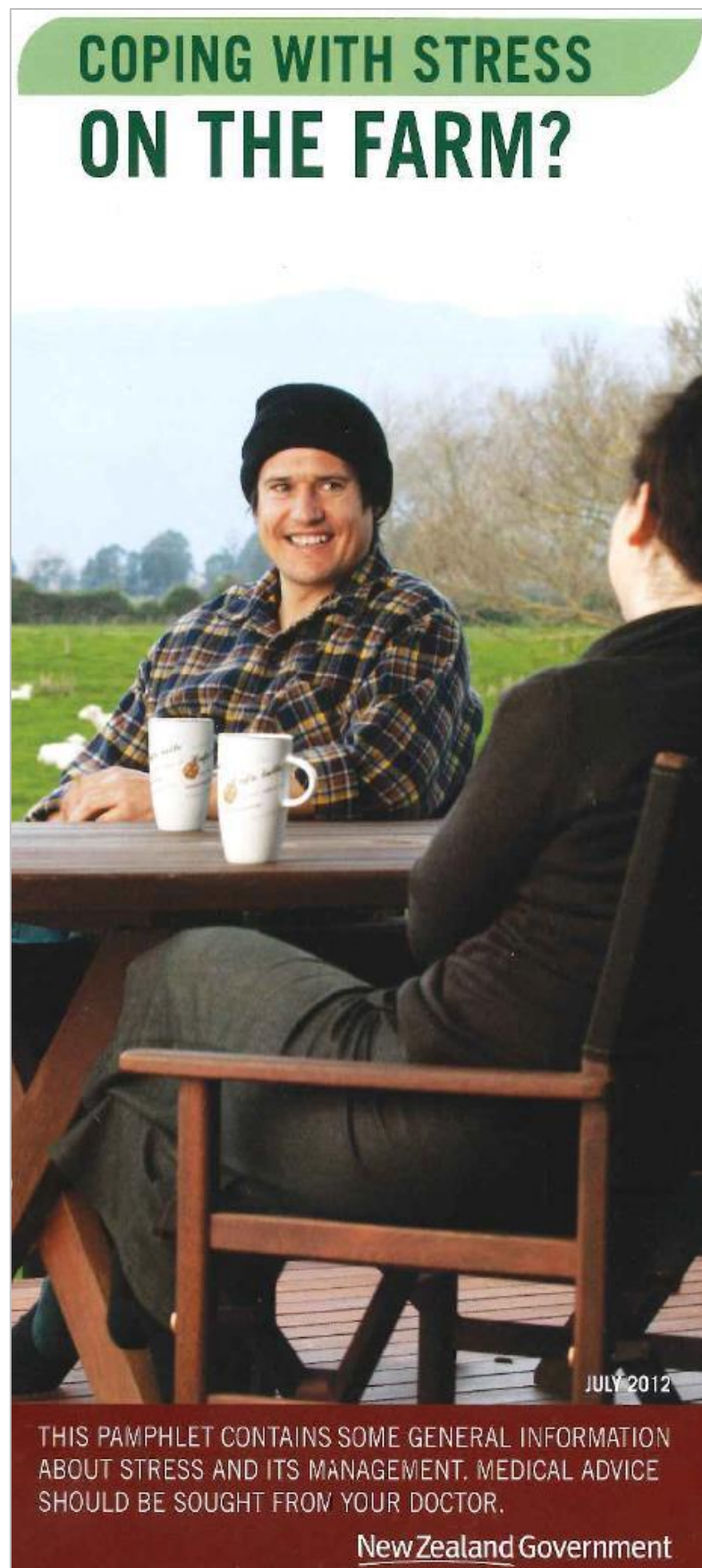


Figure 6: New Zealand Government information pamphlet aimed at farmers

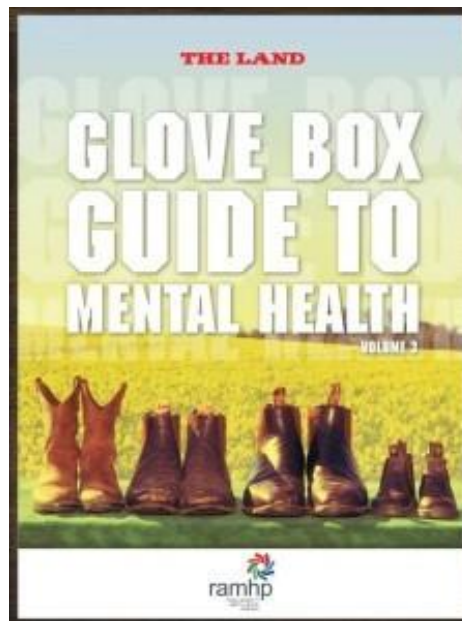


Figure 7: Rural Australia's free quarterly publication, 'Glove Box Guide to Mental Health'

New Zealand has a number of well-funded and resourced educational initiatives aimed specifically at the farming sector. DairyNZ is New Zealand's levy-funded, dairy sector extension service and has received government funding to develop its own dedicated 'Farmer wellness and wellbeing programme'. Another impressive initiative is Farmstrong which aims to encourage a culture change where farmers take ownership for their physical health and mental wellbeing.

Farmstrong: Farm Well; Live Well

Farmstrong is an initiative promoting wellbeing for all farmers and growers across New Zealand. Encapsulated in its mantra, 'Farm Well Live Well', Farmstrong aims to encourage a culture change where farmers take ownership for their physical health and mental wellbeing so that they can indeed live well, farm well and get the most out of life. Rather than concentrating on illness and depression, Farmstrong's focus is solely preventative. It is this that makes it particularly different from many other farmer support initiatives. The Farmstrong programme is purposely designed to sit 'upstream' and teach practical, proactive measures that farmers can integrate into their busy lives on farm, to benefit their wellbeing and support their family, staff and rural community. Farmstrong offers advice on topics such as nutrition, fitness, sleep, managing fatigue, building mental and physical resilience, strengthening links with family and community and scheduling time off the farm.

Farmstrong is a non-commercial initiative funded through generous corporate sponsorship from some of New Zealand's leading companies – in particular the rural insurance provider, FMG. As opposed to being dependent on precarious, short-term funding this financial support has enabled Farmstrong to adopt a minimum 10-year vision and thereby work to deliver the *(continued on next page)*



sort of longer-term programme it believes is necessary to support gradual change. Good financial resources have allowed Farmstrong to invest in strong branding as well as sophisticated market research, communications, advertising and measurement activity. Farmstrong is also working to recruit a network of farmer ambassadors. These ambassadors will promote Farmstrong messages and deliver advice across the regions and so accelerate the programme's aim of increased adoption of wellbeing behaviours by farmers.



6b.ii. Awareness events

In some areas, farmer mental health had become such a topic of concern that open discussion was being encouraged through information days. While these type of events are now common in Australia – especially in drought affected areas - I was surprised to find the issue beginning to be so openly discussed within the comparatively conservative farming culture of Finland.

Finish agriculture communities are facing a number of challenges. Its farmer population is ageing. Agriculture is becoming more marginal to Finnish society. Small, traditionally run family farms have struggled with gradual structural changes following the country's ascension to the EU in the mid-1990s. More recently, Russian trade embargos have led to declines in markets prices and had a damaging economic impact on Finland's food and farming industry. Increasing cases of stress, anxiety and depression were being reported amongst farmers. Some suggested this was being compound by an inherent drinking culture – especially in the remote northern part of the country.

In response farming organisations were delivering a series of events across the country. These one-day events were structured around the broad theme of how to take good care of oneself and one's business during times of considerable economic pressure. The events featured presentations from financial advisers on subjects such as budget planning, pension provision and the importance of looking after oneself through accident insurance provision etc. However, a good proportion of the agenda was dedicated to mental health and wellbeing. This included a farmer talking about farmer identity and how to develop mental strength in difficult times. There was also a 'Happiness Professor'



speaking about how to handle stress, deal with difficult change and keep a positive outlook in life. The events were supported by and funded by the rural banking, pension and insurance sector. There was also an exhibitor's area where different organisations had trade stands and a drop-in clinic where farmers could undergo a basic health check. Private rooms were available so people could have conversations in private.

GREASE & OIL CHANGE
A brain and body workshop for rural men and women.

THURSDAY 17th MARCH 2016
TIME: 10AM – 2:00PM
VENUE: TRUNDLE GOLF CLUB, TRUNDLE, NSW

How are you and yours travelling? Di Gill - RAMHP	Sausage making Danny Byrnes - DPI
Living with mental ill health and the road to recovery. Geoff Chase - Farmer	Let's Cook: 5 ingredients Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner. Cherie Stitt – Wannabe Cook
Mindfulness; a guided exercise with Gabrielle Waters-Mckay - Psychologist Community Health	Tractor Yoga Chris Wills – Farmer and yoga enthusiast
Mixing good food with good health. Belinda Anderson - Dietitian & Nutri-therapist	Free Skin Checks Laurinne Campbell – Registered Nurse

For catering purposes please R.S.V.P by the 10th of March

Cherie Stitt (0411) 057 745 or
cheriequade@hotmail.com
OR
James Leigo DPI (0419) 110 714
or james.leigo@dpi.nsw.gov.au

Figure 8: Example of promotional flyer for a 'Grease & Oil Change: Brain & Body Workshop' event in rural Australia



Figure 9: With farmer, Maija Pispa (Left) and farmer, Marko Honkaniemi (centre) with his Highland cattle on his farm in Pinsio, beautiful Finland



Figure 10: Farmer, Maarit Kalio – a strong advocate for mental health and wellbeing amongst farmers in Finland – on farm with her Simmental cattle

The organisers of these events explained they knew there was a need for more information and education in this area yet at first were unsure whether farmers would openly attend a public event on such a sensitive and difficult topic. Having expected around 30 to 40 attendees, over 200 farmers attended the initial event in 2015. This and the fact that a series of further events around the country were oversubscribed illustrates the interest and demand shown by farmers.

6b.iii. Targeted training

There are a number of established introductory educational courses on mental health and suicide prevention. For example, 'Mental Health First Aid' and 'safeTALK' are two models that are popular and well known in the UK. I found organisations in Australia and New Zealand's agriculture community had designed similar themed, structured training yet had specifically tailored the content and style of



delivery to a farming audience. They had also been able to secure funding to deliver and promote it. In New South Wales, Australia, I was fortunate to be able to participate in a suicide prevention skills workshop with farm owners and members of the local Aborigine community. This was organised and delivered by 'Farm-Link'. Similarly, in New Zealand I had the opportunity to experience DairyNZ's 'Good Yarn' workshop together with farmers and rural professionals.



Figure 11: With farming families and community members at Farm-Link's Suicide Prevention Skills workshop in Inverell, New South Wales, Australia

see poster for Australia's Farm-Link initiative on the next page.

Both initiatives are structured as a half-day group workshop. Material is presented in an educational style with visual presentations and workbooks. Interactive discussion is encouraged and there are some challenging group exercises. Both workshops aim to raise awareness of the importance of looking after one's wellbeing and introduce participants to practical steps they can take to help maintain and improve their mental and emotional health. They also educate participants in how to recognise signs of stress and common mental health problems. In doing so the idea is to reduce stigma and give participants greater knowledge and confidence in how to talk to someone about their mental health as well as the taboo topic of suicide. The training also highlights support services that are available. This helps participants to feel more knowledgeable and confident in referring those in distress towards appropriate support. Workshop facilitators are not expected to be clinical professionals as material is pitched at an appropriate level. Crucially, facilitators are expected to have experience and understanding of farming culture. Both initiatives were being heavily promoted to farming communities.

Bearing in mind some of the stigma and resistance towards the topic and the fact that farmers have to see enough value in the training to give up a day to attend, then it is accepted that there may be difficulties attracting large numbers of farmers. Rather it is likely to be the more progressive farmers and farmer leaders who engage as opposed to the isolated struggling farmer that these initiatives ultimately hope to reach. However, the demographic Farm-Link and Good Yarn particularly aim to target is rural professionals within the farming sector such as vets, rural bankers, agrochemical reps, tanker drivers etc.

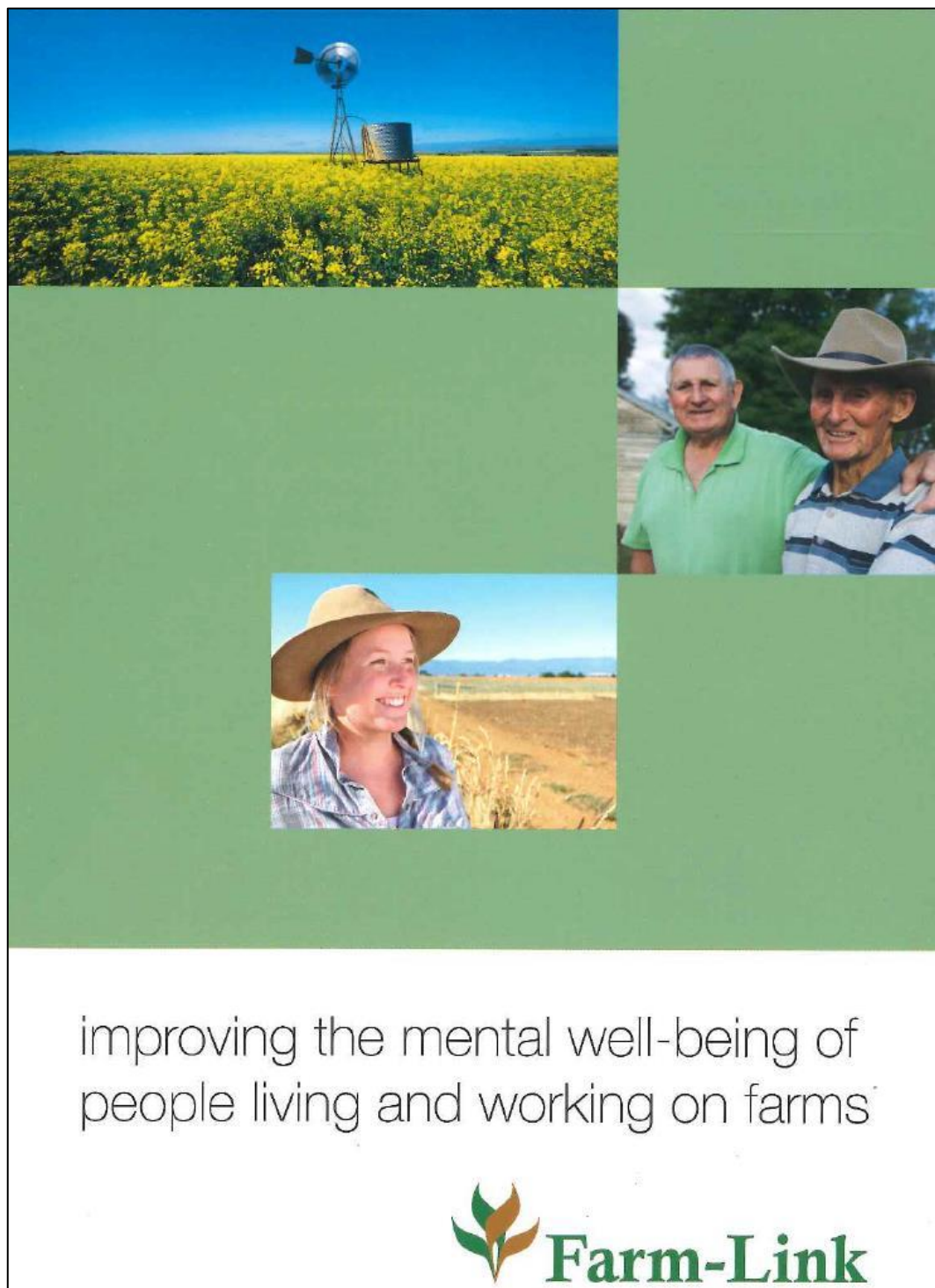


Figure 12: Australia's Farm-Link initiative



Figure 13: With farmers and rural professionals at DairyNZ's 'Good Yarn' Workshop in Winton, New Zealand



Figure 14: New Zealand's 'Good Yarn' Workshop



Australia's National Centre for Farmer Health together with the School of Medicine at Deakin University aims for a similar effect with its course in Agricultural Health and Medicine. This is a 5-day intensive study course particularly targeted at rural professionals, health professionals, health care administrators and policy makers. The course highlights some of the physical and mental health issues facing farmers, farm employees and their families. Participants get to hear from high calibre specialists including general medical practitioners, trauma surgeons, psychologists and various experts in occupational health. A good chunk of the course is devoted to mental health and wellbeing.

