A Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust Report

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Securing farmers' resilience in a changing world

Jude Martin McCann

September 2018

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NUFFIELD FARMING SCHOLARSHIPS TRUST (UK)

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Southill Farm, Staple Fitzpaine, Taunton, TA3 5SH
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Email: director@nuffieldscholar.org
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A Nuffield (UK) Farming Scholarships Trust Report

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

Date of report: September 2018

Title	Securing farmers' resilience in a changing world
Scholar	Jude Martin McCann
Sponsor	Thomas Henry Foundation
Objectives of Study Tour	• Identify issues and pressures affecting farmers' and farm households' health and well-being • Examine the importance of farmers' resilience • Identify ways of increasing resilience so that farmers' and farm families' can protect themselves and their farm businesses in challenging times. • Make recommendations on how to build and secure the farmers' resilience by governments, business, NGOs and farm support organisations.
Countries Visited	Brazil - (Contemporary Scholars Conference) Singapore, Indonesia, Japan, Israel, the United Kingdom and the USA - (Global Focus Programme) United Kingdom & Ireland, Norway, Switzerland, Italy, New Zealand and Cambodia (Personal Nuffield Travel)
Messages	• Challenges facing farmers can no longer be addressed by solely focusing on current business issues. • Willingness and ability to adapt to change together with connecting with others are key components to farmers' resilience. • Assuring the health and wellbeing of farmers and farm households are priorities and are prerequisites to address financial or production concerns. • A holistic approach that incorporates long-term social and mental health as well as environmental and financial issues is integral to resolving any immediate, short-term needs.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Farmers' health and wellbeing have attracted increased, widespread attention in recent years. This has been dramatized by reports of high levels of stress and suicide among farmers and in rural communities. Farmers in the modern world experience the same challenges as everyone else, but these are often compounded by the special characteristics of farming. These factors equally impact on how stress is experienced.

This report examines the key and emerging issues impacting on farmers and farm families and the support provided to resolve stress and promote resilience. The research centres on an extensive, investigation of farmers and farm families in the face of rapid change. It was undertaken over the period from March 2017 to September 2018, and involved study visits to 13 countries, including participation in the Nuffield Global Focus Programme, and over 80 face-to-face interviews and facilitated group meetings. This was backed by a review of the published literature, including government reports on issues related to rural restructuring and farmers' health and wellbeing.

The repeated theme identified is farmers and farm households' aspiration to secure a viable farm business and to meet the needs of their families. What varies is the nature of individual responses, the willingness and capacity of farmers and farm households to adapt, farmers' level of inter-personal relations, access to support from others and the nature of the support systems and policies available. There is also an increasing understanding of the nature of the support required.

Individuals, in particular farmers themselves and farm families are identified as the primary factor in supporting adaptive change and specific initiatives are identified that support resilience. Several key shifts in thinking are emerging on best practice. Challenges facing farmers can no longer be addressed by solely focusing on current business issues. Assuring farmers and farm household health and wellbeing are top priorities and prerequisites to address financial or production concerns. A holistic approach that incorporates long-term social and mental health issues as well as environmental and financial matters is now recognised as integral to resolving any immediate, shorter-term needs. This is central to farmers' well-being and their resilience and is an emerging component in the strategies used by support organisations to help farmers and farm families to survive and thrive.

This report concludes by stating that, 'farmers' resilience is everyone's business'. A series of recommendations to farmers, governments, the private sector and NGOs including farm support organisations are provided.

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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

Jude Martin McCann

Judem78@gmail.com

0044 (0)77 0267 6914

6, Ganard Lane
Knockadoo Road
Moneymore
Co. Derry
N Ireland
BT45 7UE

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.or

Chapter 1: Introduction

Figure 1: Author on his home farm Co Derry

My introduction to the Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust came in 2005, when I met with the then President of the Ulster Farmers' Union and Nuffield Scholar, Campbell Tweed. I little realised then that twelve years later, I too would be privileged to embark on my own Nuffield journey. Having grown up in Mid-Ulster, Northern Ireland, on a small family farm, I had an early awareness of the social, economic and other pressures that farm households experience. This awareness grew over the years and became a key focus of my subsequent university research. This interest continues today. After graduation from Queen's University Belfast (QUB) in 2001, I worked as a Researcher at the University of Auckland before embarking on a PhD through QUB, examining the social impact of the abrupt removal of subsidies from New Zealand agriculture which occurred as part of a package of changes in 1984.

Returning home to Northern Ireland in 2007, I worked in the international development sector. In our spare time my wife and I established a school in Cambodia in 2012 with a focus on English and leadership development for children, mostly from farm families, in disadvantaged communities. Today over 150 children attend the school each day, with scholarships provided to both high school and university level students. For the last six years I have been back on the farm in Mid-Ulster, building our family home and working as Chief Executive of Rural Support. Now, at 40, sadly middle-aged, I remain committed to the work of Rural Support, but also look forward to strengthening our activities and contributing further to the wider UK agri-food sector, all the while recognising the challenges we face in a potentially new phase of major rural restructuring.

The Foot and Mouth crisis that plagued the UK agricultural industry in 2001 was the spur to the establishment of Rural Support. From the first, the main services offered by Rural Support were through its telephone helpline. The helpline remains Rural Support's primary method of farmer contact. Today, with the assistance of volunteers and farm business mentors, Rural Support offers listening support, financial and technical expertise and a referral service for farmers and rural families suffering from any immediate crisis or ongoing distress. Support is provided over the phone

as well, when necessary, face-to-face in the farmer's home. Over time Rural Support has expanded its remit in the face of emerging needs and demands, and with increasing recognition that while specific crises emerge at different points in time, there are underpinning vulnerabilities and problems in the rural community that must also be addressed. Rural Support now provides farm business mentoring, assistance in response to issues such as outbreaks of disease, financial problems, debt, adverse weather events, inheritance problems and the burden imposed by farm paperwork and officialdom.

The support now provided takes many different forms but has the overarching goal of increasing the resilience of farmers and farm families. Rural Support has expanded to a team of 50 (including volunteers and mentors) and in the last year has facilitated training on farm resilience, succession planning and farm tax issues. Rural Support has also expanded to host the Social Farming Support Service for Northern Ireland which involves the innovative use of agriculture to provide therapy, rehabilitation, social inclusion, education and social services in rural areas.

While Rural Support fills the niche of supporting farmers and farm families in Northern Ireland, the challenges of Brexit and imminent farm support restructuring require an increased understanding and promotion of best practice, and on-going learning. Embarking on this Nuffield Farming journey offered the opportunity to get ahead of game and to provide insight for Rural Support, other support agencies and key stakeholders.

A UK Nuffield Farming Scholarship consists of:

(1) A briefing in London.

(2) Joining the week-long Contemporary Scholars' Conference attended by all new Nuffield Farming Scholars world-wide.

(3) A personal study tour of approximately 8 weeks looking in detail at the Scholar's chosen topic.

(4) A Global Focus Tour (optional) where a group of approximately 10 Scholars from a mix of the countries where the scheme operates travel together for 7 weeks acquiring a global perspective of agriculture.

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The Nuffield Farming Scholarships scheme originated in the UK in 1947 but has since expanded to operate in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Zimbabwe, France, Ireland, and The Netherlands. Brazil, Chile, South Africa and the USA are in the initial stages of joining the organisation.

Chapter 2: Methodology

My objectives when I planned my study tour were to identify and explore those issues and pressures impacting on farmers' and farm households' health and well-being; to examine the importance of farmers' resilience; identify ways to increasing resilience and how best to support farmers and their farm businesses through challenging times. I hoped to develop recommendations to better secure resilience for farmers and identify best practice for farm support organisations (including Rural Support), the agri-food industry, governments and others. To meet these objectives, it was necessary to look well beyond Northern Ireland or the UK and visit a range of countries that support their farmers and farm families in varied ways. The countries selected were chosen to provide a broad range of insights not only from just individual farmers but also from farm support agencies including farmers' unions and government and non-government organisations. Key to this was to identify best practices that could be adapted for the UK.

