



Eat Well, Farm Better



A Handy Guide
for Busy Farmers

Sarah Percy, nutrition expert



Farmstrong has partnered with Wairarapa nutrition expert Sarah Percy to produce this guide on how to eat well, boost your energy levels and stay healthy on the farm. Sarah is a registered dietician with over 15 years experience. She works extensively with farming families to provide practical tips and advice on how to live well and farm well.

Introduction – Eat Well, Farm Better

Eating well gives your body the energy and nutrients it needs to perform at its best. That's why a nutritious diet and regular meals are essential for a physically demanding job like farming.

Research shows a lot of farmers are great at looking after their stock, but often neglect their own diet. This resource will help find out how you can eat well and what works best for you. It contains a heap of practical tips and easy-to-make recipes especially designed for busy people.

Keeping your energy levels on track throughout the day is about fuelling up with the right food options and not having to rely on sugary foods or another coffee to get you through.

Let's face it, the number one asset on any farm is the farmer and the people

who work for you. Eating well can bring real benefits to your business. A nutritious, well-balanced diet means:

- you'll feel fitter, stronger and enjoy improved energy levels
- you'll reduce your risk of heart disease, diabetes and cancer
- you'll boost your immune system and stay healthier
- you'll think more clearly and handle stress better.

If you really want to get off on the right foot, as well as reading this resource we strongly recommend talking to a health professional who can help you work out the best diet for you based on your weight, genetics, medical history, blood results, lifestyle and activity levels. ■

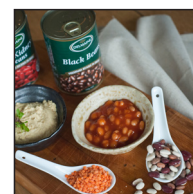
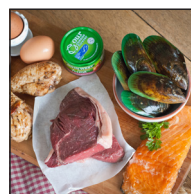
Go Fresh!

The foods you choose will have a big impact on your health and how you feel.

The key to eating well is choosing fresh, wholefoods rather than packaged and processed options. Processed foods are more likely to be stripped of nutrients and often have unhealthy amounts of added salt, sugar and fat.

Eating well means choosing a balance of foods from the following food groups each day:

- Healthy fats
- Meat and meat alternatives, chicken, fish, eggs
- Dairy
- Fruit
- Vegetables
- Grains
- Legumes ■