When I took the course my classmates were drawn from a diverse range of rural professionals each of who would come across farmers and farm personnel in their daily working life. For example, various nursing professionals working in rural settings; a small town osteopath with a large number of farmers and farm workers amongst her clients; a paramedic regularly called out to farms in her remote rural catchment area; and field staff from some of Australia's leading dairies. By taking the course they aimed to develop their knowledge and confidence about the health challenges faced by farming families and improve their understanding of the nuances of farmer culture. In this way they could be better equipped to respond to the needs of the farming community and become advocates for farmer wellbeing in their particular sphere of influence.



Figure 15: Studying Agricultural Health and Medicine at Australia's National Centre for Farmer Health in Hamilton, Victoria

Lincoln University is New Zealand South Island's specialist land-based institution. Working together with DairyNZ, the University has incorporated the topic of wellbeing as part of a module on people management for agricultural students. This module involves courses on each of human resources, leadership management and wellbeing. Questions on the topic now feature in course examinations and it is hoped it can now be taken to the stage where there is a higher level assessment. According to DairyNZ, feedback from students has been positive. A particular piece of feedback recounted to me was a student who shared how he was scared and hesitant to go into farming. His words were "My Dad has no life". However, having taken the course he shared how he learned that by doing some things differently he can find a healthy balance with his life and the demands of managing a farming



business. In addition to the universities, New Zealand's technical colleges deliver training to primary industries through a series of qualifications known as 'Primary ITO'. DairyNZ have also helped create material for this and trained tutors on wellbeing issues. This material is now incorporated as part of the Primary ITO Agricultural courses. This features 2.5 days of wellbeing content as part of a 5 day Human Resources module including homework and assessments.

6c. Developing facilities and services

Appropriate services and facilities may not always be readily accessible in more remote rural areas and, if they are, farmers may be reluctant to engage with them. This may be due to stigma, an inherent resistance to seek help or a sense that most health professionals simply cannot relate to the values, concerns, language and nuances of farmer culture. Therefore, a lot of farming communities have developed their own services that are better placed to engage with farmers on issues of wellbeing or support farmer wellbeing.

6c.i. Farmer welfare services

Farmer welfare services run by the farming community for the farming community are often the first port of call for farmers or concerned family and friends when it comes to concerns of mental and emotional health. In the UK, charitable organisations such as Farming Community Network (FCN), Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution (RABI), the Rural Support Networks, YANA (You are not alone) and agricultural chaplaincy teams offer dedicated pastoral and practical support. New Zealand has a nation-wide network of Rural Support Trusts which provides similar assistance to farmers and rural communities.

In the case of FCN and RABI for instance, while mental health is often central to many cases they may deal with, it is frequently entangled in a complex web of other practical problems such as debt, farm eviction, marital difficulties or family disputes. Organisations like FCN and RABI walk beside people through their problems and difficulties so that they don't have to face them on their own. As well as providing one-on-one practical support, these types of organisations also offer confidential farmer helplines, are well placed to refer on those in need to more specialist help and, in some cases, can provide financial support to farmers. These organisations are typically working at the 'emergency end' of the scale – often dealing with farming families close to breaking point or dealing with immense hardship. New Zealand's Rural Support Trusts are particularly known for the assistance they can provide rural communities and individuals during and following adverse events such as floods and droughts.

One of the greatest strengths of all these types of organisations is that they are fronted by staff and volunteers drawn from farming or rural backgrounds. They therefore have a deep understanding of rural and farming concerns. They understand much of the language, psyche and idiosyncrasies of farmers. Though not health professionals, they are experienced in providing an empathetic listening ear and can confidently support people to unburden some of the mental and emotional weight they may be carrying.



6c.ii. Financial guidance

During my visit to New South Wales, Australia, I met with the Rural Financial Counselling Service. Funded by State and Federal Governments it offers free and confidential financial help to primary producers and rural businesses. Financial counsellors assist farmers to identify financial and business options, negotiate with lenders, help with refinancing and refer them to a range of other forms of support. Ultimately, the service aims to build up business resilience and support people to become self-reliant with better financial management skills. Issues of debt and financial pressures are a source of much stress in farming and so specialised services such as this play a role in helping to reduce stressors at source. Similarly, UK farming charities such as RABI and FCN will often refer farmers to expert debt advisers to help take the pressure off and allow a better chance for recovery.

6c.iii. Occupational Health Services

Finland has a dedicated occupational health service for farmers and farm workers coordinated through the organisation, 'Mela'. This service entitles its members to an annual health check with doctors and occupational health professionals at a medical centre local to them. The service also incorporates farm visits from specialised nurses who help farmers assess exposure to health hazards. The service is tailored to meet the needs of farmers and their families and its health care professionals have an understanding of agriculture and the farming culture. To be part of this scheme is a voluntary decision as farmers are required to pay into it. However the main costs are subsidised by Government. Around 60% of full time Finnish farmers are thought to be involved.

6c.iv. Health and wellbeing checks

As explained in Section 6a, Australia and New Zealand have a well-developed system of 'Health and Lifestyle Assessments' or 'Health Pit Stops' which are often represented at agricultural shows and field days. Some farming support groups in the UK, such as Lincolnshire's Rural Support Network, also offer health screening services, for instance at auction marts. These allow farmers to engage with health professionals and help to normalise the idea of a routine health and wellbeing check. They also provide an opportunity to spot mental health issues and a less intimidating situation in which to begin a conversation on the general topic. In drought-affected areas of New South Wales where this service was being offered professional counsellors were also on hand with whom farmers could have an informal chat. This softly, softly approach had led to an increase in referrals for counselling with the local service providers.

6c.v. Counselling services

Some farming communities have made arrangements for farmers in distress to benefit from counselling with a qualified professional. In parts of Australia's New South Wales, drought assistance funding was being used to fund a free service whereby farmers could regularly meet for sessions with a local counsellor. The rural, remote nature of much of the state meant that many people struggled to access locally based or overstretched counselling services. A free service was therefore being organised by registered and accredited counsellors which offered farmers ongoing counselling via either phone or over the internet using Skype. These counsellors had undergone training to better



familiarise themselves with the issues and challenges farmers were typically facing. The UK charity, YANA, works in the eastern counties of England and supports farmers in need as well as people in associated rural professions to access a professional counsellor. Overstretched resources can mean there is often a waiting list of several weeks before one is able to see a National Health Service provider. By contrast, YANA has access to a network of private counsellors and is able to provide funding to cover costs so that farmers can access counselling help promptly.

6d. Reducing stigma

As the stigma around the subject of mental health and wellbeing is one of the greatest barriers, tackling this is often a key strand running through all campaigns and initiatives directed at the farming community. Education and raising awareness supports people to better understand the issue and helps to dispel myths with accurate information. This in turn helps to break down the stigma. In essence one of the main aims is to encourage a critical mass of people to openly speak out about and discuss the issue. In doing so the issue becomes more widely acknowledged and normalised so that associated stigma, shame and taboo is gradually eroded and it becomes easier for farmers to ask for help.

6d.i. The power of farming voices

During my visit to Ireland I visited dairy farmer, David Kerr. David is well known in the Irish dairy farming industry and viewed as a highly successful and innovative operator. However, several years earlier David had been through a personal struggle with debilitating depression that severely impacted his health and ability to manage the farm business. David had been a speaker at a well-attended Irish Farmers Journal dairy seminar where he courageously shared his own personal story of stress and depression. The striking impact that this singular action of authentic disclosure appeared to have on fellow farmers is typified by the example of the letter displayed on the journal's correspondence page following the event: *"I see him as a top-class successful farmer and for him to tell his personal story was very surprising indeed. Who would have guessed what was going on for him? Anyone I spoke to afterwards said it was a fantastic talk. I came away realising that we all need to look in on our neighbours just for a chat!"*²². David himself shared with me how he was 'gobsmacked' at the positive way his story was received by fellow farmers. He had lost of count of the number of people who have since approached him and revealed the impact his story had upon them.

Similarly, whilst in New Zealand I met with Doug Avery who is a beef and sheep farmer in South Island's Marlborough region. Being a winner of New Zealand South Island Farmer of the year, ambassador for New Zealand's Landcare Trust, recipient of various environmental awards, and with his own radio slot meant Doug was well known as a prominent, high profile figure in New Zealand farming. Yet unknown to many was his internal struggle with depression. On his live radio slot Doug decided to tell his story. He told me how that particular broadcast generated the biggest listener response the station ever had. Soon afterwards he was receiving calls from farmers and even chief executives of major agricultural companies applauding him for speaking out and many of them revealing similar struggles.



These examples show how farmers telling their own personal story of their struggles and experiences with mental health has tremendous potential to break down stigma. It also models to others that it is OK to speak out about the issue. Consequently, many initiatives tackling mental health are making use of this approach. In Australia and New Zealand in particular, I noticed how such farmers would often be speakers at awareness-raising events. Similarly, articles in farming magazines or local press would often feature farmers sharing their personal stories and signposting others to available help.

The UK's National Federation of Young Farmer Clubs (NFYFC) recently launched an initiative known as 'Rural +'. This was created by former Chairman, Claire Worden, for whom mental health was brought into focus by her father's attempted suicide. The Rural+ campaign has done a lot to reduce stigma by encouraging open discussion of the issue among farming's younger generations. Through Rural +, local YFC clubs are encouraged to make contacts with organisations and initiatives supporting young people with mental health in their local area and to host club evenings on the topic.

6e. Promotion of skills and strategies supporting healthy behaviour

There are many steps farmers can take themselves to improve their overall wellbeing and ensure they are better placed to deal with the stresses and pressures of farming. I will go on to look at this in depth in chapter 8.

The Ripple Effect

The Ripple Effect (<https://therippleeffect.com.au>) is an online initiative which aims to break down stigma around farmer suicide in Australia and provide support and connection to farmers, farming families and rural communities. The Ripple Effect aims to stimulate a healthy discussion by talking directly and openly about the impact of suicide.

The Ripple Effect works like an interactive module. On one hand it functions as a research tool to investigate methods of reduction of stigma on the topic of farmer suicide. It does this by asking questions to those who participate with the site and collecting this user information as anonymous data. At the same time, as users work through the site, they have the opportunity to hear stories from others within the farming community who have been through similar circumstances. Users are also able to anonymously share their own story of an experience of suicide.

The journey through the site also allows users to learn more about the topic through the fact-based information and resources available. This includes educational slides, short videos, quizzes, and the ability to write messages on postcards that can be shared on the site for the benefit of others. Completion of the Ripple Effect is thought to take between 2.5 to 4 hours. The idea is it can be undertaken in a number of sessions over a couple of weeks as participants can return to where they left off at any time.

As its name suggest the initiative aims to transform the “negative ripple of suicide into a positive ripple of support”.



see picture of poster on next page.

SUICIDE - TAKING ON THE LAST TABOO
JOIN THE RIPPLE EFFECT

SUICIDE IS KILLING US.
Every farmer knows someone who has taken their life.
Every farm and family has lived with the emotional damage.
The ripple effect of that loss tears apart the fabric of family and community.

BUT YOU CAN HELP CHANGE THAT!
If we are going to turn back the tide of suicide on farms we need to know what people on farms are thinking. We need to know what you are thinking.
We want you to sign up for an anonymous survey - if you are aged over 18 please help us help you and your community.
It does not take much time and can be done where and when it suits you. But we need people from every state and territory to sign up.
The survey results will enable planners, researchers and government to fully realise the extent of the problem - and start developing ways to address it.
But it begins with you and signing up for our survey.

SIGN NOW AND HELP SAVE A LIFE - MAYBE EVEN YOUR LIFE.

WHAT CAN I DO?

- Log on www.rippleeffect.com.au
- Register, then participate - tell your story, hear farmers' stories
- Talk to anyone about the Ripple Effect
- Share on Facebook
- Distribute Ripple Effect flyers through your rural networks

Contact Alison on (03) 5551 8587 for more information.

Log on to: therippleeffect.com.au T: (03) 5551 8587 E: alison.kennedy@deakin.net @sementalsma #BeetRuralSuicide

Logos: AgVic, DEakin, and others.



Chapter 7. Opportunity in crisis

The wellbeing of farming communities is perhaps most vulnerable at times of industry crisis. UK farming suffered immensely as a result of the BSE crisis in the mid-1990s and it was at this time that the Farming Community Network came into being to offer much needed practical and pastoral support to those in need. Many farming families suffered great emotional and psychological distress as a result of the foot and mouth outbreak of 2001 and its aftermath. More recently localised crisis such as devastating floods have caused great personal stress and anguish to those farm business affected. At such difficult, pressurised times, the mental and emotional wellbeing of farmers can suffer and communities are likely to require additional support.

7a. Peer support in Denmark

In Denmark, high levels of debt have led to many farms being repossessed by banks, farming families having to leave their farms and exit the agriculture industry. Much of this is a result of the 2008 global financial crisis and currency decisions. In addition, environmental regulations have driven farms to take out loans to improve infrastructure and invest in modern equipment. All of this has been compounded by the recent Russian trade export embargo which has affected the country's important pig meat sector. This has resulted in high levels of stress, anxiety and depression as many farming families face bankruptcy and the emotional distress of having to leave the land which they may have farmed for several generations.

This has led to concerns about a possible repeat of farmer suicides that Denmark experienced during the agricultural crisis of the 1980s. In response, Denmark's main farming advisory and extension service, 'SEGES' is running a crisis support scheme for affected farming families. This is a free service funded by the Danish farming union together with contributions from various commercial agriculture organisations. Whilst the scheme provides a helpline for farmers and access to a free package of social work, what I found the most interesting and more novel aspect was the scheme's creation of peer support groups.

These groups tend to consist of around 10-12 members (mostly farming couples) typically meeting for a 2-3 hour evening meeting every 2-3 weeks. Some group members will be approaching the point where they are about to lose the farm. Other members will be at the point where they have lost the farm and moved off the property. Most are typically in a state of fear, anxiety, hopelessness and low self-esteem. The initial few meetings are facilitated by an experienced social counselling professional. He or she helps members lay down basic ground rules for the group and make agreements on confidentiality. The facilitator also presents some educational material about the nature of personal crisis which helps to frame the group context. Most importantly through their own example the facilitator will model to members how to facilitate and chair discussion. From then onwards the group runs under the guidance and facilitation of its own members.

In Aarhus, northern Denmark I met with Bodil Irene Jensen of SEGES and Inger Kristensen of LMO – both of whom are involved in running the scheme. They explained how these peer support groups provide a safe space for affected farmers and farming couples to cathartically work through their



difficulties and fears about the future. Group members come together with a certain level of shared personal experience and knowledge of farming life. They therefore gain a lot of helpful identification through hearing the stories of other members and learning how they are dealing with similar difficulties. As the group gradually bonds, members begin to give and receive tremendous social and emotional support to each other. Observing and learning from others moving through adversity to progress is inspiring and helps give members a sense of hope. Over time they begin to find meaning in their crisis and are empowered to find a new path in their lives - whether a completely new life outside of farming or remaining in farming whilst adapting to a new circumstance. Bodil and Inger also shared how at first the idea was met with familiar scepticism by others, *“Farmers will never come to these groups! There is no way they are going to sit in a circle and tell you about their personal problems. Forget it!”* Yet they did. Following a slow start when the scheme launched in 2012 many farmers are now calling in to access the services. When I visited Denmark in 2015 there were 20 peer support groups in existence across different parts of the country and further groups close to being formed.



Figure 16: Meeting with Inger Kristensen of LMO (Left) and Bodil Irene Jensen (centre) of SEGES in Aarhus, Denmark

This is just one example which shows how peer-support groups can be another way for farmers to access emotional and social support to help them through stress, anxieties and difficult farming situations. For some farmers it may feel intimidating or stigmatising to talk to doctor, counsellor or health professional about their mental health. Yet in such a support group there is no power imbalance, members are equals in a safe space and farmers are able to identify with fellow farmers. Some therefore may feel more comfortable opening up about their problems and seeking help in this different type of scenario. It also highlights the importance of emotional support for those who are transitioning out of farming. This can be a hugely upsetting and stressful experience for many families. Yet as pressures on farmers increase it seems inevitable that some families may have to take this difficult step.