The approach adopted had several different components:

- Firstly, broad-based desk-top research identified key organisations in many different countries that provide support to farmers. From this starting point, the focus was on the different approaches farm support organisations in these countries have developed and the key issues that farming families in these countries currently face. These countries and organisations became the target areas to visit.

- Participation at The Contemporary Scholars Conference in Brasilia, **Brazil,** in March 2017 was a requirement for all 2017 Nuffield Farming scholars. It offered a rich opportunity to learn about the issues facing agriculture in a global context. The conference provided the opportunity to engage with and learn from a wide range of high calibre agricultural experts drawn from government, industry, NGOs and farm businesses. The conference also provided the opportunity to visit farms and agricultural industries. Attendees at the conference included more than one-hundred current Nuffield Farming Scholars from around the world. This offered a special opportunity to share experience, insights and expertise through formal sessions as well as informal, personal conversations. Many of the challenges, opportunities and issues discussed often focused on local issues ranging from deforestation to sustainable farming systems, natural resources and sustainable land use in Brazil. Global issues ranged from financial forecasts for food and agriculture, to climate change. There was common acceptance of future increased pace of global change in the agricultural sector and of the evidence that individual countries, governments, NGOs and individual farmers are all under pressure to respond and adapt quickly, innovatively, and necessarily in a range of different ways.

- Thirdly, in addition to the Nuffield Farming Scholarship, I was also fortunate to be chosen for participation in a six-week Global Focus Programme (GFP). The aim of the Programme was to develop an understanding of local and international agricultural best practice in all aspects of agriculture, meet with successful and progressive farm businesses, suppliers and processors, support organisations, embassy staff and officials from Agriculture Departments. Participants were 10 other international Nuffield Farming scholars, and the Programme ran

for seven weeks in June and July 2017. Scholars, who work in wide range of agriculture and food sectors, came from the UK, the Republic of Ireland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Australia and Brazil. The countries visited as part of the GFP, (organised and chosen by Nuffield, Australia), included Singapore, Japan, Indonesia, Israel, the UK, and the USA. The GFP provided an awareness of the immense global market opportunities for agriculture, particularly in East and South-East Asia, associated with growing consumer demands. Economic growth is expanding capacity to purchase western outputs including dairy products and red meat not traditionally associated with Asia. The mix (in relation to expertise, nationality and backgrounds) of Nuffield scholars who travelled together as part of this programme also provided great debate, learning and insight. What hit home in the countries visited and in experiences shared was the growing global challenges ranging from climate change, the increasing threat from animal and crop disease outbreaks, and a shifting policy context.

To build and extend on group learning, I also followed an extensive tailored personal study tour in 2017-18 (8 weeks in total), to get in-depth information on the current challenges experienced by farmers, how they are responding and what support programmes or mechanisms exist to support farmers and increase their resilience. This involved extensive face-to-face interviews with individual farmers, representatives of NGOs and other agencies directly involved in farmer-support activities. The countries concerned, and the focus of each country visit is described below:

- **UK and Ireland –** As a starting point it was important to develop a broad understanding of the current and emerging pressures on rural communities both in the UK as a whole and its individual regions as well as in our closest neighbour, the Republic of Ireland. Shared uncertainties regarding Brexit, associated probable changes in farm subsidies and shifts in access to markets highlighted the value of this component of the tour. Key organisations that facilitated and arranged meetings for me included Farmers Unions, Teagasc in Ireland, the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution, the Farm Community Network (England), the Prince's Countryside Fund (UK wide), and representatives from agriculture departments of government.

- **Norway and Switzerland** – These two European neighbours are each characterised by small family farms, and as neither is a member of the European Union, were identified as potential sources of insight on how European countries maintain and support agriculture and farmers in a non-EU context. Norway is a member of the European Economic Area. Switzerland is a member of the European Free Trade Association but not the EEA. Both provide higher levels of subsidies to farmers than any of their OECD counterparts. Farming Unions, farm advisory/ support organisations and policy experts in government departments of agriculture in both countries provided unique insight. In Norway, face-to-face interviews were conducted with farmers who had diversified to remain resilient, as well as with the farm support organisation Inn Pa Tunet, representatives from the Norwegian Farmers Union – Norges Bondelag, staff of the Norwegian Agricultural Extension Service, academics at the Norwegian University of Health Sciences and government representatives at the Norwegian Agricultural Agency – Landbruksdirektoratet. In Switzerland my face-to-face interviews included world renowned psychologist, Willie Horton, individual farmers, farm insurance representatives,

the Farmers' Hotline, Farmers Union representatives', academics at the rural research agency Agroscope and at the farm advisory services, Agridea.

- **Italy (UNFAO)** - An agroecology symposium, 'Scaling up agroecology to achieve the Sustainable Development goals', held in the UNFAO headquarters in Rome April 2018. This provided an opportunity to learn about the agroecology movement, engage with policy makers and farmers and farm support organisations from across the globe. Over 400 participants from across the world included representatives from national governments, the United Nations, NGOs, private sector companies, funding organisations, academics and farmers. Interviews were also conducted after the event with individual UNFAO staff who have particular expertise in farm support and resilience.

- **New Zealand** – New Zealand has offered effectively no subsidies to its farmers since 1984. The abrupt withdrawal of subsidies at that time was part of a radical restructuring that cut across all economic sectors and exposed the country to the full effects of global market forces. Today New Zealand remains a significant agricultural exporter and is unusual among most modern western economies in its continued dependence on agricultural earnings. It is not immune to domestic and global pressures on its rural communities and was identified as a good example of initiatives and programmes to support farmers and build resilience. Face-to-face Interviews were held with officials in the Ministry for Primary Industries, staff in AgResearch (a research organisation) and representatives of regional Rural Support Trusts who assist farmers during and after adverse events. Staff from the 'Farm Strong' initiative and organisations developing farm specific farm support initiatives, academics and key industry representatives were also interviewed.

- **Cambodia** – Experience from the GFP reinforced my commitment to include a less developed country in South-East Asia. I already had strong established links. Cambodia was selected as an example of a country emerging from poverty and that between 2004 – 2012 experienced an annual average agricultural growth of 5.3%, one of the highest in the world. Meetings and interviews were arranged with government officials in the Department for Agriculture and Rural Affairs – Kampong Speu Province, farmers, NGO representatives from the Cambodian Centre for Study and Development in Agriculture, farm support organisations, and independent farm consultants based in Phnom Penh.

My study tour gave me direct experience of 13 different countries and combined conference attendance with over 80 interviews. The breadth and depth of the approach adopted was designed to provide a global perspective on current and emerging issues and challenges facing farmers and farm families. The diversity of countries included offered a range of different models of farm support systems, an overview of the diversity of government interventions and insight on the many variations in the characteristics and issues associated with family farms.

Chapter 3. Context: managing change

3.1. Introduction

Humanity is inherently resilient in the face of change. Sometimes it isn't easy, but survive we must, and farmers are no exception. Farmers face unique pressures, however, as unlike any other business operation they are in practice tied to a specific location ("locationally fixed") and particularly vulnerable to shifts in weather patterns and climatic conditions. Consequently, farmers are well used to change. They are adaptable and may make repeated adjustments in their stock and land management, whether on a daily basis or over longer periods. Such characteristics and responses are almost universal. If that is not challenging enough, for a farmer, business and home go hand in hand. So, while farming has often been explained or interpreted in terms of its physical resources base, its capacity to survive and thrive is contingent on the skills, know-how and labour a farmer and farm family provide. The family farm structure that still predominates in the UK and many other western style economies and elsewhere is above all a social enterprise as well as a business. The business profitability or productivity of the family farm and its adaptability rests in large part on that inter-dependency between land, resources and people. Family farms have repeatedly demonstrated a capacity to adapt and survive due to their social structure. Today it is the pace of change, rather than change *per se* that is cause for concern.

The stresses on farmers, farm families and indeed on rural communities are starkly demonstrated across the UK. Changes in recent decades include reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), adverse weather conditions, disease outbreaks and the prospect of future changes, most immediately with the prospect of Brexit, are putting continued, increased stress and pressure on farmers. Stress, anxiety, loneliness and depression are already endemic in many farm households. Research by Rural Support (2016) identified over 60% of farmers as experiencing significant stress. Those in debt scored significantly higher in terms of poor mental health and well-being. In addition, 17% reported that they did not have anyone they could speak to about a mental health problem. Another 37% said they would be willing to speak only to a professional. Older people were less likely to seek help for themselves than younger people.