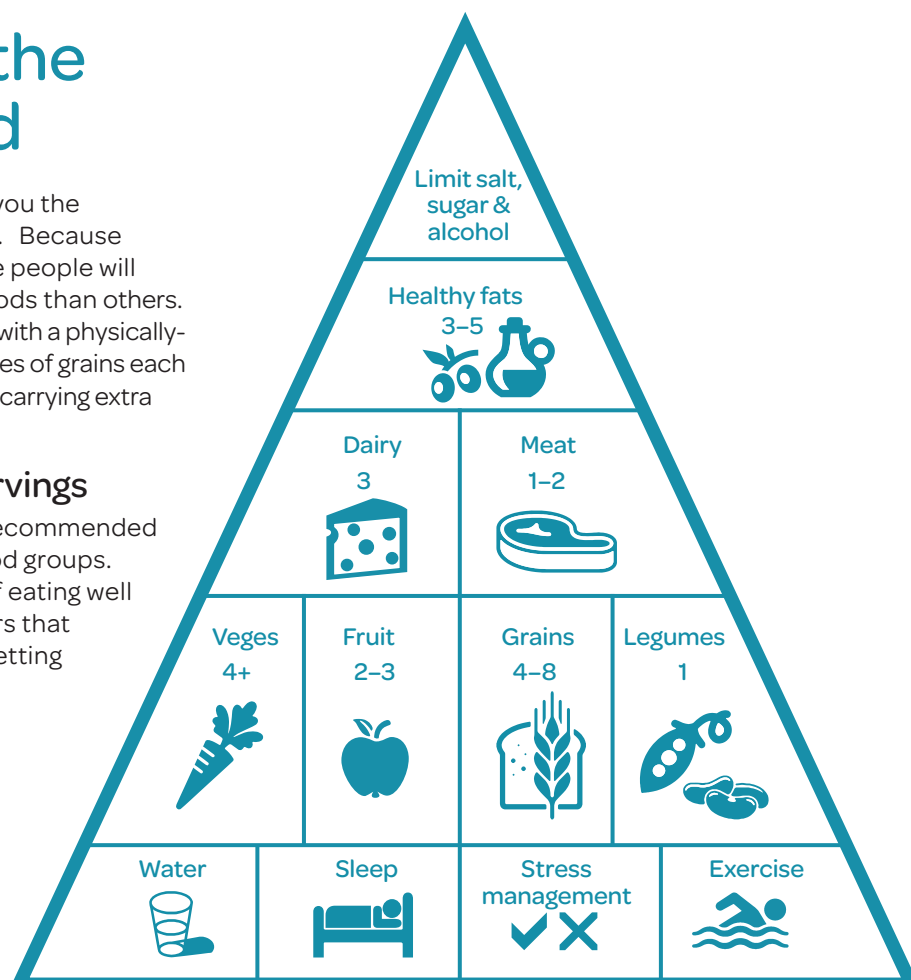


Get to Know the Food Pyramid

This food pyramid diagram gives you the foundation of a healthy, daily diet. Because everyone's body is different some people will require more servings of some foods than others. For example, an active, slim farmer with a physically-demanding job might require 8 serves of grains each day, while a more sedentary farmer carrying extra weight may only need 5 serves.

Recommended Daily Servings

Inside the food pyramid are the recommended daily servings for the different food groups. You'll also notice the essentials of eating well sit on a foundation of other factors that keep us well – staying hydrated, getting enough sleep and exercise and managing stress. ■





Quick Tip: Learn what good looks like ✓

Eating well is about getting the balance right between the various food groups. This delicious looking roast meal has everything you need from the different food groups in the right proportions. There is a $\frac{1}{4}$ plate meat, $\frac{1}{4}$ plate potatoes/kumara and $\frac{1}{2}$ plate colourful vegetables.

Carbs, Proteins and Fats – how they help the body



Carbohydrates

Carbohydrates provide glucose to your brain and muscles for energy, and wholegrain varieties also provide fibre for a healthy gut. Best choices are fruit, vegetables, grains (such as bread, oats, Weet-bix, potatoes, kumara, pasta, rice, crackers) and legumes (such as chick peas, lentils, kidney beans, split peas, hummus, baked beans).



Protein

Protein gets broken down to amino acids in the body which are the building blocks for muscles and cells. Protein also helps us feel fuller for longer so including protein foods in each of your meals and snacks will give you more energy over the day. Best choices are meat, fish, chicken, eggs, dairy, nuts/seeds, legumes and tofu.



Fats

Fats are used in the body as an energy source and are also essential for healthy brains and cells. Fats, like protein, help us feel fuller for longer but as they are very energy dense we don't need large quantities in our diets to be healthy. Some fats are better than others so the best choices are avocado, olive oil, nuts, seeds and oily fish (salmon, sardines, mackerel) as these fats not only provide us with energy but also with nutrients we need for good health. ■

Quick Tip: Watch Out For Sugar



Table sugar and foods made with sugar are classified as carbohydrates but unlike the fruit, vegetables, grains and legumes that are good for us, sugars do not usually contain many vitamins and minerals.

If we eat too much sugar it gets converted to fat which may be stored in the liver causing fatty liver disease. The odd teaspoon of sugar in a hot drink or in baking may be ok, but watch out for soft drinks, lollies, ice cream, chocolate as well as the packaged food high in sugar.

Sugar can lurk in a huge range of processed foods such as tomato sauce, salad dressing, fruit yoghurts and breakfast cereals so even though you may think your sugar intake is low, it may actually be getting up there.



Quick Tip: Go for variety



It can be easy to fall into the habit of eating the same things each day or each week. But if we narrow our food choices too much or get stuck in a food or cooking rut, we won't be getting all the nutrients we need for great health.

So, to get the best fuel for your busy day eat from each of the food groups above and choose different foods to get a really good range of vitamins and minerals.



For example grab a handful of almonds when you feel peckish between meals, try putting some hummus in your lunchtime sandwich, have a smoothie with your breakfast and add banana, milk, Greek yogurt, chia seeds or peanut butter for extra goodness.