7b. Lessons from kiwifruit country

During my visit to New Zealand I was fortunate to have the opportunity to visit the iconic ‘Bay of Plenty’ region which is the country’s prime kiwifruit producing area. Beginning in 2010, the local industry suffered a devastating outbreak of the bacterial disease, ‘Psa’. Many growers were left facing potential financial ruin and the impact on the associated industries in the supply chain was equally severe. The repercussions of this industry-wide crisis included huge stress and anxiety for those businesses affected. I heard several stories of how growers and their families struggled with feelings of hopelessness and depression as they searched for ways to cope.



Figure 17: The Bay of Plenty area near Tauranga, New Zealand
with Mount Maunganui in the distant background

In addition to the important agronomic and scientific measures to tackle the disease, right from the beginning stakeholders realised the need to address the mental and emotional health of affected as growers as part of the industry response to the crisis. They encouraged an inclusive approach so that no one person or group ‘owned’ responsibility for grower wellbeing. An important factor was the use of an “Anchor” person to front the response. It was agreed that this needed to be somebody who was involved emotionally and financially in the sector whilst having empathy for and respect from the industry and wider community. Kiwifruit New Zealand’s Ian Greaves took on this role and he took me around the local area to meet some of the faces behind the story.

Stress, burnout, depression and wellbeing were talked about openly and head on right from the beginning at the numerous well-attended industry meetings and roadshow seminars that were held throughout the area in response to the crisis. The services of a clinical psychologist were engaged to provide expert support. This was funded by the industry rather than working through the health system so that she could be available immediately. The psychologist spoke at all of the seminars and explained about issues of stress and in simple, plain English briefly talked through the concept of the grief cycle and the nature of a crisis. This helped to normalise a stressful situation. It supported growers to understand some of the emotions and fears they were going through, legitimised feelings and communicated the message that it’s OK to talk about the issue; it’s OK to ask for help and support. A collective goal was set that there would be no suicides as a result of the crisis. In this way people



were given the glimmer of hope they needed – that there was support from people who understand, that they could make it through.



Figure 18: Ian Greaves, a strong advocate for the wellbeing of New Zealand's Kiwifruit growers

The practicalities of responding to the needs of troubled growers were then broken down into areas of financial, operational and psychological. High profile advocates were found for each of these areas who in turn had links to more specialist professionals that they could signpost people toward if needed. Frontline industry personnel, field staff, receptionists of supply chain organisations and many more were put through suicide prevention skills training and briefed in referral criteria. Throughout the duration of the crisis messages on wellbeing were incorporated into industry communications including trade press, advice workshops, email updates etc.

Simple yet creative methods were employed to help people feel more comfortable about opening up and seeking help so that that they could access psychological and emotional support if they needed. This included using community drop-in sessions which encouraged growers to stop by and mingle with fellow growers over a coffee. However, at the drop-in a grief counsellor would be on hand with whom people could have an informal chat. The psychologist who had spoken at the industry roadshows had struck the right note in the way she presented her material and had been well received by growers.

Yet it was recognised that traditional attitudes and stigma meant many growers would feel hesitant or resistant to visiting their local doctor, never mind formally approach a psychologist for help. She instead made it known she would be fishing down at the local beach every Friday if anybody 'just happened to be passing' and felt like stopping for a chat.

Family and spousal relationships can come under real strain amidst the tension, anxiety and irritability that come with prolonged stress. Recognising this a number of growers were open and willing enough to attend a marriage enrichment workshop that was organised during the outbreak. The community also organised workshops teaching practical breathing techniques to help grower better manage stress.

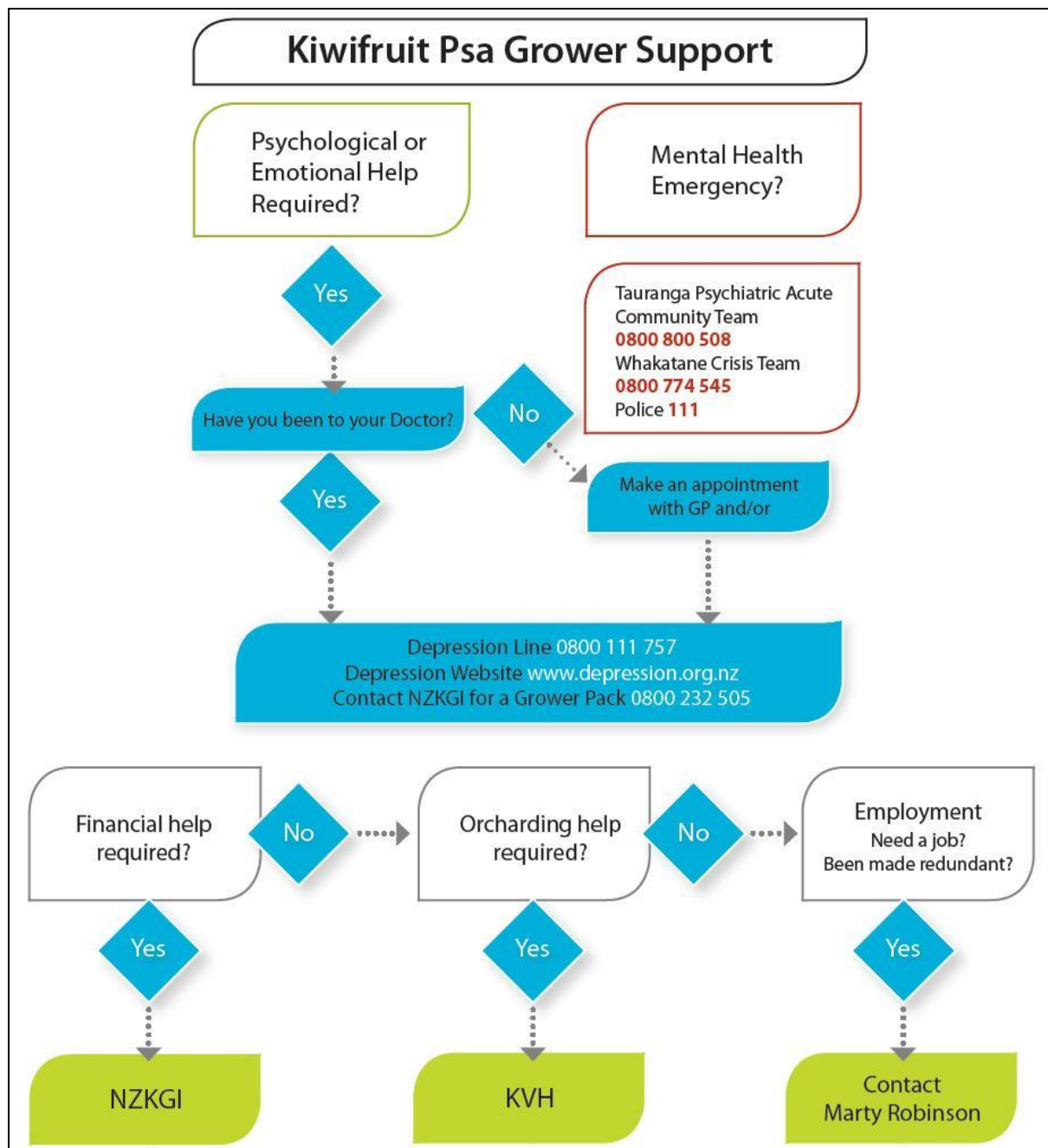


Figure 19: Information sheet distributed to all growers during the Psa crisis.
Support for grower mental health is integrated as part of the industry response alongside orchard help and employment support. (Adapted from KVH)

I was struck by how inventive yet practical these measures were. The industry funded most of the costs of the response itself, as opposed to losing time waiting for support from Government. Ian reasoned that it cost very little yet alleviated years of anxiety and as far as they can tell not one grower was lost to suicide.



Figure 20: Ian Greaves (left) with Ross Bawden (right) –
a grower affected by New Zealand Kiwifruit industry's Psa disease outbreak



Chapter 8. Ways to wellbeing

With the pressures of farming arguably increasing, what practical, pro-active measures can farmers adopt to help safeguard against stress and to take care of their mental and emotional wellbeing?

In Australia and New Zealand I found that farmers were being encouraged to adopt simple, well-understood measures informed by the ‘Five ways to wellbeing’ report²³. This report forms part of UK Government’s Foresight Programme. It recommends a set of measures that can be followed to improve wellbeing. Crucially, all measures are supported by a very strong evidence base. The report and the evidence-based measures it recommends have gained considerable attention and they are being widely promoted in health and wellbeing campaigns across the world, including the UK’s National Health Service.

In New Zealand, the following five ways are a central tenet of initiatives such as Farmstrong and DairyNZ’s wellness and wellbeing programme.

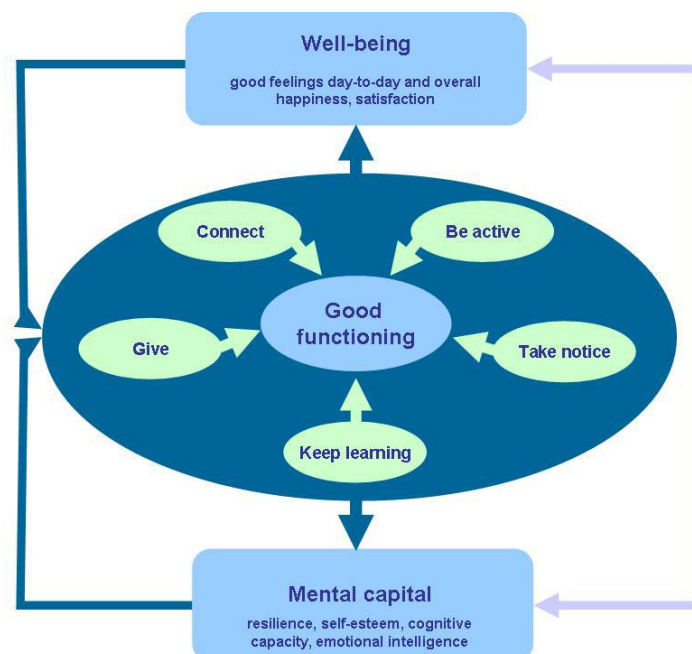


Figure 21: Actions enhancing wellbeing (Adopted from ‘Five Ways to Wellbeing’)

On next page see Farmstrong’s promotion of healthy behaviours, inspired by the Five Ways to Wellbeing (above)



Figure 22: Farmstrong's promotion of healthy behaviours inspired by the Five Ways to Wellbeing

8a. 'Connect'

There is strong evidence to show that having good social connections and supportive networks is one of the most protective factors for individual wellbeing, especially during stressful times. Whether family, friends, colleagues, neighbours, church or local community members, investing time to maintain and broaden such social networks can act as a buffer against poor mental health. When wellbeing is challenged it is common to want to withdraw from people and social contact. Yet social isolation can affect us profoundly. When we consider the long and sometimes unsociable hours that farming often demands, not to mention that fact that people may be working these long hours alone, then the importance of maintaining social connection is brought into focus.

As discussed early, many farmers are subject to a level of everyday physical and geographical isolation due to the comparative isolation of rural areas. Naturally therefore, this recommendation is being actively promoted in remote and rural Australia and New Zealand. Farmers were being encouraged, for instance to prioritise making time to go shooting or fishing with friends, have monthly dinner with neighbours, join a hobby club and many other such suggestions.



Whilst on the South Island of New Zealand I visited Richard Reynolds, a dairy producer with a young family farming literally on the coast of the Tasman Sea. He stressed to me the importance of actively working to maintain social connections in an isolated community: *“Social connectedness and the breadth of your social connectedness is extremely important. There is a difference in knowing ten farmers and ten people that have different experience that they can talk about. Being here in a small and isolated community is a very easy place to get more and more ingrained into only connecting with your immediate family and colleagues. I try and keep connected and cell-phone coverage has helped a lot. So I am trying to reconnect with people who I haven’t connected with for a long time. But it is ME picking up the phone. I am consciously aware that I am the one that calls people. But is a conscious decision I have made to call people. I feel better for doing it”*.



Figure 23: New Zealand dairy farmer, Richard Reynolds

One of the most encouraging aspects of New Zealand’s Kiwifruit industry’s rallying response to the Psa disease crisis was how the power of social connectedness became a key strand running through the entire recovery effort. A myriad array of events was organised throughout the grower community. While some were structured around imparting news, information or practical advice, others such as ‘Men’s breakfasts’ and ‘Meat nights’, ‘Women’s dinner groups’ or upbeat talks at the local Farmlands Co-op store were put on purely for their therapeutic social value – to help people get out of their orchard and connect with others, to feel some lightness and support in heavy times.

Whilst in the area I visited a number of growers on their orchards and the feedback I picked up was that those who lived through the distressing time definitely appreciated having such outlets for social connection. David and Nicola Reid, a young grower couple I visited who were developing and managing orchards when Psa struck summed it up, *“What we didn’t want to do during the difficult and distressing time was to become disconnected and isolated. There was a risk that could have happened. We live 26km out of town so geographically there is every chance you can feel isolated. Half the reason we went to events was to keep up to date with what was going on in the industry but the other half was just the need to remain socially connected.”*



My visits to farming businesses in Ireland illustrated to me the influence and importance of the country's farmer discussion groups. The common model is 10-15 farmers meeting regularly on group members' farms to collectively learn through discussion of relevant technical and business issues. Ireland's state-supported advisory service, 'Teagasc', estimates there to be around 13,000 discussion group members in the country (*Source: Teagasc*) and this model is thought to have played a key role in driving knowledge transfer, productivity and innovation in Irish agriculture. From talking to farmers in Ireland what also became clear to me was the tremendous sense of personal and emotional support they can also offer to farmers. Strong friendships are often formed within the groups. Such bonds create a support network which farmers can draw upon if needed during tough times. As mentioned in section 6d.i., David Kerr is a dairy farmer who bravely spoke out publicly about his personal experiences with debilitating depression which for a long period of time left him unable to work on the farm. He shared with me how being part of an active discussion group meant he had a network of close contacts around him who were prepared to step in and support him practically during this difficult time. Around ten separate members of the group were actively involved in helping take care of farm business in different ways whilst he recovered. David said he perished at the thought of how he might have managed had he not been connected through a discussion group in this way.

8b. 'Be Active'

Evidence of a definitive relationship between exercise and improved mental health continues to develop. Regular exercise is known to be a good antidote to stress, tiredness and fatigue. Even a small amount of physical activity can reduce anxiety, depression and improve general wellbeing²⁴. Furthermore, lack of physical activity is a leading cause of disease and a major public concern throughout the world. I have heard many people celebrate the apparent healthiness of the farming life - being outdoors in the fresh air getting lots of physical exercise. Yet data from many studies around the world would suggest that this is often a myth and in general the health of farmers and farm workers can be poor when compared to other occupational groups²⁵.

It could be said that in recent times farming has become a less active job. For instance, more of a farmer's time is taken up with planning and managing the business. As machinery and technology continues to develop, some of the more physical elements of traditional farm work are being replaced. Jobs like milking have become semi-automated or in some cases fully automated. Just like many workplaces, more and more work on the farm involves sitting. Muscles once used regularly do not perhaps get the workout they used to or, instead, the same muscles types are worked over and over again. While a farmer's strength may be good, this doesn't always apply to their overall aerobic fitness.

It is thought that around 20-30 minutes of moderate physical activity every day can make a big difference to how one feels as exercise is thought to have an effect on the certain chemicals in the brain such as dopamine and serotonin which modulate mood, pain, perception, stress response²⁶. Exercise was a key element in the wellbeing campaigns and initiatives targeting farmers in New Zealand and Australia. In order to feel sharper, make better decisions and improve their ability to handle stress and fatigue farmers were being actively encouraged to purposefully incorporate more physical activity into their daily routine. DairyNZ for instance were encouraging farmers that ideally they should get 20 minutes of vigorous exercise, where their heart rate is up to a point where they almost can't speak, at least three days a week.