Poignantly, current statistics from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2018) show that almost one farmer a week in the UK dies by suicide. All such deaths are tragic and often have far-reaching consequences for the families, communities concerned. Suicide, however, is only one indicator, if the most quoted, of the on-going pressures on farmers. More fundamental are the inherent stresses common to farm life. These need to be examined, better understood and addressed if more suicides are to be averted, and the overall well-being of farmers, their families, and their communities, increased.

3.2. Government support for agriculture

Governments across the world are responding to domestic and global issues in many ways but have varying resources to implement effective policies. Climate change is an enormous challenge to agriculture and governments. Issues concerning the availability of clean water, productive soils, forests, wetlands and the biodiversity of the planet, all hinge in some part on the way we produce

food and what we eat. One-third of the world's population obtains its livelihood from agriculture, and agriculture and food is the world's largest business. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), state that almost 800 million people of the world population of seven billion, are chronically undernourished; at the same time, in 2014, 1.9 billion people are overweight, and of these, 600 million obese.

From the mid-1940s, the United Kingdom and many other European countries increased state support for agriculture. Through the application of science and technology, the development of advisory services, and increased subsidies, output dramatically increased. Such initiatives were driven in part by concerns over food security. War in Europe dramatized the need for increased self-sufficiency. More recently the debate has shifted in favour of a reduction in government support. National food security has become of much less concern. Production subsidies are now under attack.

Although the global pattern varies, overall government priorities have shifted. For the most part, production subsidies have decreased (and threatened to further decrease). To some extent these have been replaced by other forms of support such as payment for environmental management and, as in Switzerland and Norway, for maintenance of agricultural landscapes for cultural and other reasons. At the same time globally, the number of farms has decreased; average farm size has risen, and the political power of farmers has declined. All this has and continues to place stress on the farm community. Agriculture remains an essential source of income for many individuals and nations. As noted in 'Agriculture at a crossroads: Findings and recommendations for future farming', Foundation on Future Farming (2016), one-third of the economically active population still obtains its livelihood from agriculture. Yet, government perspectives on agricultural policy have fundamentally changed.

3.3. Social licence to farm

While there is a relative abundance of food in the world, severe distributional (and financial issues) persist. There are, in addition, recurrent – even persistent – crises in areas of war and instability and severe food shortages. Overall, however, there is a greater disconnect than ever between consumers and farmers. Consumers are asking about where their food is coming from and how safe is it? At the same time, there is increased political and public awareness of environmental and other issues.

John Wilson, a beef farmer in Wisconsin USA, and interviewed as part of this study said, "*Farmers need to rise to challenges, to tell our own stories, be pro-active in sharing information about our production practices, our values; farmers will experience more and more legislation that won't be coming from a place of agronomy or science, it will be from politics. Farmers are and will be forced to change how we grow food if we don't tell our stories and get the facts out.*"

The current debate and policy shifts (and so pressure on farmers) go beyond ecological concerns and concerns over the quality of food, animal welfare, disease-free produce and the preservation of cultural landscapes. Subsidies or some other form of financial support for farmers are increasingly promoted and supported on such criteria. As Martin Stein, a Norwegian sheep farmer explained, *"We recognise the importance of our family farms. Tourism is very important both here and internationally. We are famous for our fjords and the landscapes along our coasts have been shaped*

by agriculture and rural communities, we need to continue to keep people in these areas and protect this landscape."

Particularly in the EU, these multiple new policy concerns are redirecting subsidies and other support to farmers. This is commonly described as the 'social licence to farm'. This reflects the shifting and growing demands on farmers and land managers that go well beyond the increased output of food.

In New Zealand, where the absence of farm subsidies is loudly championed, environmental demands (as well as issues of food safety and animal welfare) have increased in prominence. Issues of water quality are now a primary policy goal. Legislation on dairying has increased resulting in initiatives and demands for detailed land management plans. The current Government is now implementing a national plan to address erosion, water quality, and climate change with a commitment to plant one million hectares of land (much of it farmland) with one billion trees between now and 2027. This is all encompassed within the concept of 'a social license to farm'.

3.4. Global and other pressures on the farming community

As described, 'a social license to farm' encompasses the decline in production subsidies with increasing and multiple, wider environmental and other concerns. This threatens the current structure of farming and is already driving changes across the agri-food industry and within individual rural communities. To many farmers these challenges pose increasing uncertainty and heighten their sense of vulnerability. Among the most prominent challenges identified in all areas visited are:

- Climate change: - including changing weather patterns and increased extreme weather events
- Financial pressures: - indebtedness, market uncertainty and increased price volatility
- Growing social isolation: - smaller farm households, increased difficulties in accessing services (e.g. schools, hospitals) and attracting farm labour and new, young farmers
- An increasingly elderly farm population and an aging population in rural communities
- Stress and pressures increasing the risk of farm accidents
- (Often hidden) rural poverty and young people leaving rural areas

These changes and concerns are equally evident across the UK. Yet as elsewhere, they are shaped and compounded by a national or regional lens. In particular, close to home, this lens is currently shaped by:

- The potential implications of Brexit including market shifts, new trade arrangements, environmental controls and different subsidy regimes.
- Changes in tax reporting / HMRC reporting
- Farm family structures / one-person businesses; pressures on farm households from changing production practices
- Increased recognition of farmers as a high-risk group in terms of suicide, stress, poor mental health and wellbeing.

Figure 2 illustrates the range of the pressures currently experienced globally in rural areas.

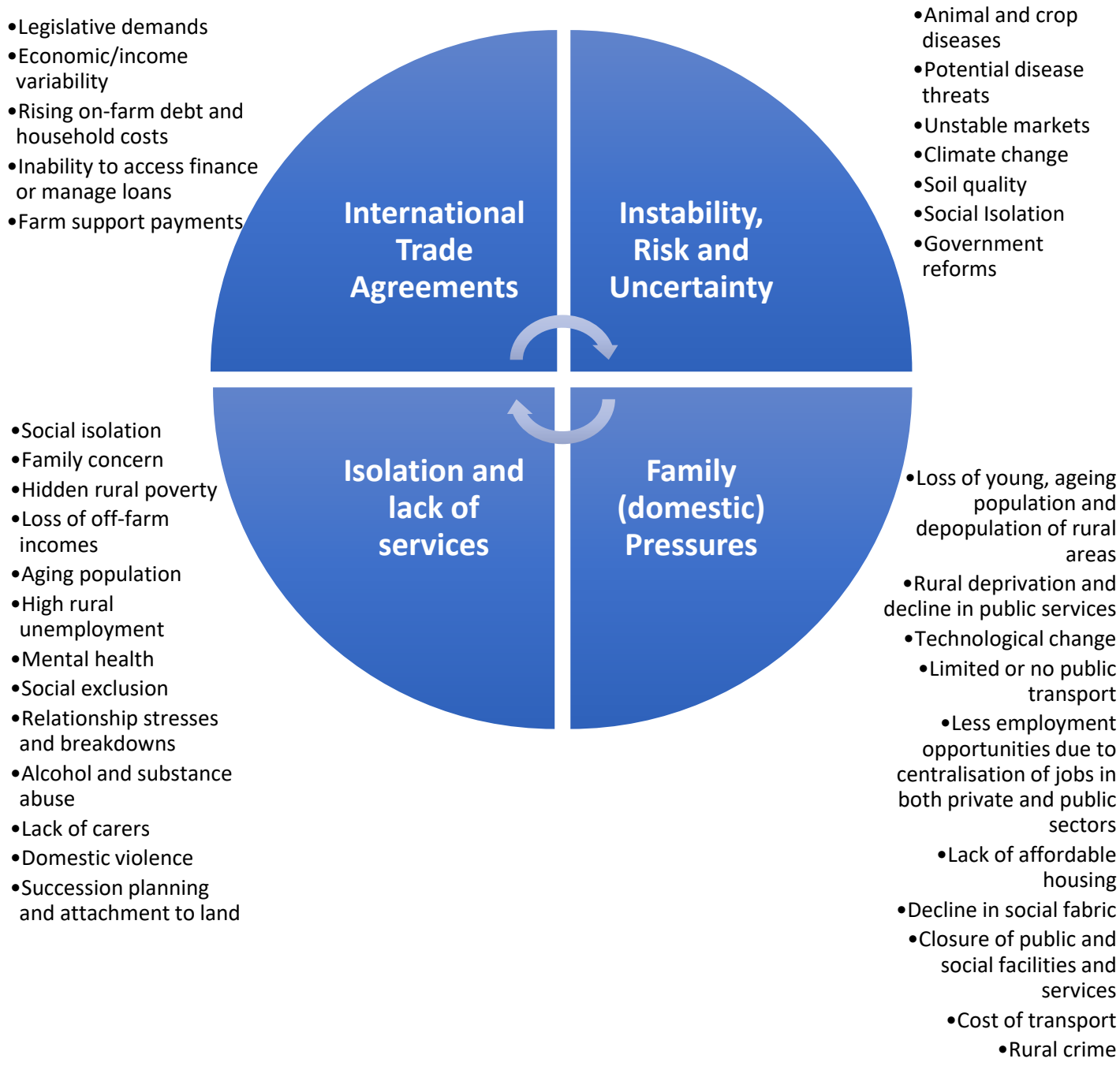

Figure 2: Global Pressures on Farming and Farm Households

3.5. Responding to and managing change

Many of the challenges and pressures identified in Figure 2 are well established and unlikely either to be rapidly diverted or to quickly disappear; many are complex and poorly understood. That is

certainly the case with climate change but equally applies to Brexit. All this heightens the pressure on farmers as how best to respond and how best farm support agencies should assist. What issues can farmers themselves influence and help shape? What are the issues for which they need help? What can't be changed but must be addressed head on? Identifying issues on this basis allows non-influential issues to be parked and the focus placed over which they have some control. Effectively managing change hinges above all on the industry's human component, and it is with people that the capacity for resilience primarily depends. This places farm support organisations front and forward in assisting and guiding those who can be overwhelmed by the pace of changes and the pressures experienced, or who may still need information and help.

Chapter 4: Resilient farmers

4.1. Introduction: Change, Response, Resilience

Resilience is increasingly and repeatedly referenced by politicians and in the media as an important measure of survival and success with respect to farm businesses as well as individual farmers. Yet understanding or defining the concept remains contentious. Central to all definitions, however, is adaptability, the capacity to respond and recover from shifting needs and demands. Windle (1999, p163) captures this succinctly explaining it as *"the successful adaptation to life tasks in the face of social disadvantage or highly adverse conditions"*.

Selected case studies of farmers visited all share the common theme of responses to change. As described the specific drivers of change vary. The stresses on individual farmers and farm households are disparate and the regional or national context in which change occurs moulds the nature of their response. But in every example, the goal is to increase resilience - both of the farm business and of the individuals and households concerned.

4.2. A Swiss example: Andre Staidler

Andre, now in his early 40s, farms beef and dairy cows in the Canton of Bern. He milks 30 jersey cows and combines this with selling farm insurance. He lives next door to his elderly parents. His mother remains actively involved in the farm business.

Andre's farm totals 12 hectares with an additional 2.5 hectares in forestry. He farms largely organically, although it is not certified because the number of animals he has for the size of his farm exceeds the necessary, official criteria; but he doesn't use any chemical fertilizers. Andre has changed his farm activities because the size of his farm and traditional practices didn't provide sufficient income nor allow him the way of life he desired.

Figure 3: Andres begins milking at 5am

Andre stands out as he ensures that he had every second weekend off the farm. This is possible because in Switzerland apprenticeships in agriculture are widely available allowing Andre to employ an apprentice to manage the farm and milk the cows every other weekend. Andre also enjoys travelling, is part of a wine tasting group, and takes regular holidays.

Andre explains that, "*As farmers it's very hard to switch the mind off from farming … it's a bit like looking after a young baby or child. You are constantly thinking about what needs to be done, what needs fed, cleaned; you see jobs to do. Non-stop, the mind never rests*". For Andre weekends off-farm provide a shift in gear, allowing him to quickly switch off. He appreciates that this is not a

realistic option for all farmers but believes in the importance of a good work/life balance; he has a good apprentice, and trusts him to do a good job.

Andre has formed a good relationship with a neighbour who works full-time as a train driver but who wanted to do some physical, outdoor work for his health. Andre offered to teach him how to milk cows and he now provides additional help as required. Andre sees this as 'a bit like insurance' - a fall-back should he get sick or if something else crops-up.

Andre describes himself as a '*farmer for people'*. Such farmers – typically described as Care Farmers or Social Farmers receive government funding to provide support for people with mental health issues, learning disabilities and other needs. Similar polices now exist in the Netherlands, Norway, the UK and many other European countries. Typical of many Swiss homes, Andrew's farmhouse is divided into three apartments. Andre has had a man with learning disabilities living in one of his apartments for more than 16 years. The Government recognises and values the role of Care Farms in social care and provides funding to farmers dependent on the level of needs of the individual client involved. Andre explains that his client is not too demanding and able to look after himself a fair bit. They have meals together and the client helps a little on the farm, but Andre explained that other clients have had more complex issues and haven't work-out. Andre is a strong advocate of the Care Farm concept and firmly believes that farmers are well positioned to help care for vulnerable members of society who have learning disabilities or mental health issues. There are now more than 550 Care Farms in Switzerland (out of a total of 52,000 farms).

Andre is now, with the support of the Swiss Farmer Association, embarking on a project to assist refugees and asylum seekers, currently coming mainly from Eritrea. Andre will provide accommodation for a young man in his 20s who has reasonably good German language skills and wants to learn farming skills. Andre explains that he is working with social services which are funding this initiative. In 2018, 14 farm apprenticeships will be made available to refugees in the Canton of Bern. The apprentices will help on farms, learn farming skills, get a home, live in a good environment, and if they prove able, will in the longer-run either get full-time paid employment in Switzerland or return to Eritrea, with a set of new skills. Everyone wins, Andre as a farmer will get a little more income, the government gets accommodation and opportunities for refugees, and the refugees get help and support.

Figure 4: Andre's farm and 2 family homes - 6 apartments

Andre is also part of a local wine group. The group regularly hosts wine tasting evenings in each other's homes. The group includes several wealthy individuals. While the members share a passion for quality wine, Andre also uses his membership to tell them about his farm and his organic produce. As a result, Andre now provides

beef from his farm direct to a range of customers who are able and willing to pay a premium price because they know him, trust the way he farms and value the quality of his beef.

Andre is a member of a farm co-operative. Members pool their resources to purchase equipment which they share. Such arrangements are common in Switzerland. Asked about his hopes for the future of farming, Andre highlighted the place of farming in the community and his hope that the community increasingly realises the importance of farming. "*Everybody eats but often people don't know or appreciate where their food comes from. My hope is that farmers can get a little better paid, so they can survive and that we don't go down the road of industrial farming."*

Asked what makes him a resilient farmer, Andre explains, "*Farmers need to get a life-farm balance. This is the most important thing."* Farmers are much better when they take time to switch off. Andre also believes that farmers need to recognise that they can't be experts in everything. "*Farmers need help and support from others. That's why orgnaistions like our Swiss 'Farmers Hotline' (*telephone helpline support launched in 1996 to support farmers facing personal or financial difficulties*) is so valuable. We need to be proctive in seeking support and information. My traditional farm business was vulnerable because, it didn't provide enough income. I had to adapt, change and look how to diversify to be more resilient.*"

Figure 5: Author helping at feeding time

4.3. A Northern Ireland example: Damian and Jackie

Damian and Jackie are Dexter beef farmers (with some sheep and pigs) who live near Downpatrick, Co Down, in Northern Ireland. Damian is a third-generation farmer but also works off the farm as a tree surgeon. Damien and Jackie got together 4-5 years ago. Jackie was new to farming and found it "*a baptism of fire*". She previously worked in special needs child care. Damien and Jackie recognised the need "*to do something*" to realise their dream of building their farm business in a way they could both work full-time on their farm. They have 30 hectares and now breed and fatten predominately pedigree Dexter beef cattle. Damian explained that they started in 2012 with two Dexter heifers as a "*present from Santa*" for their children. The heifers were unexpectedly found to be in calf, so the farm soon had 4 Dexters. Now they have over 100. Damian says "*We can't cope with demand for our meat at the moment, so we have neighbours and friends now breeding Dexters for us on their land. We are basically selling an animal a week. Busy times like the Balmoral show we sold 6 animals*".