The greatest barrier to farmer take-up of regular physical exercise for wellbeing is the busy schedules and long hours involved in managing or working on the farm; responsibilities for children and family commitments can mean take-up of regular physical exercise is seen as unrealistic and idealistic. In New Zealand I heard stories of farmers purposely choosing to get off the quad bike or tractor and walk more often as well as those devising more creative and inventive ways of incorporating exercise into their farming day. Dana Carver is the manager of DairyNZ's Wellness and Wellbeing Programme. She told me a story about a farmer who worked out it was 2.5km from his house to the milking parlour. So he would jog down in the mornings and home in the evenings whenever he could. He said he couldn't actually make it the first time. Yet three weeks later he was doing it and it is making all the difference to his stress.

Chris Wills is a beef and sheep farmer in New South Wales, Australia. Considering himself the ultimate sceptic he was dragged 'kicking and screaming' to a yoga class. To his surprise, as well as helping with his bad back he found yoga supported him to address his stresses and anxieties. He was motivated to learn more and found himself travelling to Cambodia for a 200-hour yoga teaching course. He has since created a form of 'Tractor Yoga' which he now teaches to fellow farmers. Tractor yoga is a series of exercises that farmers do in their tractor cabs. It can easily be incorporated into everyday farming life to help keep farmers physically fit, mentally alert and focused. Chris believes it is great for mental stability, helping to slow the mind down and supporting one to live in the present moment²⁷.

Getting fitter for farming with Farmstrong

Farmstrong's vision is for New Zealand to become the fittest farming nation in the world. Its Fit4Farming initiative set a goal for the country's farming community to collectively achieve 4million kilometres of physical activity for the year. As a commitment to their personal health and wellbeing farmers were urged to sign up to this goal by pledging kilometres in walking, running or cycling. Some groups of farmers formed local teams and were encouraged to chart their progress with photos and postings on social media. Meanwhile a core group of farmers led a rural cycle tour which travelled from the top of New Zealand's North Island to the southern tip of country. Special event days were held at various points on the tour where locals were encouraged to join in with a walk, run or cycle. The events would then feature speakers in the evening.

This all aimed to spread to the farming community the message of the importance of being more active. During June 2015 to June 2016, 105 teams were created totalling over 1,000 people. Between them these teams achieved 633,216 kilometres. Each contributed to the collective total in their own time and own ways. The Fit4Farming challenge is informed by research suggesting if people publicly commit to a point of view or goal, they become more likely to behave in a manner consistent with that view or goal, even if they did not previously hold that view in the first place.





8c. 'Take Notice'

The process of simply being more aware of our sensations, thoughts and feelings and being attentive to and aware of what is taking place in the present is thought to enhance wellbeing. It is human tendency to spend much of our time thinking about something other than what we are doing. This mind-wandering typically leaves us distracted and missing out on enjoyment from what may be happening around us. This idea of living in the moment has more recently been popularized as 'Mindfulness'. In simple terms mindfulness is about being fully in the present moment rather than our attention and thinking being absorbed in the past or future. Neuro-scientific understanding of mindfulness is increasing. There is now a good evidence that it can help people concentrate better, aid creativity; help with relaxation and sleep as well as help people feel calmer so that they can work with difficult states such as anxious thoughts, low moods and everyday stresses.

Farmers in New Zealand were being encouraged to incorporate this concept into their life on the farm. DairyNZ's Farmer Wellness and Wellbeing programme is working to capture some of the innovative ways New Zealand farmers brought more mindful awareness to their farming day. I heard some wonderful stories including:

- A farmer who every day while out and about on the farm purposefully takes some time to stop, stand still, breathe and listen to the sound of the birds singing.
- A farmer who during the stressful time of calving pauses at dusk, purposefully turns off his phone and mindfully watches the calves play whilst reminding himself he doesn't want to be in an office and that he is doing the job he loves.
- A variable order sharemilker who after very early morning milking makes all his team stop and leave the milking parlour to go outside to watch the sunrise. As he says, *"It doesn't matter how much money you are making you can still go out and watch the sunrise!"*

Joe Leonard, a dairy farmer I visited in County Meath, Ireland, is a passionate advocate for farmer health. He achieved what I consider a somewhat unlikely feat of encouraging a group of Irish farmers from his local discussion group to undertake a course in mindfulness. This involved considerable commitment as the course demanded one night a week over eight weeks, with an additional weekend workshop. Some of the positive feedback was documented in a discussion group report. One farmer commented *"I was originally sceptical but found it calming, relaxing and mind clearing How I could totally switch off from the present, leave everything outside the door. How easy I could get into that zone."* Another reported *"It taught me how to de-stress by clearing my head; this allows me to calm myself and look at the problem better before acting"*²⁸.

see photo on next page

8d. 'Keep learning'

It is well recognised that learning plays an important role in human social and cognitive development. The continuation of learning through life has the benefits of enhancing individual self-esteem, encouraging social interaction and supporting a more active life. It is known to help with adaptation to change and thought to help open the mind to support seeing things from different perspectives



and so increasing wisdom and confidence. Continuous learning could take the form of signing up for a class such as learning a language or new business management skills, getting involved in farmer technical discussion groups or simply researching something you always wondered about.



Figure 24: Joe Leonard – advocate for stress management in farming - pictured on his dairy farm in County Meath, Ireland

8e. 'Give'

Mental wellbeing is thought to be enhanced when an individual is able to experience a sense of meaning and purpose in their life. Helping, sharing, giving and team-oriented behaviours are likely to be associated with an increased sense of self-worth and positive feelings. There are many ways to incorporate more of this in one's life though common examples include volunteering, getting involved in local community projects, giving time to help with organising local events or mentoring other farmers.

8f. Other factors

In addition to these five well understood measures there are numerous other activities and behaviours whose positive impact on wellbeing is acknowledged:

8f.i. Time away

It is really important to get away and rest, especially when times are tough. In New Zealand, DairyNZ and Farmstrong encourage farmers to take at least a day off per week and some good holiday breaks each year, if it can be managed. Yet this is easier said than done. I know farmers who have haven't spent a night away from the farm for over a decade. The difficulty getting off the farm for a holiday particularly among dairy farmers was captured in a 2015 survey undertaken by Farmers Guardian in the UK²⁹. As Figure 27 illustrates, over 15% had taken no holiday whatsoever in the previous 12 months since the survey; around 33% had taken 5 to 9 days whilst less than 10% had taken more than



20 days' holiday. A major barrier especially for smaller family units is finding somebody to cover the work, and the costs involved in paying extra staff. There is also the difficulty of actually sourcing appropriately qualified and experienced relief workers.



Figure 25: Holiday taken by UK dairy farmers (Source: Farmers Guardian)

In Finland the organisation 'Mela' is charged by the country's Ministry of Social Affairs and Health with overseeing a national scheme that enables farms to source relief workers so that farmers can take a holiday away from the farm. Through this scheme all full-time dairy, livestock, pig and poultry farmers in Finland have the right to 26 days of relief cover each year. Cereal and vegetable farmers are excluded from the scheme as the winter months before the onset of the growing season are deemed to offer them a sufficient enough window in which to take a holiday. Around 4-5,000 professional relief workers are continually employed in this system moving from farm to farm. Local municipalities contract with Mela to hold details of workers available in their area. If a farmer wants to source a holiday relief worker, they contact their local municipality team who will arrange cover. Alternatively, farmers have the option to make their own arrangements for sourcing a worker and have these costs reimbursed through the system.

Remarkably, this scheme is entirely funded by the Finnish taxpayer. Around 180 - 200million euros per year from the state budget is dedicated to this purpose (Source: Mela). Farmers can source relief workers through the same structures for sickness cover as well as maternity and paternity leave. However, unlike the holiday scheme entitlement farmers have to pay hourly costs for the period the relief workers are on farm, although these are offered at subsidised rates.

Unsurprisingly Finnish farmers value this system immensely and Mela estimate 99% of them to use the holiday allowance scheme. When viewed from a simple economic perspective I found it remarkable to see the state subsidising such a benefit for farmers. Ultimately this seemed to be about cultural attitudes. Issues such as work satisfaction, work-life balance and employee motivation are very much considered in Finnish society. Fairness, equality and wellbeing are all important values.



Supporting citizens to live full, healthy and productive lives so that they can contribute to a healthy and productive society is very much a guiding principle of Finland and its other Scandinavian neighbours. In essence, if Finland's farmers are to be guaranteed the same equal rights as other citizens then the unique circumstances of the farming industry must be acknowledged and catered for with specialised support.



Figure 26: Meeting with Paivi Wallin of Mela in Espoo, Finland to discuss the country's farmer holiday scheme

see another photo on next page

8f.ii. Nutrition

Research shows that a healthy, balanced diet is important for mental health in addition to physical health. England's National Institute for Mental Health lists 'eating well' in its framework for improving mental health and well-being in England³⁰. A recent report in the Lancet Psychiatry journal concluded that *"Although the determinants of mental health are complex, the emerging and compelling evidence for nutrition as a crucial factor in the high prevalence and incidence of mental disorders suggests that diet is as important to psychiatry as it is to cardiology, endocrinology, and gastroenterology"*³¹. For instance, eating well with plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables in the diet instead of processed food and avoiding soft sugary drinks is understood to keep us well and better able to cope with stress. At



times of high stress many people feel compelled to increase their reliance on caffeine and/or alcohol in an attempt to mediate and manage distress. Ironically increased intake of these substances can create tension and be harmful to health. In New Zealand organisations like DairyNZ and Farmstrong were making concerted efforts to encourage farmers to eat more healthily.



Figure 27: Dairy farmers and strong supporters of the farmer holiday scheme, Mikka and Sirkku Nieminen, whom I visited at their farm in Finland's Pirkanmaa region

8f.iii. Sleep

Farming involves long hours. Especially during seasonal peaks of busyness such as lambing, calving or harvesting many simply have to get by on reduced sleep or rest. Making sleep a priority amidst the demands and pressures of a working farm will always be challenging. Often bedtime tends to happen when it happens! Yet study after study highlights the critical role of sleep for physical health and mental wellbeing. Lack of sleep can increase the risk of developing depression and has been shown to exacerbate anxiety, negatively impact memory, productivity and decision making. Changes in sleep patterns are often one of the key signs we will tend to notice in ourselves, or hear people refer to at times of high stress or mental ill health. This may be difficulty sleeping (Insomnia) or alternatively finding oneself sleeping too much (Hypersomnia).

Irish dairy farmer, Joe Leonard, described his experiences in this area which may be common for many farmers, *"Personally, insomnia is my first sign of stress. Despite the physical exhaustion that is normal during the calving season this year I regularly found myself unable to sleep for more than three to four hours a night when, to function properly, I need a good seven to eight hours. I was unable to stop my mind 'racing' and to relax due to the stress I was under. I find this physical exhaustion then leads me to be indecisive and to make poorer decisions on the farm"*³².

Insomnia was one of many difficulties experienced by New Zealand Kiwifruit growers during the stressful period following an outbreak of Psa disease in 2010. Industry advocates for wellbeing came up with simple yet effective response: they put on a series of 'Sleep Well' workshops for growers. These were facilitated by a medical doctor specialised in sleep science. Growers were coached on how



they could improve their sleep quickly and effectively to get a better night's sleep and therefore a more productive day. The feedback was extremely positive with many growers reporting they were subsequently able to sleep better.

8f.iv. Religion and spirituality

Faith and religion plays a tremendously important and supportive force in the lives of many people, whether involvement in Church or some form of spiritual practice or reflection.

8f.v. Celebration

“In the past when I worked on farms there were small celebrations at times of the year when we had finished jobs, like picking up the hay or finishing shearing. Some of this has gone on the large farms now. There is nothing I do here on the dairy farm where I have a celebration. Maybe drying off is about it. We sleep in the next day and that's about it. At the end of mating we don't do anything. At the end of calving we don't do anything. We seem to have no end point in the job and no celebrations. It feels endless. We just move on to the next list of jobs. We don't have any celebrations of finishing a job. “

– Richard Reynolds, Dairy Farmer, New Zealand

A number of farmers I talked with during my study stressed the role of celebration. Psychology has long recognised how celebrating milestones and success helps to reinforce attitudes and behaviours that we wish to draw upon when facing new challenges and or opportunities. Furthermore, in today's highly demanding business world people have been somewhat conditioned to move immediately on to the next goal or task as opposed to taking time to celebrate their wins. Consciously celebrating is thought to release endorphins and train the brain to recognise that what you are doing is important. Celebrating together with colleagues or partners is thought to bring added benefits by strengthening your network and bonds with those around us as well as helping to build on momentum.



Chapter 9. Getting strategic

I came away from my travels in Australia and New Zealand with the opinion that both countries were considerably further down the road in creatively and positively beginning to address the issue of stress and mental ill health than any other farming country I had the opportunity to visit. I began to reflect on how the farming community had been able to mobilise resources and successfully develop such considered, targeted initiatives.

9a. The power of partnership

Firstly, it seemed to me that much of the industry in general had clearly agreed that tackling the issue of farmer wellbeing should be a strategic priority. Secondly, a key factor seemed to be a multi-organisational approach whereby a diverse range of stakeholders drawn both from the farming sector and beyond have joined together united behind a clear, common goal. This includes farming associations, extension advisory services, government agencies, health professionals, expert academics and local community groups. Recognised and respected leaders within the agricultural world are actively involved. For example, in New Zealand the leading farmer association, 'Federated Farmers'; the main research and extension body, DairyNZ, and the leading farm insurance provider, Farmers Mutual Group, all play an active role on the issue of wellbeing. These leading organisations have stepped beyond a former backseat role of mere champion of and referrer to the traditional farming welfare charities, faith-based agencies and health sector campaigners. Instead, having acknowledged the strategic need to address the issue of farmer mental health wellbeing they have become active participants in this movement. They have contributed expertise, resources, in-kind support and used their profile and influence.

The building of wide reaching networks to guide this activity has been critical. For instance, much of the wellbeing awareness-raising activity taking place throughout the farming sector in New Zealand has been driven by a 'Farmer Wellbeing Stakeholder Group'. This forum meets every 3 months and draws together representatives from over 20 different organisations. Meanwhile the Rural Health Alliance Aotearoa New Zealand (RHAANZ) brings together various rural sector organisations to tackle some of the wider issues around rural mental health policy. The farming community's involvement with RHAANZ provides a conduit to engage with and influence important issues in higher level health policy such as the delivery of care and medical services in rural areas. It provides a mechanism whereby the unique health and wellbeing needs of farming communities can be effectively communicated direct to central government and local health authorities. Members of RHAANZ have also collectively formulated a National Rural Health Strategy which aims to influence the country's direction for rural health³³.

Similar networks are in place across Australia. During my visit to Sydney I was fortunate to be able to attend a meeting of the 'New South Wales Rural Mental Health Network'. This brings together over 30 different organisations working together to address the issue of rural mental health and wellbeing in the state. The network meets every quarter and offers a forum for sharing of ideas, knowledge, data, and the troubleshooting of problems. It has also led to the creation of the Blueprint for Mental Health (See Section 93).



9b. Effective linkage

Both Australia and New Zealand have good models of 'linkage' which aim to better connect health care providers and public health agencies to farming communities. For instance in New Zealand, RHAANZ has created a network of rural mental health 'Clinical Champions' across different regions of the country. These champions are drawn from the ranks of senior health professionals such as doctors, nurses, or pharmacists. They are expected to have interest and expertise in rural or provincial mental health. The role of these champions is to help upskill the health and social services professionals within their region so that they are better able to understand and respond to the particular mental health and wellbeing needs of farmers. They also provide advice and support to New Zealand's Rural Support Trusts and help align the farming community with existing health services in their region. Their pre-existing position within rural communities and their understanding of the local health sector combined with their knowledge or interest in rural mental health means these champions are expertly placed for this role. Similarly, Australia's Rural Adversity Mental Health Programme has placed a network of co-ordinators across New South Wales' rural communities. They are embedded in their communities so can work with a range of local agencies to provide information, education and training to rural communities and help link people in need with appropriate services and programmes.

9c. Mapping the rural wellbeing landscape

Taking a strategic overview across the wider industry and supply chain was a key factor helping to maximise engagement and widen the reach of initiatives.