Originally Damian and Jackie farmed commercial cows. When they shifted to Dexters their business developed much faster than expected. Daren explains that "*It was a shock to try and keep up with demand. When people got the taste of it, it went like wild fire. We soon recognised that the meat filled a market niche. That gave us the incentive and drive for change*". They now have a fertilizer and pesticide free farm and are trying to farm as sustainably as possible. People are prepared to pay that bit more for a niche product. Damian and Jackie are now expanding still further with plans to set- up their own on farm butchery and have longer-term plans to open a farm shop.

Figure 6: Damian and Jackie on their Castlescreen Farm

Damian says that the biggest challenge in changing his production system and diversifying was probably his dad and his uncle who had farmed in a more traditional way. He explains that, "*They weren't able to get their heads around what we were trying to do; they still don't understand why we aren't putting on chemical fertilisers. We can keep 2 Dexters to their one bigger standard animal, our stock are easier on the land, giving us a low input system. 'Wee cows: big beef' is the strap line. Sometimes you need someone from outside looking in and that's where Rural Support can help*."

"*The Dexters are inherently resilient and suited to the local environment; they get dosed once a year and that's it. They are low maintenance and don't need supplementary feed. They are healthy and resistant to diseases. The cows and calves stay out all year round, and the cows calve on their own 99% of the time. They are hardy wee animals. On-farm equipment needs amount only to an old small tractor, while most local farmers need (or think they need) big new machines*".

Damian and Jackie participated in the farm resilience programme that has been facilitated by Rural Support in Northern Ireland since 2016. They wanted to develop a sustainable farm business and saw this programme helping them achieve this. They also joined the alumni group of farmers from the programme and recently travelled as part of a farm group to Scotland. This trip was organised by Rural Support and provided 25 farmers from Northern Ireland the opportunity to visit a range of successful farm businesses that had changed and adapted in response to changing demands. The aim of this is to facilitate learning and social interaction and contribute to the resilience of farm businesses. The visit to Scotland encouraged them to innovate using smaller paddocks. Damian said, "*Key things we took out of the farm resilience programme include the importance of good book keeping, looking at where we are wasting time, and looking at costs and bench marking.*" They are now moving to computerised software.

Jackie explains that the resilience programme opened their eyes to things they had previously thought okay, and that they have made changes because of the programme and got a lot out of it. "*The Rural Support mentor was very good at pointing out areas for improvement*". Now they are building their business and have just built a new house, although cash flow remains stressful. "*We want to keep pushing, get the farm shop open, keep the momentum, but it is stressful. But the*

resilience programme took us away from the farm; we then started to question things rather than just being stuck in a rut".

As a young lad Damien remembers the farm advisor from the Ministry coming out and sitting down with his father.

He said, "*That's all gone. Who is providing support? Subsidies and Brexit are big issues. We are open to learning something new if it promotes sustainability and helps us farm. We are as much looking after the land as we are marketing the beef. We are looking at soil quality, we are liming more, we are planting trees, hedges and an orchard."*

Damien and Jackie now describe themselves as resilient. They talk to each other and share ideas. This reduces stress. They also recognise the need to be continually adaptable and willing to change.

Figure 7: Newly born Dexter calf and mother

4.4. A Cambodian example: Leang and Ratana

Close to Kampong Speu in Cambodia, Leang and his wife Ratana farm 1.5 hectares with 4 cows, 4 ducks and 10 chickens. They also grow vegetables and rice. It's a self-sufficient farm but they also generate cash from selling produce at the local market. What is striking is the sheer joy and happiness Leang and Ratana exude. Never having met a foreigner before they were both eager and proud to show off their farm and discuss the challenges they face.

Despite Leang and Ratana having received little formal education, they survived the genocide in Cambodia in the 1970s, when Leang lost both his parents and older siblings some of the 1.5 – 3 million people killed. What followed was prolonged poverty. Despite all this, Leang and Ratana are knowledgeable and innovative in their management of their farm. They have four adult children and three grandchildren who live close by. Leang is now in poor health but a successful, resilient farmer, because, he believes in the dedication and hard work he and his wife, his children and neighbours have put in. They all pull together in mutual

Figure 8: Leang and author in cow barn on farm

support as needed and required.

Figure 9: Ratana (who is camera-shy) harvesting veg

Leang believes that farmers need to consider and take care of the whole farm system, including the family, and the environment. In this part of the world this includes a primary reliance on animal manure. Leang says that he doesn't like using any chemicals on the farm, believing that they are not good for either his animals or his children. He is entrepreneurial and was the first in the village to buy a machine to process rice. This machine is now used by his neighbours who rent it from him, providing him with an additional income stream. Leang also supplements his income by providing transportation of goods for a local construction company.

Leang and Ratana view their biggest challenge as the environment. They often face a water shortage in the dry season (partly due to dams holding water for others further upstream, as well as from prolonged longer spells of dry weather) and they get poor, inadequate prices for their rice and vegetables when they take them to market. When asked to sum-up the success and resilience of the farm, Leang again explains it in terms of hard work by his family and neighbours "*In the mornings I go out to the fields and in the afternoons my wife goes out. My health is not good and I'm not as strong as I used to be. I'm happy to look after my grandchildren in the afternoons. We are a small village. Everyone helps everyone. We simply couldn't stay alive on our own. We are one tribe.*"

Despite their success, Leang and Ratana don't want their children to be farmers as the land they have is inadequate in the long term to provide a decent income. Leang explains "*Farming here is tough, and dry weather and poor prices mean it's not easy to survive on farming alone*". Leang and Ratana are extremely proud that one of their children is now at university and they think the government should do more to help by providing seeds for vegetables and rice, training and help to find better markets. Leang and Ratana illustrate the need for change to secure resilience, and that change of different kinds must become part of an on-going process to maintain and secure resilience as markets shift and family needs evolve.

Figure 10: Leang and his granddaughter

4.5. A New Zealand example: Doug and Wendy Avery

Doug Avery and his wife Wendy farm 2,400 hectares in Marlborough, in the north of South Island. Their son is in the process of taking over the farm and they employ additional labour as and when needed.

Figure 11: Wendy and Doug Avery

As Doug tells it in '*The Resilient Farmer*' (2017). In 1966, aged 11, his brother died in a hunting accident or possible suicide and his dad fell into deep depression. Doug explains that "*For four years my father spent his time in hell with two suicide attempts... Mum became the rock that held our lives together."*

Doug dropped out of school and with the help of a neighbour managed to hold onto the farm. Doug's dad eventually recovered. Later, however, tragedy again struck when one of the farm workers was killed in a tractor accident. Doug saw this tragedy. The family were also directly impacted by cancer adding to the stresses they faced.

In the 1990s, the farm was devastated by a drought which lasted eight years. As the land dried up, income shrunk and Doug's ability to function seriously decreased. While driving around their farm Doug explained, "*A broken mind can't diagnose a broken mind*." His depression continued for many years, but he didn't recognise it. He withdrew from his family, friends, and his community when, on reflection, he acknowledges he needed them most. Turning to drink and closing himself off at home playing computer games, his depression increased.

Figure12: Lucerne paddocks

As Doug explains, "*Help came to me in the form of a young sales rep who was pushy enough to make me leave the farm for a day".* That day they travelled together to a farmers' meeting. A scientist speaking at the meeting spoke of his belief and passion for *Lucerne* which he believed was a suitable fodder and grazing crop for areas with an extremely dry climate. As Doug describes it, *''This set me off on a process of discovery and change."* Ultimately Doug became affectionately known as the 'Lucerne lunatic'. He began to turn his farm business around using Lucerne, a deep rooted, resilient crop which enabled Doug to feed more animals a highly nutritious diet and so he didn't have to downsize in times of drought. Lucerne became as Doug explains, not just about increasing productivity but "*About changing the way we integrate to the world*." Doug went from struggling to survive and with zero income in 1998, to

winning the title of South Island Farmer of the Year in 2010. He was able to expand his farm with land purchases; output and profitability increased. At the same time his management practices became more environmentally friendly.

Most importantly, Doug's mental health or his "Top-paddock" as he calls it was transformed. He began to share his experience with other farmers and communities around New Zealand. He realised that there were many farming families suffering as he and his family had suffered and that many farmers were struggling with depression. Helping others look after their own top-paddock became and remains a passion for both Doug and Wendy.

Doug explains, "*Learning to farm differently – to farm with nature, rather than against it – is at the heart of that success. But, even more importantly, I had to change my thinking process. I had to seek help, I sought help and became emotionally resilient…*'' He now accepts that life for everyone has its ups and downs and that recognising and accepting this, "*You never become mired in despair*."

Figure13: Doug presenting to farmers across New Zealand

4.6. Conclusions for Chapter 4

While not all the case study farmers necessarily describe themselves as resilient or use such terminology, each has responded to different pressures – economic, social, or medical –adapted and changed to build their farm business and increase well-being. They are resilient, though as Leang in particular highlights, resilience is not a final or permanent status, but a process that as family circumstances (and goals) shift and as the economic and social context changes, further adaptations may be required.

The drivers of change vary. Sometimes these are prompted by individual or family circumstances, including mental health issues, financial need, or a desire for a better work/life balance. Equally, the path to resilience may vary. One common theme, as every case study illustrated, is the importance of connections; as one farmer explained - "*Being part of a tribe*". This recognises that everyone needs support either from family, friends, farm employees, neighbours or some outside source.

A farmer's (or a farm household's) initiative, entrepreneurial spirit or willingness to take risks is important but connectivity widens the pool of information and support. In many parts of the world the traditional rural community has become much more fragmented. As farms have increased in size, mechanisation has reduced the need for manual labour, so life for many has become more isolated. As one Wisconsin farmer told me, in an earlier visit to the USA, farmers when asked: "*How many close friends do you have who you could call on in a crisis?*" Most commonly replied, "*None.*" When the question was posed some years earlier, the most common answer was "*Five*." Reduced opportunities for social interaction mean that farmers need to be increasingly proactive to develop new connections, to remain informed and have people around to support and assist when required. The evidence from some developing nations reminds us of the inherent resilience of family farms. Being prepared to farm differently and to use the assets of the farm in different ways is a recurrent

theme. This is much easier when farmers recognise that they are not alone, seek support, and where necessary lean on others.

Chapter 5: Supporting Farmers' Resilience: global trends

5.1. Introduction: diverse and changing farm support structures

The previous chapter explored resilience among individual farmers in an international context. This chapter explores how information and support structures to promote resilience are changing and responding to different demands and needs. It is a cliché to say that change is constant. It is equally true that farmers are constantly adapting to meet changing needs. Political agendas and the needs of other stakeholders are also changing which directly and indirectly impact on farmers. These pressures almost inevitably generate stress, and this can generate, at least in some cases, clinical depression. The Nuffield study tour highlighted that in every country multiple agencies of different types have emerged or increased their role in providing information and different forms of support to farmers. This has occurred, in part, in response to a widespread decline of many different earlier forms of support provided by government. In broad terms these changes have seen a shift away from one-to-one farm advisory services funded by taxpayers and provided free to farmers, to more diverse approaches ranging from initiatives targeted to specific farmer groups or individual producers.

5.2. Privatised extension and the emergence of NGO support

The shift from traditional support structures and the once predominant model of government advisory, extension and support services is evident in the USA, Canada, Australia, Brazil, the United Kingdom and elsewhere. In the past, services and support offered to farmers largely focused on productivity and use of new technologies. It can be argued, however, that this traditional support offered through face-to-face services may have provided some social support, but what has now emerged is a massive need for social support engendered by increasing loneliness, suicide rates, and increased farmer expectations. Wealthier, larger scale farmers as well as farmers from smaller and medium size enterprises share the same risks in relation to suicide and depression. These issues, as demonstrated in the case studies, are not necessarily related to economic well-being. The provision of care has generated a significant new support industry.

New Zealand provides an example at one extreme of privatised extension services. Traditional farm support structures and services were abruptly withdrawn in the mid-1980s. Prior to this the then Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) was the key provider of information and advice to the rural sector with no charge to individual users. At its peak, the Advisory Services Division of MAF had 670 staff spread throughout the country at 56 locations. Of this staff, over 300 were extension workers/ farm advisors. Today there are effectively no government extension workers and a major increase in the role of the private sector in this space. This has brought a significant increase in the diversity of agencies and NGOs involved in the transfer of production information and social or psychological support to farmers. Figure 14 on next page exemplifies the current situation in New Zealand, but its key components are evident in the other countries visited.

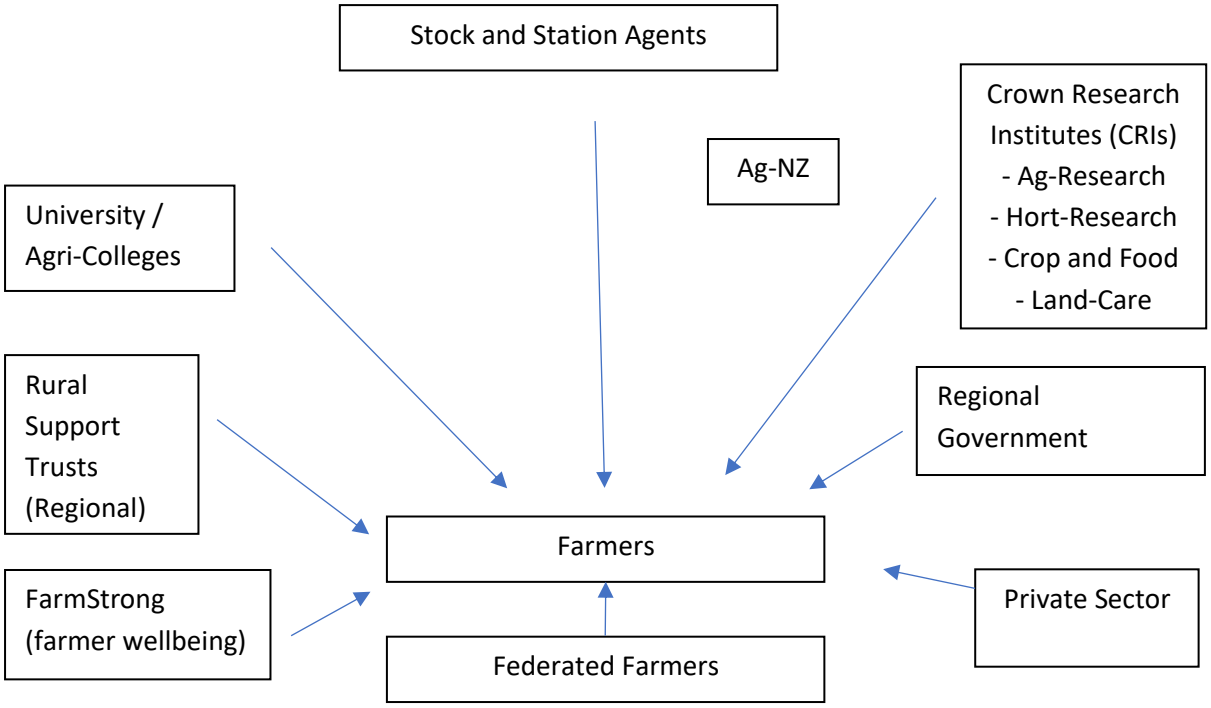

Figure 14: Current Information and Support for New Zealand Farmers

Note: Stock and Station agents are rural business services. Crown Research Institutes are science businesses owned by the New Zealand Government and formed in 1992. Rural Support Trusts provide confidential helpline and outreach support to farmers. Federated Farmers is the country's leading advocacy organisation. Farmstrong is a new social information service to farmers and the private sector includes individual commercial entities - supply, processing, financial and insurance companies.