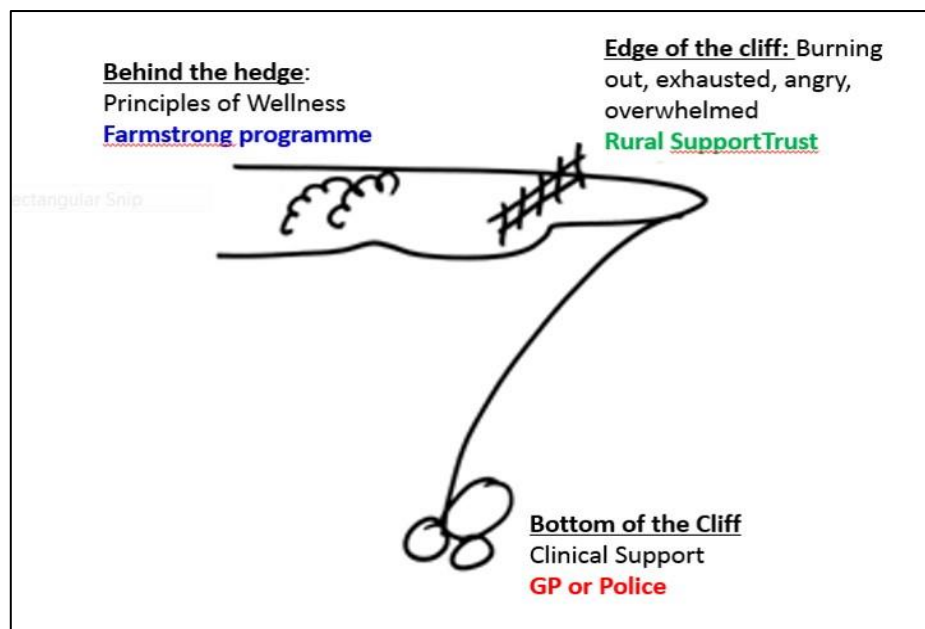


Figure 28: New Zealand's Rural Wellness Landscape (Adapted from DairyNZ)

Using the blunt yet effective metaphor of a cliff as illustrated in Figure 30, Stakeholders in New Zealand have mapped the varying wellbeing needs of different sections of the farming population.



- **‘Behind the Hedge’**: This effectively covers the section of New Zealand farmers whose overall health and wellbeing is in good condition. The focus here therefore is how to maintain and improve the mental health and wellbeing of this group of farmers so that they remain strong, resilient and less at risk of creeping to the ‘Edge of the Cliff’.
- **‘Edge of the Cliff’**: This represents those farmers whose mental health and wellbeing is seriously threatened. They are typically presenting as stressed, exhausted, overwhelmed and may be struggling mental and emotionally to deal with the challenges they face.
- **‘Bottom of the Cliff’**: Those whose mental health and wellbeing is at a level whereby they require professional medical or clinical support. Some may be considered at higher risk of suicide.

Many of the cases that the farmer welfare charities will tend to deal with are those at the ‘Edge of the Cliff’. They may be close to breaking point and often need a more complex mixture of emotional support, practical assistance or hand-holding to deal with issues of finance, paperwork, legal disputes etc. In New Zealand this territory is served by its network of Rural Support Trusts just as, in the UK, farming charities such as FCN and RABI are renowned for their excellent work in this area. Those at the ‘Bottom of the Cliff’ are generally at a stage where they are reliant on more specialised health or emergency services. In New Zealand this is the area in which RHAANZ are working to improve rural health care provision. The space ‘Behind the Hedge’ whilst once is less catered for is now being addressed by New Zealand’s Farmstrong initiative whose ethos is all about promotion of positive wellbeing behaviours (such as those discussed in Chapter 8). DairyNZ’s Farmer wellness and wellbeing programme (See Section 9d) straddles the territory somewhere between the hedge and the cliff.

In this way rural stakeholders are collectively working to address the differing mental health and wellbeing needs of different sections of the farming community by matching services and initiatives to where their skillsets, knowledge and ethos are best suited. Importantly, the industry is targeting activities just as much upstream (I.e. ‘Behind the Hedge’) as the familiar downstream (I.e. ‘Edge of the Cliff’) territory.

9d. DairyNZ: Farmer Wellness and Wellbeing Programme

DairyNZ through its farmer wellness and wellbeing programme has carefully considered how to directly align its wellbeing activities with the strategic outcomes and objectives set out in New Zealand’s national dairy strategy.

see flow chart on next page

As the flow chart illustrates, DairyNZ’s wellbeing activities range from communication in trade media, development of website resources and specialised training, to the production of wellbeing metrics and delivery of health Pitstops. These are all cast as essential people management measures. These in turn feed into high level-objectives identified in the industry’s strategic vision: (1) Retaining skilled and motivated people in the industry; (2) Providing a world-class work environment on-farm. (3) Enhancing local rural communities³⁴.

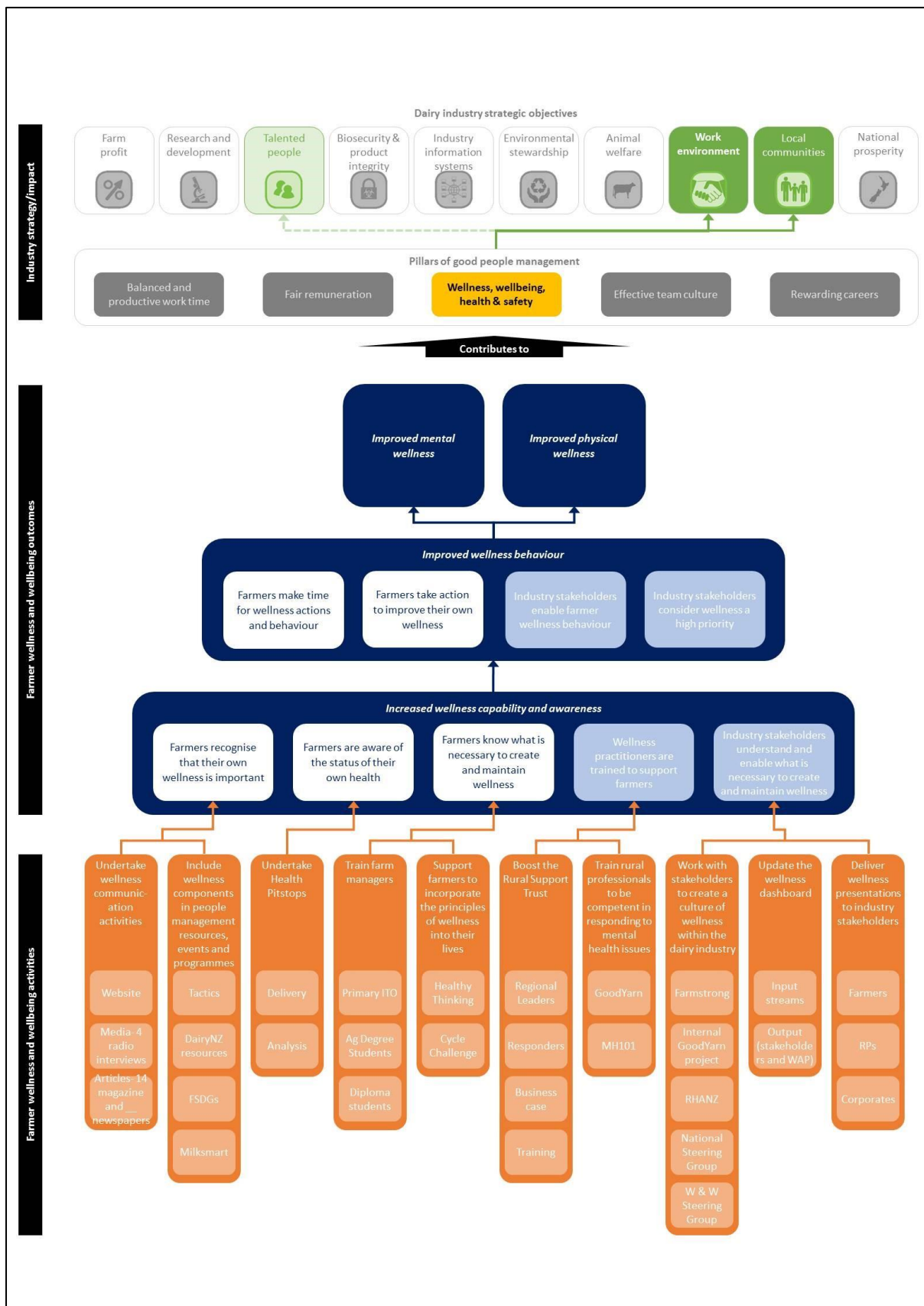


Figure 29: Strategic thinking behind DairyNZ's Wellness and Wellbeing Programme



9e. New South Wales Farmers Blueprint for Mental Health and Wellbeing

The Blueprint was launched in 2006 by the New South Wales Farmers association along with the many other organisations that make up the New South Wales Rural Mental Health Network³⁵. In visual, schematic form, the Blueprint sets out a simple summary of the major challenges impacting on the mental health and wellbeing of people on New South Wales Farms. It identifies some of the key risk factors in the pathways to personal and family breakdown and strategic actions the farming industry and rural community can take to address these factors.

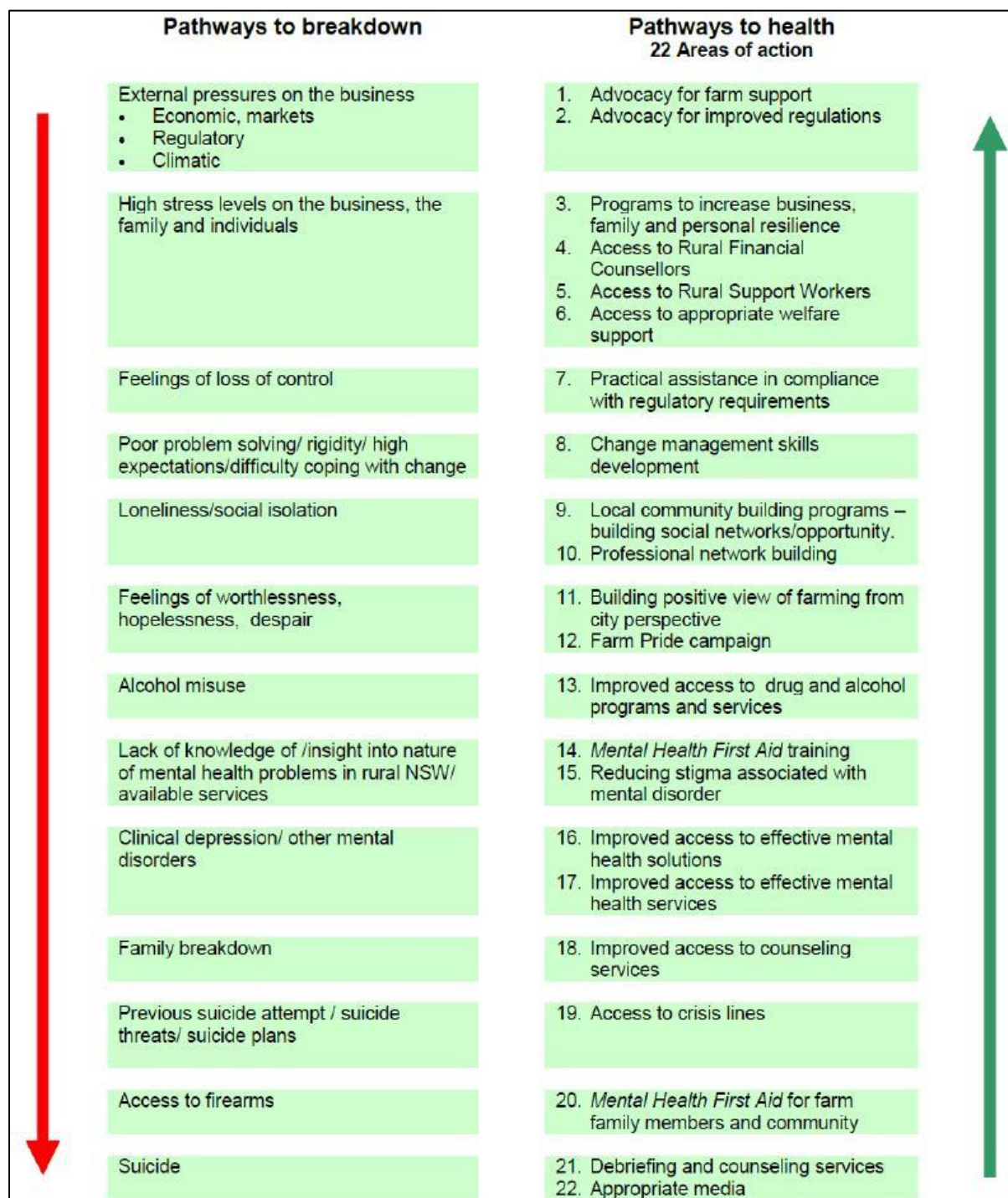


Figure 30: New South Wales Farmers Blueprint for Mental Health



The Blueprint encapsulates in clear and simplified form just how complex and multi-faceted is the challenge of addressing farmer health and wellbeing. Rather than responding to individual presenting issues and tackling symptoms in isolation the Blueprint sets out a bigger picture approach. This requires co-ordinated action from various different stakeholders in order to respond to complex inter-related issues. Actions in the Blueprint span those aiming to address issues at source to those at the more 'emergency' end. At the source end, this includes work to alleviate some of the external stressors on farm business. This includes the role of farmer associations in advocating for reduced regulatory complexity and the role of government agencies in improving farm business skills. At the more emergency end of the scale the Blueprint identifies the role of health organisations in providing effective mental health and counselling services in rural communities and the need for support for those farm families bereaved by suicide. The Blueprint involves the collaboration of a wide range of organisations so that all available resources can be utilised effectively. It has proved a useful aid when lobbying for funding to assist with rural mental health initiatives in New South Wales. The Blueprint also makes it clear which organisations are to take the lead role and responsibility for these actions. This has helped bring clarity to who is doing what, helped avoid unnecessary duplication and allowed the industry to work together with one clear voice.

9f. Moving forward with measurement

Another important element was a commitment to robust measurement of progress and effectiveness. For example, DairyNZ's wellness & wellbeing programme utilises around 20 different measurement factors to quantify improvement or decline in farmer wellbeing. Each measurement is benchmarked against a target value. Whilst measurement components continue to be developed and refined they currently span four broad categories:

- **Capability and Awareness:** Monitoring farmers' participation in activities that build capability and awareness on the topics of wellness and wellbeing. This is measured by number of visits to DairyNZ and Farmstrong wellbeing webpages; numbers of people participating in wellbeing events; numbers taking part in specific wellbeing training.
- **Mental Wellness:** Monitoring the collective state of dairy farmers' mental wellness and wellbeing. This is measured by the proportion of dairy farmers experiencing signs of depression and anxiety or burnout. This data is sourced from Health Pitstops.
- **Wellness behavior:** Monitoring how dairy farmers take precautions in their work and daily lives to ensure their wellness and wellbeing. This uses measurements related to use of sun protection, protective equipment, nutrition, exercise and coping strategies.
- **Physical wellness:** Monitoring the collective state of dairy farmers' physical wellness and wellbeing. This uses measurements related to cardio, obesity, diabetes and physical pain. This data is sourced from 'Health Pitstops'.

This suite of measurements is collectively brought together in a 'Wellness Dashboard'. The dashboard then functions as a resource whereby the wellness and wellbeing profile of New Zealand dairy farmers can be regularly monitored over time.