In New Zealand, largely successful efforts have been made to raise levies from farmers for research and technology transfer. In addition, the CRIs and to a lesser extent, the universities have also become more active in research and technology transfer. In 1995 full privatisation of New Zealand's extension /advisory service occurred. In the vacuum created by the reduction in government advisory services a growth of private extension services has occurred, including the emergence of non-government organisations in the forms of charitable organisations and trusts, as well as farm-driven initiatives including local discussion groups, as well as land-care groups. This is the case not just in New Zealand but in all countries visited with similar modern agricultural economies. There are marked parallels between New Zealand and the UK in this respect. Non-government organisations like Rural Support (Northern Ireland) and the Farm Community Network (England and Wales) have emerged in recent years and continue to play an increasing role in support of farmers similar to the Rural Support Trusts in New Zealand. Likewise, farmer specific 'Helplines' - telephone support - is now provided in many provinces in Canada and many states in the USA, as well as in Australia, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Vietnam and (as the "The Farmers Hotline") in Switzerland. What is most marked is perhaps the emergence not only of technical support and information about strategies to support the farm business, but the rapid emergence and increasing recognition of the need to provide social and psychological support.

In Switzerland it is predominately rural pastors and farmers who provide support to farmers. Lucas Schwyn, President of The Swiss Farmers Hotline service said, "*Our helpline is financed mainly by the church and we have volunteers, all farmers, taking calls and I go out and visit and support farmers. There is another farmer helpline in another part of Switzerland, not just us. Farmers experience many challenges, changes in government support, and more and more regulations. We have more farmers using the helpline, but we aren't sure how to explain this increase*." There is awareness of an increase in depression among farmers often linked to financial problems and generational/family conflicts. Farmers, especially older farmers, find it particularly difficult to speak about their problems, especially psychological problems. Social and psychological issues are intertwined.

Figure 15: Author meeting with the President of "the Farmers Hotline" Switzerland

Cambodia provides an interesting example of how NGOs have emerged to support farm families in the developing world. Founded in August 1997, with initial support from a French NGO, the Cambodian Centre for Study and Development in Agriculture (CEDAC) works to build the capacity and knowledge of farmers in ecologically-sound agriculture. Today CEDAC is the preeminent Cambodian organisation in agriculture and rural development, recognised for its farmer-led extension services, agricultural innovation training, support for farmer organisations and publications. CEDAC employs more than 270 people and provides direct assistance to about 160,000 families. Since its inception, CEDAC has implemented more than 165 community development projects with funding from over 40 domestic and international donors. Its director, Mrs Tong Chantheang explains, "*While we have a Government Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, its support to farmers is minimal and, in many ways, ineffective. Because of corruption, farmers experience little benefit from the limited resources the government allocates. We have stepped in to help our farmers through a wide range of programmes and interventions*." In terms of climate change, it is also evident that in much of South East Asia including Cambodia and Indonesia, international agencies are doing integrated work (psychological, economic and technically) to help farmers adapt and change. Perhaps ironically, this integrated approach is more apparent in SE Asia than in the western countries visited.

The diminishing support farmers receive through government one-to-one extension and advisory services in western economies has coincided with farmers' sense of increased isolation due to a decrease in farm labour, increased mechanisation, and a decrease in interaction with neighbours, sales reps and others. This may well have increased the stress many farmers experience. Social expectations have also increased, and community networks have at least in some areas, declined. The emergence of telephone helplines reflects the increased recognition of mental health problems in the rural community and the craving for anonymity in seeking help. While many of these issues

are almost universal, different cultural and political circumstances bring their own challenges. What appears increasingly clear is that NGOs, Helpline support, research institutes and government programmes generally target one key topic area, e.g. Helplines respond to high farm suicide rates and mental health issues, government interventions are frequently focused on the impact of natural hazards or debt issues associated with market downturns. Yet these issues are frequently linked – psychological pressures cannot necessarily be resolved without addressing underlying concerns (e.g. farm debt). Even in the modern world the traditional family home/business links are fundamental. No one organisation can fully address every issue. One outcome priority from the study tour, however, is the need for a more holistic or "joined up" approach that brings all stakeholders together in common purpose.

5.3. Increasing focus on farmers' health and wellbeing by governments and the private sector

In addition to the growth of NGOs and farmer helpline support organisations, there is a significant increased focus on farmers' health and wellbeing. The Farm Centre in Wisconsin (within the State Department of Agriculture) is an interesting example. While other US states have similar helpline farm support programmes or have initiatives to address specific farm crises, the Farm Centre is considered by many as the most developed and robust support service for farmers in the USA.

The Farm Centre was established in the 1980s in response to an agriculture-financial crisis. Many farmers had serious debt, lacked the means to clear these debts, and were unable to get debt support when the market crashed. Suicide rates rose. But it was never envisaged that the Farm Centre would continue beyond this crisis. However, new crises mean that the Farm Centre continues to grow and respond. Its mission is simply "*to help farmers*". The Centre's director Kathy Schmit explained "*We are interested in farmers' quality of life and sustainability of their farm businesses*". Services offered include a helpline phone number for help and support, financial consultation and succession facilitation as well as vouchers for counselling and additional services to minority farmers i.e. 700 Mong farming families (who came as refugees from South East Asia). All staff are certified first aid mental health responders. The Farm Centre is a model integrating social, psychological help with business advice and support.

The Norwegian Agricultural Extension Service (NAES) is another example that illustrates a changing focus in response to shifting needs and understanding. The NAES has 9,000 members, out of a total of 40,000 farms. There are 34 advisors spread across the country. Each member gets at least one face-to-face visit every third year. This service cooperates closely with local health centres in rural communities. As elsewhere, the Norwegian Government no-longer provides direct advisory services. However, the Extension Service is part funded by the Government and from membership fees. Kari-Anne Aanerud an adviser in the Norwegian Agricultural Extension Service (NLR Øst region), explains, "*Our job as advisors is to go out to the farm every third year to look at safety, environment and talk about how the farmer is in terms of mental health. It's an important issue. A lot of our farmers are interested in talking about this as a lot of them are quite lonely, there are big pressures from society, they have to run harder, work faster, produce more and they work quite a lot by themselves and this is a big problem. From our recent Nordic conference, some of the reports*

highlight the linkages between poor mental health and the number of farm accidents, there are lots of parallels".

The interviews in Norway and elsewhere (with the exception of Cambodia) found farmers increasingly work alone in their work, so that they are increasingly physically and socially isolated on a daily basis.

Figure 16: Farmstrong - Five strategies for health and wellbeing

Understandably organisations like the Rural Support Trusts in New Zealand have developed an increased focus on mental health concerns. What is also evident is that the private sector is now much more engaged than they once were on issues of health and wellbeing. Farmstrong is a particularly interesting and successful New Zealand initiative to give "*Farmers the skills and resources to live well, farm well and get the most out of life*." Founding partners include FMG (a New Zealand Insurance company) who instigated the idea and contribute significant funding. Farmstrong is now largely an online agency which provides information and messages as short videos that showcase New Zealand farmers and others to address issues including sleeping well, healthy thinking, fitness, taking time out, staying in touch and lightening the load. In interview Gerard Vaughan, a consultant for the Mental Health Foundation and who since 2014, has taken the lead in developing Farmstrong explained, "*To engage with farmers and with men in particular, the language we use is crucial. We choose carefully how we address issues like depression, suicide, stress or mental health problems without using terminology that people may feel uncomfortable about or be unwilling to engage with."* This private-sector funded initiative provides farm support organisations with excellent learning and is a model that can be replicated in the UK or indeed elsewhere.

5.4. Conclusions for Chapter 5

In an era of globalisation, information and support structures for agriculture have increasingly been changed or restructured to meet national or regional circumstances and specific needs. The result is considerable divergence among the different national agricultural systems in terms of research, technological transfer and social and emotional support. Arguably these structures are all designed to help farmers manage change and secure resilience. At the same time, nationally and regionally different systems have been tailored to meet the unique challenges and characteristics of the different populations concerned.