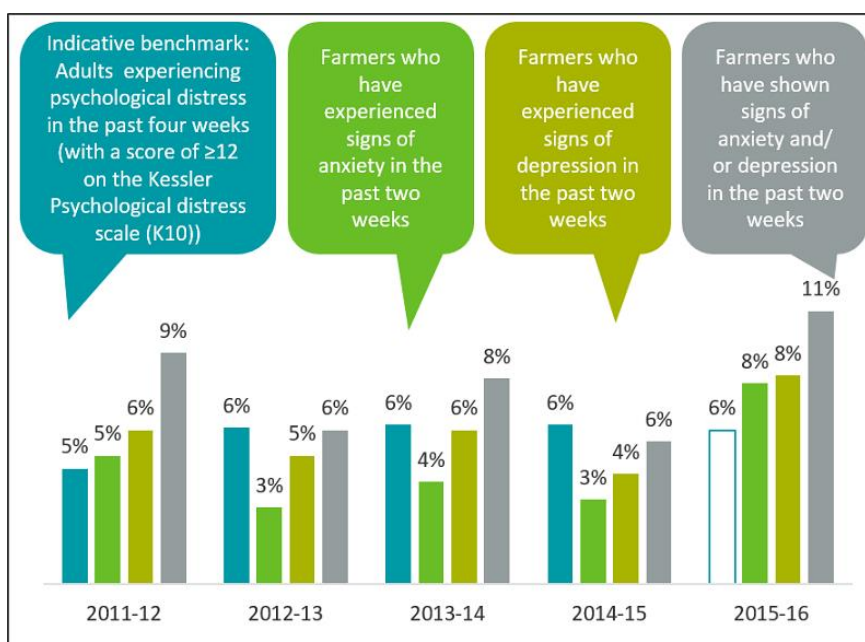


Figure 31: Example of DairyNZ Dashboard – monitoring mental health of farmers using data collected from ‘Health Pitstops’ (Source: DairyNZ)

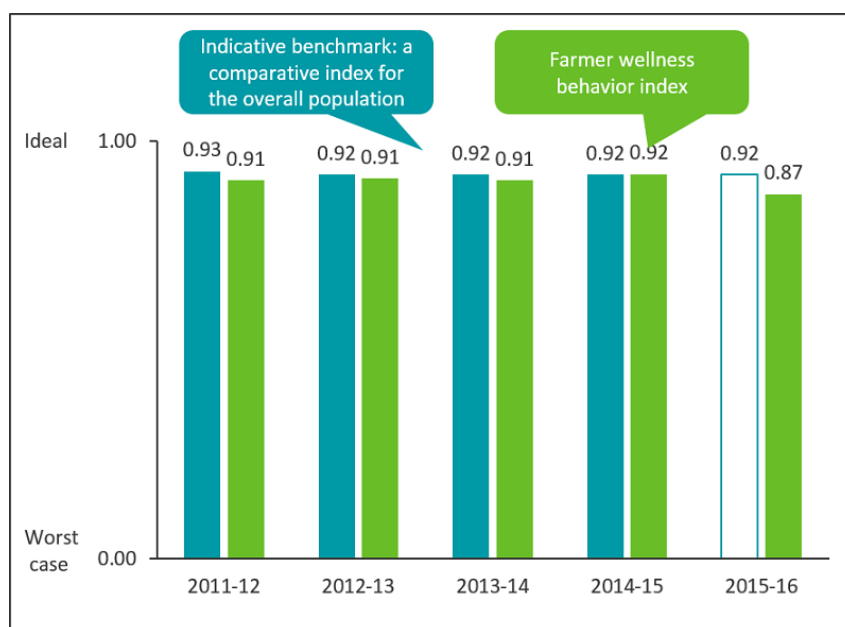


Figure 32: DairyNZ’s ‘Mental Wellness’ index monitoring the collective state of dairy farmers’ mental wellness and wellbeing. This index is derived using measures related to anxiety, depression and burnout. The index is scaled from 0 to 1, with 0 describing the worst-outcome scenario and 1 describing ideal. (Source: DairyNZ)

This culture of continuous monitoring and sophisticated measurement provides an important source of data. This allows DairyNZ, along with other stakeholders working in farmer wellbeing, to empirically evaluate the effectiveness of their activities, assess whether or not they are making a difference and highlight areas that may need more attention. There are also a number of other advantages to being



able to present hard evidence to support arguments and hypotheses. It helps with demonstrating value and return on investment to funders. This is particularly important as most of the mental health and wellbeing activity in agriculture is funded through charitable grants or individual and commercial donations. Funders are obviously more likely to back organisations and initiatives supported by a credible evidence base. Likewise, a strong evidence base coupled with credible methods of on-going evaluation aids lobbying and advocacy work. This was an important consideration in places like Australia and New Zealand where farmer associations were as heavily involved in lobbying on issues such as rural mental health provision as lobbying on more typical agricultural topics.



Chapter 10. Building the business case for wellbeing

Research shows people are more likely to run a successful business when fit and well and in a balanced place. How can we make the most of this business benefit to encourage farmers to invest in their mental and emotional health?

10a. Repositioning the mental health message

Several farmers I met during my Nuffield Farming study made the point that the term 'mental health' can feel harsh. For many, the phrase and in particular the 'mental' aspect would seem to be too easily associated with or confused with 'mental illness'. I have also personally encountered this barrier when talking to people about the subject. A study looking at mental health and stigma in rural Northern Ireland similarly reported how the term was *"seen as something from which an individual will not recover and will have for life; and is generally referred to in negative and stereotyping terms such as 'psycho', 'schizo', 'mad', 'the big house', 'avoid like the plague' and 'nutter etc.'"*³⁶

Language can often be key. Get it right and you improve your chances of generating interest and engagement; Get it wrong and you can end up reinforcing barriers and turning people off from engaging. This may explain why a lot of the communication I experienced aimed at farmers in Australia and New Zealand avoided use of 'mental health' and 'depression' and preferred to use terms like wellbeing and 'resilience'.

10b. Resilience

Resilience can broadly be defined as one's willingness and capacity to manage and cope with stresses. It is about understanding and accepting there will be both good and difficult times and consequently having supportive strategies to manage one's thoughts, behaviour and reactions. Resilience doesn't mean complete elimination of stress as a certain amount of stress is necessary to help us achieve goals in our life. Yet having emotional resilience means we can adapt and move forward in a positive direction in the midst of adversity. Building and maintaining emotional resilience is a process that takes preparation and practice. Psychology has long been interested in the study of why some people are able to deal with high levels of stress and pressure in their lives whilst others struggle and may develop serious problems as a result. However, in recent times the concept of resilience has become very popular especially in the area of sports and elite performance. Many would say that farmers have a certain amount of natural resilience as they often have to endure great challenges and adversity yet keep their businesses going.

Talking about resilience seems to be an effective way of engaging farmers for a number of reasons. It is free of some of the connotations and stigma that unfortunately accompany the term mental health. Talking in terms of resilience may offer a more welcoming, perhaps subtler way of framing components of mental health and emotional wellbeing. Farmers can relate to concepts such as resilient cropping systems or resilient health herd so the phrase can offer a way of talking about topics of mental, emotional and family resilience. Just as with crop management or cow conditioning, the



concept of resilience is underpinned by a lot of emerging biological and biophysical science and this seems to be well received by farmers.

‘The Resilient Farmer’

“I have learned that as a farmer, you need to be sustainable across three pillars — financial, environmental and social. Around each pillar, you need to build resilience, by accessing integrated knowledge and support. It’s not about business as usual with a few concessions. It’s a whole new road. Too often, the social pillar is ignored. Yet, in New Zealand, we are twice as likely to die from our own hand as in a motor accident. Men are three times more likely to die than women, and rural men are twice as likely again. Below the tragedy of suicide is a huge pyramid of depression. This is something we all have to work together to address.”



New Zealand livestock farmer, Doug Avery has moved through his own personal depression, and near business collapse. Through his ‘Resilient Farmer’ initiative he now makes it his mission to share his story and learning with the farming community to help them build up their resilience.

The philosophy he imparts to fellow farmers is about structuring farm business around ‘the three pillars’ of financial, environmental and social resilience. For Doug, the social pillar is about building relationships and connections, seeking support through mentorship and learning strategies to manage one’s own emotional resilience. It is this area in particular that has now become Doug’s passion. Through road shows and ongoing mentoring his aim is to encourage farmers to adopt new thinking and practices to build resilience, transform farm performance and help tackle what he calls ‘the pyramid of depression’ in farming. When I met Doug during my visit to New Zealand in 2016 he had recently completed a tour of 35 speaking events across the country sponsored by some leading agribusiness organisations. His message had reach thousands of fellow farmers and been well received.



New Zealand's Farmstrong initiative is very much framed around the idea of building farmer resilience. It enthusiastically and creatively promotes the message that to thrive in the demanding, high pressure world of modern agriculture, farmers need to develop the skills and resilience to cope with the profession's unique challenges. Farmstrong's communications and activities are all designed around promoting this headline message. It offers a range of practical tools and resources that farmers can integrate into busy daily lives to improve their wellbeing and resilience. Interestingly, Farmstrong purposely refrains from talking in terms of mental health, mental illness, anxiety, depression, suicide. Gerard Vaughan one of the key figures behind the initiative, explained to me that talking in these terms inevitably leads to a discussion about seeking professional support or some form of clinical intervention. As other farming organisations and agencies already operate in this space, Farmstrong's ethos is to concentrate its work 'upstream'. As opposed to framing messages around illness it instead focusses solely on the promotion of positive wellbeing behaviours for keeping farmers healthy and strong.

Farmstrong is pioneering new ground by developing specialised workshops teaching 'Healthy thinking for farmers'. These workshops gently introduce farmers to cognitive processes and their role in thinking, feeling, and behaving. Rather than talking in terms of mental health, material in the workshop is presented as a performance-enhancing tool similar to that used in modern sports psychology. Farmers are responding well to the material and the discussion of stressful thoughts and difficult emotions within this framework. In this way they begin to see how they can use cognitive techniques as a positive tool to help keep themselves healthy and strong amidst the ever-increasing pressures and stress of farming. Between June 2015 to June 2016, Farmstrong organised 31 Healthy Thinking workshops across the country. These were attended by a total of 1,122 farmers, growers and rural professionals. 23 of these were 3 hour workshops, attended by 962 people. 8 of these were more in depth, 2-day workshops which were attended by a total of 160 farmers. (Source: Farmstrong). Many more workshops were planned for the future. The fact that so many farmers were giving up their time to attend a 2-day workshop on this topic demonstrated to me that they saw business value in learning techniques to help build up their mental and emotional resilience. In a 4-month, post-workshop, follow-up, 71% of farmers who attended a 2-day Healthy Thinking workshop reported improvements in "their ability to cope with the ups and downs of farming." This was almost 50% higher than a random sample of farmers answering the same question. (Source: Farmstrong).

Another benefit I see in framing messages in pro-active terms like resilience is that it offers a helpful context in which to emphasise the business case for investing in personal wellbeing.



Figure 33: Farmstrong's Workshop on 'Healthy Thinking for Farmers'



10c. Putting the person in the business plan

When it comes to business planning, most farmers naturally tend to be more comfortable monitoring and evaluating components such as inputs, yields, machinery and finances. Yet the more complex human, emotional and social issues behind the farming issues are often avoided, overlooked or not valued or prioritised in the same way as other key facets of the farm business. The lens of farm business planning and evaluation therefore offers another opportunity to acknowledge the importance of mental and emotional wellbeing and stimulate engagement on the topic. For instance, Australia's Centre for Remote and Rural Health in Australia is advocating that every farm should have an emergency plan, which includes the number of the mental health hotline and their doctor's details. One of the long-term aims of the Farmstrong programme is that putting the person in the business plan becomes an accepted social norm in farming circles.

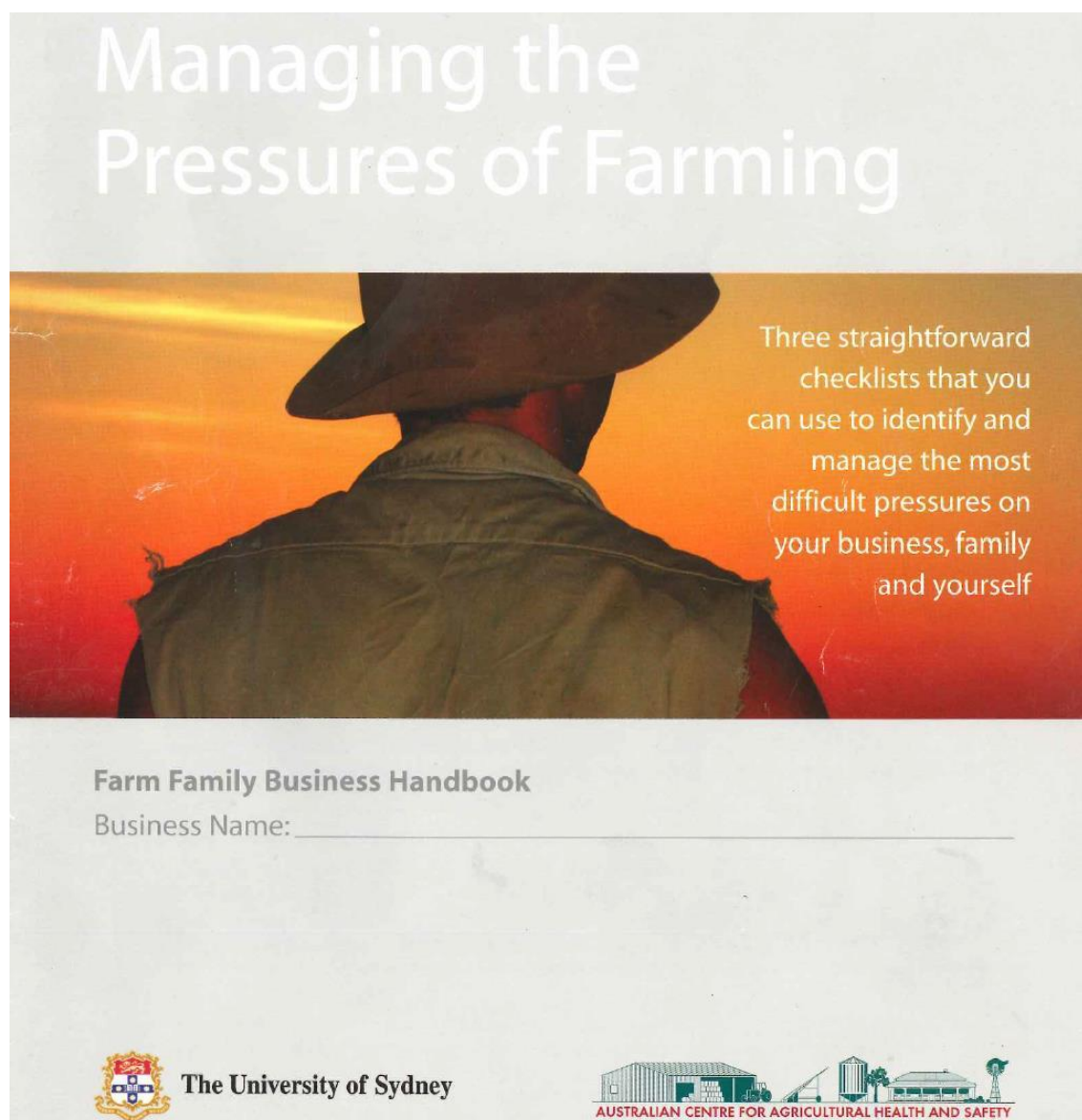


Figure 34: Australian handbook designed to help farmers identify and plan for difficult pressures in farming



“As much as it’s important to do an annual budget, you should be auditing your social capital as well. It’s about being holistic in how we look at business. The only way to have a strong agricultural industry into the future is that we recognise the importance of people, the importance of mental wellbeing, the importance of the environment and these are all key elements in strong businesses and strong communities”.

Pip Job, New South Wales Department of Primary Industries, Australia

Pip Job works in the New South Wales’s Department of Primary Industries’ Business and Social Resilience programme, Australia. With a background in livestock farming, environmental advocacy and as a champion for rural women she brings an interesting perspective to farm business planning. Her experiences have led her to passionately believe that if farmers do not care for themselves first, they will struggle to properly care for anything else. Her insight came after observing three generations of a farming family wanting to introduce a more sustainable model to their business only to find it all fell apart because of internal struggles. When a member of the family became suicidal and ended up in hospital the project fell away, despite thousands of dollars invested. The family reverted to former practices in their management. The family was simply not capable of handling the stress of the situation, together with the transition and changes in management of the business. She came to a profound realisation, *“Here I am trying to encourage people to adopt best management practice – whether it’s productive agriculture or conservation – but if we don’t work on the social capacity of these businesses we can’t ever achieve sustained practice change”*³⁷. This led her to conclude that the biggest threat to Australian agriculture is actually the mismanagement of the social factors that act as a barrier to progress in family farming businesses. To achieve productive change therefore, she strongly believes these barriers must be come overcome.

As a result, Pip Job is developing ‘Positive Farming Footprints’. This is tool designed to help small businesses to identify their social barriers to progress. The idea is to enable farms to carry out a ‘social audit’ of the capacity they have as a family business. This is approached by auditing in clusters – from the mental health issues of depression, anxiety, isolation and suicide, to family communication, the troublesome issue of succession planning and the strategic purpose and decision-making of business acumen³⁸. The idea is to offer a decision-making framework that balances the social and human aspects with more familiar farm business issues.

See chart “Key social factors” on next page.

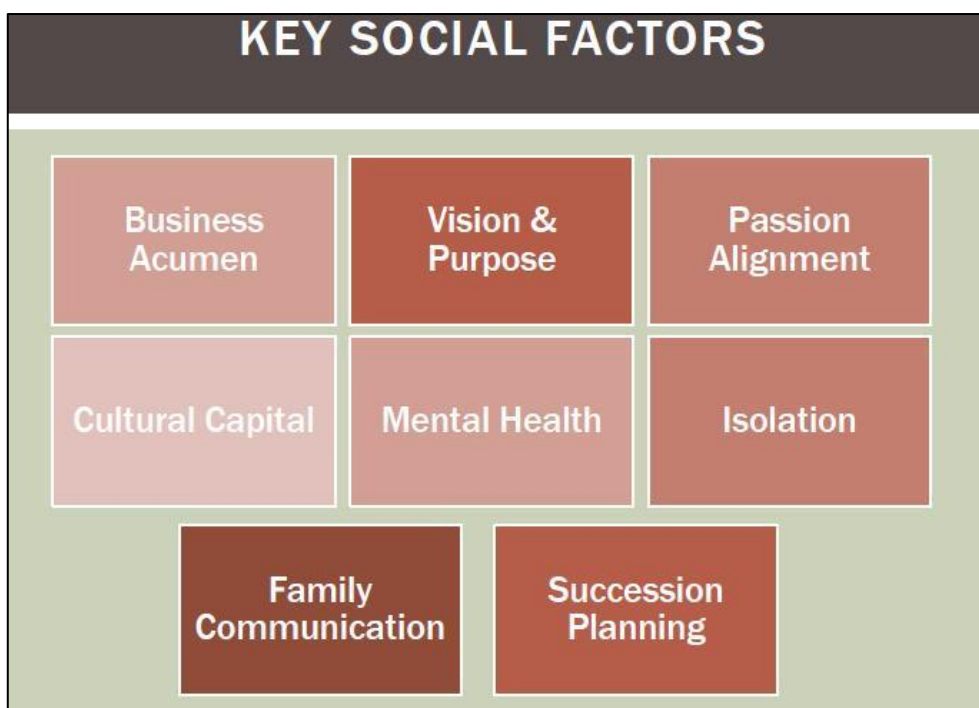


Figure 35: Key social factors are audited in clusters in 'Positive Footprints' social auditing tool

Much of the wellbeing activity taking place in farming circles has generally been prompted by the need to address concerns about poor levels of mental wellbeing and the potential consequences, which include the risk of suicide. As a result, a lot of the material and advice communicated to farmers has been framed as protective measures to manage stress in order to safeguard against possible mental ill health.

Yet taking steps to better understand and prioritise one's personal and emotional wellbeing is about more than solely preventing stress, burnout and deterioration of mental health. Investing in improving wellbeing is likely to have a positive impact on individual personal development and quality of life which in turn offers genuine benefits for the farming business. Improvements in energy, sharpness, enthusiasm, creativity and inspiration etc. can improve farmers' ability to make good decisions and run more efficient, productive businesses.

The importance of this element was brought into focus for me by Alan Wilkinson who is head of agriculture at HSBC - one of the largest banking and financial services organisations in the world. During a seminar he provided for UK Nuffield Farming Scholars he talked us through a range of financial figures and scenarios relating to farm business income. Yet his headline message on closing was, *"The biggest variable in a business is YOU"* and challenged farmers by asking *"How much professional development are you undertaking to make sure you are better than you were yesterday?"* Indeed, the most important, influential and powerful asset on the farm is the individuals behind it.



Chapter 11. Discussion

11a. A global problem

My study tour confirmed for me that mental health and wellbeing is an important issue for many farming communities around the world. Furthermore, the everyday farming pressures which often lie behind the high levels of stress and poor mental health do not appear to be going away.

11b. From anecdote to evidence

I was particularly impressed by some of the approaches and initiatives developed by farming communities in Australia and New Zealand to address the issue. An important factor behind this is that both countries have gathered extensive data on the wellbeing of their farming populations. As well as helping to inform approaches and target resources, this evidence has meant that both the industry, government and wider society has simply had no choice but to take steps to address a problem that is otherwise often hidden. Mental health in UK farming is now clearly acknowledged as a problem and frequently highlighted by frontline farming charities. Whilst many people working in the industry can all confidently supply anecdotal examples to confirm the problem, compared to some other countries we are perhaps lacking in measurement or hard data that would help give a much more detailed idea as to the extent of the problem. It could be argued therefore that ultimately the true scale of the problem remains unknown and, similarly, the effectiveness of interventions to address the problem are perhaps not as understood as they maybe could be. By comparison, a key element in many of the dedicated farmer wellbeing programmes I observed during my Nuffield Farming study was the incorporation of clear measurement and robust evaluation.

I therefore believe there is a need to further develop the evidence base in the UK. This could involve work to comprehensively collate existing data into more practical, meaningful form as well as the carrying out of relevant new academic research. Existing mechanisms within farmer organisations, government agencies and the media could also be used to regularly and extensively survey and collect data on issues of stress and mental health among farmers.

11c. Upstream to downstream

Perhaps the most impressive aspect of both countries' engagement on the topic of farmer mental health was the way essential 'downstream', emergency-type response work was balanced with proactive, preventative initiatives 'upstream'. They have recognised the need to have a strong foundation of services and facilities in place to help farming families struggling with mental and emotional health issues. In addition, through initiatives like Farmstrong and DairyNZ's wellness and wellbeing programme, they are also working to raise farmer awareness on health and wellbeing and supporting them to develop skills and resilience to cope with the ups and downs of farming. This upstream, preventative activity seeks to ensure farming communities remain healthy and productive. It also aims to reduce the likelihood of the same group of farmers reaching a point where they need to approach farmer welfare charities or that they become sufficiently informed and aware that they seek out help in good time.



11d. Ready for crisis

This ethos also extended to situations of acute industry crisis. The way the New Zealand Kiwifruit industry dealt with the psychological and emotional implications of a potentially devastating outbreak of Psa disease is a great example. In this case, strategies to address the mental and emotional health of affected growers formed a central part of the industry response to the crisis alongside the more technical scientific and agronomic aspects of the response. The approach was to pro-actively front-load preventative measures and messages about grower wellbeing in all communications and services developed to support the industry at the time. By addressing the issue directly and upfront with preventative measures the aim was to avoid having to latterly adopt a more reactionary approach which would have left them effectively mopping up the pieces afterwards.

Interestingly, it seemed to me that the Kiwifruit industry decision to prioritise the wellbeing of its grower families in the midst of the crisis seemed to have left a legacy where people now value and attend to their mental and emotional wellbeing. Talking to some of those directly affected I could see that the experience has impacted people deeply to the extent that they have changed their business plans, changed their lifestyles and their attitudes. Some of the wellbeing measures and messages that arose out of the Psa crisis have now become embedded in the sector. I believe this is aiding its resilience and stimulating people to better consider their own wellbeing alongside their business development.

11e. Learning to build resilience

Whilst the stresses of farming are not going away there are now well-understood strategies to improve mental health and wellbeing. Many of these are backed up by science and research. Action in these areas helps to build resilient people better able to cope with the pressures of farming. Organisations like DairyNZ and Farmstrong are therefore concentrating on providing farmers and growers with practical strategies which can help them stay sharp and strong amidst the ever-increasing pressures of farming. Small changes, which if done over a long period of time, can have a positive impact on how farmers live and work. The challenge however is finding time for them in the everyday busyness of typical farming life. Ultimately, this will be dependent on individuals seeing value in maintaining their individual wellbeing so that they intentionally invest and prioritise action in this area. As I witnessed during my Nuffield Farming journey, there are many simple steps that can be taken to improve wellbeing yet don't cost anything. With imagination many can be incorporated as part of farming life without necessarily absorbing huge amounts of time.

Working upstream to encourage adoption of preventative behaviours may require a different style of messaging. Social marketing involves integrating marketing concepts together with other methods to influence behaviour and benefit individuals and communities for the greater social good. It's about building emotional connection and being able to show a clear benefit to the audience to help likelihood of change occurring. Farmstrong has borrowed from this approach by choosing to concentrate on promoting positive, upbeat, aspirational messages as opposed to 'don't do' messages. It purposely refrains from talking in terms of 'mental health' and 'depression' and instead in terms of resilience and wellbeing. Messages are framed in the context of looking after wellbeing to increase productivity and enjoyment of life on the farm.



11f. The power of industry leadership

My visits to other countries confirmed to me how fortunate the UK is to have such excellent and dedicated farmer welfare charities as FCN, RABI and the many other organisations that provide excellent practical and pastoral support. For instance, Finland agriculture doesn't appear to have as strong a voluntary culture as the UK and so didn't seem to have equivalent organisations to the UK's farmer welfare charities. Ireland for example has various helplines and voluntary sector organisations working in mental health and wellbeing. Yet these are generic rather than specific services attuned to the needs and nuances of farmer culture. Several people I met in Ireland expressed a view that farmers in need may be hesitant to access these services because of this very reason.

The work of farmer welfare charities is by its nature reactive and concentrated downstream. They are often supporting clients who may be desperate, close to breaking point or near suicidal by the time they get in touch. Some describe FCN, RABI etc. as equivalent to farming's emergency services. Groups like FCN and RABI are beginning to do more upstream, preventative work and would like to do more. However, their priorities rightly are in safeguarding funding and resources to ensure they remain able to deliver their essential services that support those most in immediate need. Therefore, other appropriate routes to deliver more upstream preventative activity in the UK also need to be found. In Australia and New Zealand, this has been achieved by respected, leading organisations within the agriculture and rural sector stepping into this upstream space. For instance, to see DairyNZ - an industry leader of significant size, profile, extension and research capability - developing its own programme and staff team dedicated solely to the issue of farmer wellbeing was inspiring. Is there a role therefore for some of the UK's leading farmer-facing organisations to become more actively involved in imparting pro-active, preventative knowledge on wellbeing and to support farmers in developing strategies to improve their resilience? This could be done whilst still continuing to highlight and champion the practical, pastoral support offered by established farming welfare charities.

Extension is the process of enabling change in individuals, communities and industries³⁹. DairyNZ therefore, being New Zealand's main extension service, views creating positive change in the wellbeing of its levy payers as a strategic priority. Consequently, it is driving forward a lot of the rural sector's activity in this area. The Agricultural and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) is perhaps the UK's nearest equivalent to a national farmer extension service. As well as simply improving wellbeing, mental and emotional resilience are tools that can help its farmer and grower businesses become more successful and sustainable. Could AHDB incorporate more of this type of work as part of its skills development remit? Could the Health and Safety Executive play a wider role by broadening some of its focus on accident prevention to begin embracing the 'mental' and 'emotional' aspects of its titular 'Health' remit? Do organisations like the NFU have a duty to support its members with greater communication and education in this area?

11g. Educating upstream

UK farming would certainly benefit from a dedicated educational initiative to promote positive measures on farmer wellbeing. This could be incorporated within the remit of an appropriate existing organisation or alternatively take the form of an independent initiative such as Farmstrong. This initiative should be preventative-focussed promoting practical steps farmers can put in place to deal with stress and pressure. At the very least such an initiative could exist around an online presence. For



instance, this could involve a web-portal featuring extensive information, advice and resources on the topic of wellbeing whilst making the most of the interactive nature of social media. This primary online presence could be augmented if necessary with further initiatives such as events, training and specific campaign work.

While there are many excellent generic initiatives such as this in the area of mental health and wellbeing, there is a lack of resources specifically and solely targeting the farming population. Interest and engagement will be more likely if such an initiative is seen as belonging to the farming community and knowledgeable about rural life. Content, messages and branding should be tailored so that they are relevant to the needs of its farming audience. Funding required to deliver and coordinate something like this need not be prohibitive. Farmstrong for example has been able to develop a strong brand, high profile and deliver various activities without an office or any official staff. Instead it has utilised the services of a self-employed co-ordinator working on a part-time basis together with in-kind support from partner organisations and the use of specialist contractors and consultants as and when needed.

11h. Upskilling the rural workforce

During my visit to Australia I was struck by the range and quantity of resources, services and level of funding directed towards supporting rural mental health and wellbeing in the farming community in particular. Yet this doesn't guarantee that people will be aware of the help and services available even despite intense promotion behind them. In addition, are those who are most in need hearing and recognising that help that is available? Furthermore, having all the help and services available does not necessarily mean that that people will be ready to receive help and take action to access the services. These will always be difficult dilemmas when working in this area.

Developing an expansive reach across the farming community will go some way to helping with these difficulties. This reach can be achieved by upskilling the farming community with eyes and ears that look out for and detect signs of difficulty amongst farmers. Rural professionals such as vets, bank managers, accountants, sales representatives, tanker drivers etc. are the ones who are venturing down farm drives every day. No matter how busy farmers are these are the people they find time to talk to. These are the people invited into the farmhouse and sit and talk at the kitchen table. In Australia and New Zealand I witnessed a concerted effort to upskill farming families and particularly rural professionals through the roll out of structured, farming-specific, educational training workshops across the country. For example, DairyNZ's Good Yarn workshop has been delivered to more than 800 farmers and rural professionals since it was established in late 2015. The ultimate aim was to develop a vast rural army skilled in spotting warning signs of possible distress in people, the confidence to engage in supportive conversation with those who may be struggling and the knowledge of services that those in difficulty could be referred to.

In the UK farmer welfare charities and other groups may sometimes provide training or talks in this area. Through the Rural+ initiative, Young Farmers Clubs have joined with Farming Community Network and others to roll out training on mental health awareness to its members. However, the upskilling of farming communities and the wider rural workforce could really be accelerated with the development of a structured, formal, farming-specific training workshop similar to the likes of New Zealand's 'Good Yarn' or Australia's 'Farm-link' programme. With support from commercial



organisations in the sector the aim should be to roll this out nationally. This will support those working with farmers in the UK to improve their understanding of mental health. It will also help direct those in need towards our excellent farmer welfare charities.

11i. Supporting emerging generations

Social attitudes to mental health are gradually changing. Extensive campaigns and media coverage on the issue may be helping to slowly erode old attitudes. In particular I have noticed that much of the media seem to be covering the topic of mental health more responsibly and respectfully. Thus today's younger generations – Generation Y (usually defined as those born in the 1980s and 1990s) and Generation Z (usually defined with birth years ranging from mid to late 1990s through to the 2010s) – have arguably grown up exposed to less judgment and stigma around the issue compared to previous generations. Evidence from the WHO and youth charities such as Young Minds suggest issues of depression and anxiety are increasing among young people and that mental health is one of the pressing concerns faced by today's youth. However, perhaps because the issue is becoming less stigmatised, younger generations seem prepared to face their challenges head on and are generally more open to talk about their struggles. In this way younger generations in farming are showing an interest in their own mental health and a willingness to speak out and break down stigma. This is reflected in initiatives such as Rural+ which have been led by the UK's community of Young Farmers Clubs.

Looking to the future, should more industry initiatives on wellbeing and mental health therefore be directed at supporting younger generations of farmers? Perhaps it is here that efforts to engage and educate on mental health and wellbeing will have greater traction? Mental health and wellbeing has been successfully integrated into the curriculums of leading agricultural training institutions in New Zealand. The same needs to be achieved across land-based educational institutions in the UK. Certainly investment in this area is necessary if we want our future farmers to be well equipped to understand the many stresses of running a farm business and for them to learn healthy strategies for looking after their mental and emotional wellbeing.

11j. Speak out to break down stigma

Stigma and taboo surrounding mental health remains a major barrier and breaking this down is key. Ultimately all initiatives working on the issue aim to enable and encourage people to speak out about and openly discuss the issue. In doing so the issue becomes more widely acknowledged and normalised so that associated stigma, shame and taboo is gradually eroded. It then becomes easier for farmers to understand and talk about the issue and to ask for help. Contact with those who have personal experience of mental health difficulties is known to be one of the most effective ways to challenge stigmatised views and stereotypes of mental health. Hearing somebody who you either know, can relate to or identify with speak directly and unashamedly about their struggle can have incredible impact. This can help to reduce the sense of shame and isolation often associated with mental health and encourages others to also open up.