The Norwegian Agricultural Extension Service exemplifies a service developed with both government resources and membership fees. The Farm Centre in Wisconsin provides a unique government approach and provides services that have many parallels with those provided by Rural Support in Northern Ireland in terms both of its helpline and outreach support. New Zealand exemplifies social

and other services primarily geared to emergency situations (e.g. floods or drought) but with minimum government funding. New Zealand also leads the growing trend in decreased level of government production subsidies, but also highlights that whatever the variations in political or economic orthodoxy, crises demand political action – the impact of floods, suicide, and earthquakes testify to that.

In recent decades UK agriculture has experienced significant changes and is now expected to experience a period of uncertain but major restructuring post-Brexit. Meanwhile for UK agriculture (and UK farmers) uncertainty and concern remain. Devolution within the UK has already seen extensive power transferred to the Scottish Parliament, the Welsh Assembly and the Northern Ireland Assembly who can align and design their own policy plans. The Northern Ireland context is further impacted by the fact that its Assembly has collapsed and is currently suspended. These circumstances compound the other pressures on farmers.

The vacuum created by the reduction in government funding for advisory support has been filled by a more complex structure of support and information system for farmers. While in Northern Ireland direct government support to farmers (in terms of subsidies) remains significant, other, new, organisations and support programmes have emerged. In Northern Ireland approximately 20% of farmers generate 80% of the total agricultural output. Government resources and focus are largely concentrated on the top 20%. The question is what support both in technical/extension services as well as social/psychological advice should be provided for the remaining 80% (20,000+ farmers). The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) has led Business Development Groups which successfully engage with approximately 2,800 farmers however again the bulk of farmers remain outside this specific support system. Arguably the result is a two-tier system with the bulk of resources focused on larger scale farm businesses. This increasing business focus with the prioritising of assistance to the largest producers extends across the UK and is equally evident in other countries.

Arguably the Northern Ireland example is simply lagging three decades behind the reforms in New Zealand, at least in terms of the removal of one-to-one government funded farm advisory services. Norway and Switzerland highlight a growing concern for the emotional health and wellbeing of farmers and farming families and the significant role organisations like Rural Support (in Northern Ireland) can and should play. There is a growing recognition that farm business resilience and indeed farm family resilience and emotional resilience are interconnected and interdependent. Farmers' capacity to respond to change and to be resilient, needs a holistic support service. This requires coordination and multi-agency involvement that encompasses well-being, technical support, financial support and sound environmental management practices.

Chapter 6: Conclusions: Securing Resilience it's everyone's business

There is widespread popular acceptance that the pace of change and the pressures experienced in modern agriculture are greater than before. All farmers strive to be resilient both in terms of their farm business and as individuals and as family units. Most are successful but many underestimate their own ability and some suffer unacceptable levels of stress with serious medical and other repercussions. Farmers themselves and farm organisations, farm businesses and governments share a responsibility to respond and help individual farmers manage change and secure resilience.

It is worth repeating that a farmer's resilience is not just about personal resilience. The evidence demonstrates that an individual's resilience is as much to do with the resilience of the farm household and the resilience of the community as a whole.

Just as the pressures on farmers are increasingly complex and inter-related, so too the concept of resilience can take many different forms. Securing resilience varies with the issues involved and the options available and preferred. Some of these factors are linked to the characteristics of the individuals involved, the location of the farm, its size and structure, and its location. From a business perspective diversification, expansion, accessing new scientific information or obtaining off-farm work may be viable options. A farmer's own willingness and capacity to adapt to changing circumstances are fundamental components in their response. But there is an element of 'chicken or egg' – stresses on the farm business can prove debilitating on a farmer's health and well-being, while a farmer's health and well-being can thwart and constrain his or her capacity to effectively respond. Nor are **t**he pressures limited to either wealthy large-scale producers or small-scale farmers. Recognition of the pressures on farmers, the widespread decline in "free to user" technical farm support, and the pronounced data on farmers' health have generated a swathe of new agencies and groups to provide assistance to farmers. These agencies include the provision of technical and business support and health and social services.

Multiple models of support services have emerged in different parts of the world. As illustrated, structural arrangements vary at least in part as a result of the national social, political beliefs and values, and historical precedent. Thus, even if one national support system is deemed the ideal, these systems are not transferable, even if they may address common concerns. Yet there are common trends: there is a growing acceptance that the challenges facing farmers can no longer be addressed by solely focusing on current business issues; and no one organisation can effectively address all the issues impacting on farmers. For the most part, however, while there is an accepted need for a more integrated approach (involving all stakeholders including government, farmers unions, NGOs, the private sector and farmers themselves) there is equally no need for still more agencies, but rather a need for adaptation, increased cooperation, and the improved integration those services we already have.

Chapter 7: Recommendations

Two characteristics and core principles emerge from this report:

- the need to increase co-ordination between farm support and other agencies
- and a need to better broaden support to provide a more holistic aid package.

The recommendations below target specific groups and agencies that have and continue to play a significant role in supporting farmers and farm households. Underpinning all the recommendations identified or any other potential changes are the twin principles identified above.

7.1. Farmers

- Maintaining and increasing farmers' inherent resilience requires their increased priority to their own mental health and well-being. This requires that they recognise and ensure a positive life-farm balance as integral to social well-being and sound business performance.
- Well-being is grounded in the development and maintenance of connections with others. Effective communication with family, community, researchers and advisors must be recognised as inherent to good business health.
- Change is inherent in life and should be embraced with an openness to learning from others and willingness to do things differently. This includes proactively exploring opportunities and thinking outside the box of traditional farming (and farming practices).
- Farmers should recognise and tap into the help and support, expertise and information that is available. This may include participation in farm support programmes, business development or farm discussion groups, and face-to-face counselling.
- Everyone has their own support network and should extend these networks with support agencies and others to help identify options, business opportunities, niche markets and other strategies to improve their business and social well-being.

7.2. Government

- Governments are well positioned and active in efforts to normalise mental health and issues of farmers' well-being. Policies for agriculture should recognise and manage the implications of these policies for all aspects of farming.
- Financial support for resilience is an investment not a cost and maximising the returns on such investment requires on-going and continuing partnership with existing support agencies.
- Adverse natural events demand attention and commonly generate appropriate, increased bursts of funding, but high stress levels are persistent features of life in rural communities (as elsewhere) and require on-going intervention and support.
- Farms and famers are diverse in their size, structure and location. Blanket programmes need to consider such variations in how these programmes are designed and applied.

7.3. Private sector

- A resilient farm sector is fundamental to the financial success of all components and agents in the food chain. Most companies also recognise a broader sense of social responsibility and work as individual firms or business groups to promote farmer resilience and well-being. Such initiatives play a vital role in the resilience of the farm sector and their value may be extended by increased active support on a collaborative basis with other private sector initiatives, government agencies and NGOs.

7.4. NGOs/Farm Support organisations

- NGOs and farm support organisations should increase collaboration with one-another as well as with all other stakeholders in agriculture to support and facilitate farmers' resilience through a holistic advice system.
- Support agencies need to recognise farmers' stress and related conditions are not necessarily 'special circumstances' but part of normality and to explore options to provide and promote their services on a regular, on-going basis.
- Stress in all its forms is a priority concern but NGOs and support agencies need to strive to identify the multiple drivers of stress and to incorporate existing social and emotional support for farmers to all members of the farm household and to ensure that such support also incorporates (or provides access to) business advice, technical expertise and marketing information as required.

Chapter 8: After my study tour

My Nuffield journey over the last 18 months has enabled me to gain a global perspective and expand my knowledge of this subject area immensely. It is important to note that this report only offers a snapshot of the learning and insights gained. Having recently completed my own personal Nuffield travels I am now in the process of sharing my findings and experiences with key stakeholders throughout the UK.

In recent months I have delivered several talks to various farmer groups about my Nuffield Farming experience and the issue of farmers' resilience. I have also been contacted by organisations in England to present my findings as well as being approached by journalists in the farming press to share my findings through newspaper and radio interviews. This experience has also encouraged me to lobby government, NGOs and the private sector to bring about positive change in the sector and encourage all stakeholders to consider and act upon their responsibilities to support and secure farmers' resilience.

Jude McCann

Chapter 9: Acknowledgements

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Figure 17: Author visiting farms in Brazil

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Southill Farm, Staple Fitzpaine, Taunton, TA3 5SH
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