Farmers communicating to fellow farmers is one of the most powerful and effective ways to help build confidence and commonality. Most human behaviour is learnt from observing others. Hearing from



others about their journey and how they have benefited from making changes can act as a powerful motivator for other farmers³⁶. As witnessed during my Nuffield Farming study, this impact seemed to be particularly enhanced if the individual sharing their story is generally perceived as a high performing, successful farmer. A number of figures within the UK farming sector are becoming recognised as public advocates for mental health and wellbeing. There is a need to expand the number and diversity of these farmer voices that are speaking about the issue. One way could be through the continual development of an informal network of such champions – in particular those who have personal lived experience of mental health difficulty. Such people need to be supported to develop their profile and to become spokespeople. In particular those with an existing level of profile within the industry can make great use of this to raise awareness amongst fellow farmers, reduce stigma and signpost people to sources of support.

11k. In for the long haul

It must be remembered that culture and behaviour change takes time. Leading initiatives I encountered during my Nuffield Farming study have recognised this and wherever possible have structured themselves to deliver a long-term, sustainable programme of action. In particular, most of those working upstream to deliver pro-active, preventative initiatives typically reported that during their first few years it was a struggle to generate interest and engagement. Long term vision and investment is required.



Chapter 12. Conclusions

1. Farming communities across the world are struggling with issues of stress and mental ill health and the pressures faced by farmers appear to be increasing.
2. Mental health in farming must be tackled both 'upstream' and 'downstream'. In addition to downstream approaches supporting people in immediate or emergency need, farmer populations upstream also need to be targeted with preventative awareness-raising measures.
3. Pre-emptive measures to support the mental and emotional health of affected communities can be front-loaded within industry responses to acute farming crisis such as adverse weather events or sudden disease outbreak.
4. There are now well understood, science-based strategies and behaviours known to help develop mental and emotional resilience. Farmers embracing such measures are likely to be better placed to cope with the stresses and pressures of farming.
5. Farmers speaking out publicly and openly sharing their own personal experiences of mental health difficulty can be a hugely effective way of engaging fellow farmers on the topic and eroding stigma.



Chapter 13. Recommendations

1. More research and practical data is needed to help further develop the evidence base on farmer mental health in the UK. This will help give a more detailed picture of the extent and nature of the problem as well as inform actions to address the issue and where best to target resources.
2. Leading and respected, farmer-facing organisations within the UK sector to play a more active role in raising awareness and delivering preventative knowledge on wellbeing.
3. The creation of an upstream educational initiative specifically designed for and targeted towards a UK farmer audience. This should be preventative-focussed aiming to promote positive behaviours and practical steps that farmers can use to build mental and emotional resilience. This will support them to be better placed to cope with the everyday stresses and pressures of farming.
4. Accelerate the upskilling of Farming Communities and frontline rural professionals in mental health awareness. This will help develop their ability to spot warning signs of distress amongst farmers, give them confidence in how to respond appropriately and the knowledge of services to which those in difficulty could be referred. This could be delivered through a structured, farming-specific training workshop rolled out nationally across the UK.
5. Support and expand the network of farmer champions publicly speaking out on the issue of mental health. This will help continue to raise awareness of the issue, break down stigma and highlight available support services.
6. Support the needs of emerging generations in farming through incorporating mental health and wellbeing as a recognised topic within the curriculum of agricultural training courses.



Chapter 14. After my study tour

The Nuffield Farming experience has expanded and enhanced my knowledge and confidence of my subject area immensely. This report can only be a snapshot of the knowledge and insights I have gained. Having recently completed my study tour I am now in the process of sharing my learnings and thoughts with key organisations and figures in the UK farming world.

Since completing my tour I have delivered a number of talks to various farmer groups about my Nuffield Farming experience and the issue of mental and emotional wellbeing. Looking to the immediate future I have also been inundated with requests to talk to farmer groups, discussion societies as well as volunteers working for the farming welfare charities. I see this as indicative of the wide interest there is in this important topic. So many people seem keen to engage and learn more. In doing so I believe it is all helping to raise the profile of the issue and help erode some of the stigma that still surrounds the subject.

I have become more involved with my local Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution (RABI) in Cheshire.

In collaboration with others in the agriculture industry, I am in the process of developing skills training in the area of mental health awareness with a view to delivering to industry stakeholders in the North West and beyond. I have also been involved in the Frank Parkinson Agricultural Trust-funded project to create a national interest group to promote and support mindfulness practices specifically aimed at the farming community.



Chapter 15. Acknowledgements and thanks

Firstly, I would like to thank my sponsors the John Oldacre Foundation for their generous support. I am most grateful to all the team at the Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust. A special thanks goes to Poey Vacher without whose encouragement I would most likely not have applied to NFST. Many thanks to Anne Beckett for her help with the editing of this report.

So many people have supported me by giving up their time, offering their wisdom and showing me wonderful hospitality. It seems inevitable that I will unintentionally forget to mention some of them. I apologise to you if that is the case. I would like to especially thank the following for the time, help and insight they provided to make this all possible.

Australia

Charlie Cull, New South Wales Farmers

Sonia O'Keefe, New South Wales Farmers

Members of New South Wales Rural Mental Health Network

Sonia Muir & Robyn Walters, MPI Rural Resilience Programme, New South Wales

Matthew Keighery, Mental Health Association of New South Wales

Tony Lower, Australian Centre for Agricultural Health & Safety, New South Wales

Fiona Livingstone, Rachel McLay & Carmel O'Sullivan, Farm-Link, New South Wales

Michèle Jedlicka, The Inverell Times, New South Wales

Amanda Glasson, Catholic Community Services, Coonamble

Steph Ryan, Clinical Psychologist, Coonamble, New South Wales

Tim Horan, Coonamble Medical Centre, Coonamble, New South Wales

Maureen O'Regan, Counsellor, Walgett, New South Wales

Julie Casey, Rural Financial Counsellor, Walgett, New South Wales

Trevor Hazel, Centre for Rural & Remote Mental Health, Orange, New South Wales

Bernadette Mortensen & family, Farmers, Mangrove Mountain, New South Wales

Susan Brumby & Jacquie Cotton, National Centre for Farmer Health, Victoria

Alison Kennedy, The Ripple Effect



Denmark

Bodil Irene Jensen, SEGES, Aarhus

Helle Birk Domino, SEGES, Aarhus

Inger Kristensen, LMO, Aarhus

Peter Bakker, Aarhus

Finland

Marja Kallioniemi, Natural Resources Institute

Hanna-Riitta Kymalainen, University of Helsinki

Maija Pispä, MTK, Pirkanmaa region

Riitta Seppälä, MTK, Pirkanmaa region

Mika & Sirkku Nieminen, Dairy farmers, Poikelus, Pirkanmaa region

Marko & Johanna Honkaniemi, Livestock Farmers, Pinsiö

Maarit Kalio, Livestock farmer, Sastamala

Markus Savander, Psychologist, Tampere

Susan Traveller, Espoo

Paivi Wallin, Mela, Espoo

Pirjo Saari, Mela, Espoo

Ireland

Joe & Maireed Leonard, Dairy farmers, Meath

Noel Richardson & Diana Von Doorn, Carlow Institute of Men's health

John McNamara, Teagasc, Kildalton College

Paul Hennessey, Teagasc, Kildalton College

David Kerr, Dairy farmer, Portlaoise

Anne Cleary, University College Dublin

Karen Brosnan & family, Dublin



Aoife O'Neil, farmer, Limerick

New Zealand

Bede O'Connor, Dairy farmer, Westport

Angela Leslie, Livestock Improvement Company, Westport

Nathan Keoghan, Dairy farmer, Westport

Richard Reynolds, Dairy farmer, Barrytown

Katie Milne, Dairy farmer, Lake Brunner

Dianne Milne, Westland Rural Support Trust

Jeanette Maxwell, Livestock farmer, Mount Hutt

Lindsey Wright, Southland Rural Support Trust

Dana Carver, DairyNZ

Liz Blakemore, DairyNZ

Doug & Wendy Avery, Livestock Farmers, Blenheim

Gerard Vaughan, Farmstrong

John Wren, Accident & Compensation Corporation

Gordon and Jan Hudson, Mental Health Matters, Taranaki

Graeme Hight, Taranaki Rural Support Trust

John & Linda White, Dairy farmers, Taranaki

Lisa Harper, Federated Farmers

Kirsty McGregor, Federated Farmers

Ian & Nicola Greaves, Kiwifruit New Zealand (KNZ), Tauranga

David & Nicola Reed, Kiwifruit growers, Te Puke

Ross Bawden, Kiwifruit grower, Te Puke

Simon Cook, Orchard contractor, Te Puke

Trudi Ballantyne, Accountant, Te Puke

Erin Burt, The Dental Centre, Te Puke



Willy Koberstein, Farmlands Cooperative, Te Puke

Jamie Troughton, Kiwifruit Journal

Sweden

Christina Lunner Kolstrop, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

Kristoffer & Jenny Alpsjo, Stockholm

UK

Reverend Christina Joy

Keith Ineson, Cheshire Agricultural Chaplaincy

Charles Smith, Farming Community Network

Glyn Evans, Farming Community Network

Matt Caldicott, Farming Community Network

Georgina Lamb & Suzy Deely, Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution

Michael Pollitt, YANA

Meryl Ward, Lincolnshire Rural Support Network

Clare Worden, Rural +

Matt Swain, Farmer & coach, Essex

Olly Harrison, Farmer, Merseyside

Helen Cork, Farmer, Shropshire

Diane Swift, Swift Admin Solutions

Cindi Williams, Global Alignment



References

-
- ¹ http://www.who.int/features/factfiles/mental_health/en/
- ² <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/your-mental-health/about-mental-health/what-good-mental-health>
- ³ Farmers Weekly. (4th July 2014). 'Talking was the greatest healer'.
- ⁴ Psychological consequences of debt: an interview with Emitterus Professor Stephen Lea. September 2014. British Psychological Society. (See <http://www.bps.org.uk/psychological-consequences-debt-interview-emiterus-professor-stephen-lea>)
- ⁵ Stress and Loss: A report on the impact of Bovine TB on farming families. (2009). Farming Community Network.
- ⁶ <http://www.fcn.org.uk/help/health>
- ⁷ Beard JD, Umbach DM, Hoppin JA, Richards M, Alavanja MCR, Blair A, Sandler DP, Kamel F. (2014). Pesticide exposure and depression among male private pesticide applicators in the Agricultural Health Study. *Environ Health Perspect* 122:984–991; <http://dx.doi.org/10.1289/ehp.1307450>
- ⁸ Fundamental Facts about Mental Health 2015. (October 2015). Mental Health Foundation UK. See www.mentalhealth.org.uk
- ⁹ Whiteford H. A. et al. (2013) Global burden of disease attributable to mental and substance use disorders: findings from the Global Burden of Disease Study 2010. *The Lancet*. 382 (9904). pp. 1575-1586.
- ¹⁰ Office for National Statistics (2015). *Suicides in the United Kingdom, 2013 Registrations - ONS*. [online] Available at: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/subnational-health4/suicides-in-the-united-kingdom/2013-registrations/suicides-in-the-united-kingdom--2013-registrations.html>
- ¹¹ BBC Countryfile Broadcast. (11/10/2015).
- ¹² Preventing Suicide in England: September 2012. A cross-government outcome strategy to save lives. Prepared by Department of Health.
- ¹³ Thomas H, Lewis G, Thomas D, Salmon R, Chalmers R, Colemand T, Kench S, Morgan-Capner P, Meadows D, Sillis M, Softley P. (2003). Mental health of British farmers. *Occupational and Environmental Medicine* 60:3: 181-186.
- ¹⁴ McIntosh WL, Spies E, Stone DM, Lokey CN, Trudeau AT, Bartholow B. Suicide Rates by Occupational Group — 17 States. (2012). *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 2016;65:641–645. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6525a1>
- ¹⁵ Bossard C, Santin G, Guseva Canu I. Surveillance de la mortalité par suicide des agriculteurs exploitants. Premiers résultats. Saint-Maurice : Institut de veille sanitaire ; (2013). 26 p.
- ¹⁶ Michael R. Rosmann (2010). The Agrarian Imperative, *Journal of Agromedicine*, 1545-0813, Volume 15, Issue 2, Pages 71 – 75.



-
- ¹⁷ Dr. Linda Price. (July 2011). Rural Support Networks in the UK and Canada: The Influence of the Patrilineal Culture of Family Farming. Working Paper No. 3 Institute of Spatial and Environmental Planning. Queen's University Belfast.
- ¹⁸ Irish Farmers Journal. (26/09/2015) 'Farmers reluctant to discuss personal problems, survey finds'.
- ¹⁹ See Change: Irish Attitudes towards mental health problems. 2012 Research. (See <http://www.seechange.ie>)
- ²⁰ See Change: Irish Attitudes towards mental health problems. 2012 Research. (See <http://www.seechange.ie>)
- ²¹ Alison Goffin. (2014). Farmer's mental health: A literature review. Report prepared for the Farmers Mental Wellbeing Stakeholder Group by the Accident Compensation Corporation of New Zealand.
- ²² Joseph Leonard. (July 2015). Stress Management in Farming in Ireland. A report for Nuffield Ireland Farming Scholarships sponsored by: Peter Daly Trust, Dairymaster and LIC.
- ²³ New Economics Foundation. Five ways to wellbeing: A report presented to the Foresight Project on communicating the evidence base for improving people's well-being.
- ²⁴ Stubbe, J.H, M. H. M. de Moor, et al. (2007). "The association between exercise participation and well-being: A co-twin study. "Preventative medicine 44(2): 148-152.
- ²⁵ Breda Smyth, David S. Evans, Alan Kelly, Louise Cullen Diarmuid O'Donovan. (2012). The farming population in Ireland: mortality trends during the 'Celtic Tiger' years. The European Journal of Public Health 1-6.
- ²⁶ Royal College of Psychiatrists – Physical Activity and Mental Health – RCPsych Factsheet November 2012.
- ²⁷ Australian Broadcasting Corporation broadcast. (18/07/2016). Cattle breeder turned yogi helps farmers relax on the job with tractor yoga.
- ²⁸ Managing Stress and the Mental Health of Farmers. A study by the Navan Discussion Group.
- ²⁹ Farmers Guardian. (4th December 2015). 'How often do you take a holiday?'
- ³⁰ National Institute for Mental Health in England (2005) Making it possible: Improving mental health and well-being in England. (See <http://www.csip.org.uk/silo/files/making-it-possible-full-version.pdf>)
- ³¹ Dr Jerome Sarris et al on behalf of The International Society for Nutritional Psychiatry Research. (March 2015). Nutritional medicine as mainstream in psychiatry. The Lancet Psychiatry Volume 2, No. 3, p271–274.
- ³² Joseph Leonard. (July 2015). Stress management in farming in Ireland. A report for Nuffield Ireland Farming Scholarships
- ³³ Strategy for Healthy Rural Communities in Aotearoa New Zealand 2014-2017, RHAANZ. (See <http://www.rhaanz.org.nz>).



³⁴ Sustainable Dairying: Workplace Action Plan. DairyNZ. (See <http://www.dairynz.co.nz/about-us/dairy-industry-strategy/sustainable-dairying-workplace-action-plan>)

³⁵ New South Wales Farmers Blueprint for Maintaining the Mental Health and Wellbeing of the People on New South Wales Farms (See www.aghealth.org.au/blueprint)

³⁶ Breaking the Silence in Rural Areas: Rural mental health, stigma, services and supports within the SWARD region.(2012). A Research report by Jason Donaghy Consulting. Initiated by the Níamh Louise Foundation

³⁷ Creating rural resilience: A better future for our farmers through social change. (March 2016). National Australia Bank 'Meet the Changemakers' supplement in the UK Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/nab-meet-the-changemakers>

³⁸ Pip W. Job. (August 2015). Positive Farming Footprints: Healthy Minds, Healthy Families, Healthy Farms. Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation of Australia.

³⁹ Tafadzwa (Tafi) Manjala. (January 2014). Good to Great Extension: Influencing on farm change at pace and scale. Report to Nuffield New Zealand