Other Important Nutrients Our Bodies Need

All nutrients are important for our bodies, but there are some nutrients that we know New Zealanders can be low in, and some nutrients are especially important for busy times. Here's a brief summary of what they are and how you can make sure you keep them topped up.



Omega 3 fats – these are essential fats (which means our body can't make them so must get them from food) that have an anti-inflammatory effect on the body. They have been implicated with beneficial effects on depression, joint health, heart health and eye disorders.

They can be found in fresh/tinned salmon, fresh tuna, sardines, mackerel and lesser amounts in tinned tuna. Plant sources of omega 3 are found in walnuts, linseeds, chia seeds and canola oil although these aren't as efficiently or effectively absorbed by the body as the marine sources.



Zinc – is important for a healthy and strong immune system (to help stop us getting sick), cellular health, wound healing, memory and mental health. Good sources of zinc are beef, lamb, pork, chicken, oysters, nuts and legumes.



Magnesium – is essential for muscle and nerve function, blood pressure regulation, bone health and unlocking the energy in food for use by our bodies. People who experience insomnia or poor sleep health often report an improvement with an increase in magnesium. This important nutrient can be found in nuts, seeds, legumes, avocado, leafy greens such as spinach or silverbeet and wholegrains.



Antioxidants – work by slowing or even preventing the harmful activity of 'free radicals' in our bodies. Free radicals are all around us everyday – pollution, cigarette smoke and sun exposure. But we also produce free radicals just from breathing so we need plenty of antioxidants to reduce the effects of free radicals which contribute to the ageing process and the beginning of diseases such as heart disease and cancer. Antioxidants are found in a range of colourful fruit and vegetables (eg berries, citrus, carrots, broccoli, beetroot, potatoes, onions, tomatoes) and tea. ■



Learn to Slurp – the importance of keeping hydrated

To stay healthy we need to ensure we are drinking plenty of fluid to hydrate our bodies. This is really important in a physical, outdoors job like fencing or fruit picking.



Hot weather, wind, physical exercise and not drinking enough can all lead to dehydration. Being 'dehydrated' affects physical performance, makes it harder to make decisions and concentrate and can lead to constipation.

You need to prioritise drinking water - keep water bottles in the woolshed and dairy shed, in the ute or on the quad. Take a camelpak or drink bottle out with you on the farm and take regular slurps.

Just like you stop for your dogs to drink on big jobs, remember to provide plenty of fresh water for you and your staff if you are out for long periods from home and unable to refill water bottles. Bring a big container of water with you. This is especially important on really hot days when people can become ill from dehydration. ■



Quick tip: Stick to Water



Coffee, tea, caffeinated soft drinks, and energy drinks all contain caffeine which is a diuretic so they actually have a dehydrating effect on your body. So, if you are a tea or coffee drinker, have a drink of water while you're waiting for the kettle to boil. And if you're a caffeinated soft drink or energy drink person, try and reduce your intake of these – they tend to be full of sugar, caffeine, additives and chemicals which our bodies don't need.

Alcohol – A Few Guidelines

Enjoying a drink with mates, or a beer to unwind after a demanding day is one of life's pleasures. However, too much alcohol though has a negative effect on our health and can cause problems with our mental health, liver, heart and increases our risk of some cancers.

Stick to the alcohol guidelines of:

- 2 standard drinks a day for women and no more than 10 standard drinks a week
- 3 standard drinks a day for men and no more than 15 standard drinks a week
- and at least 2 alcohol-free days every week.

And no, you can't save up your alcohol serves like pocket money to use all at once! You will reduce your risk of injury on a single occasion by drinking no more than:

- 4 standard drinks for women on any single occasion
- 5 standard drinks for men on any single occasion

One serve is equal to 10g of alcohol or 330ml can of beer, 100ml of wine or 30ml of spirits (42% alcohol).

You can find more information on the recommended guidelines at this website: alcohol.org.nz. ■

Making It Happen

Now you have a handle on the basics of healthy eating, here are some practical tips on getting started.

If eating well is new to you, begin with small changes. When you make a change in small steps, it is more likely to be successful. Find out what works for you and lock it in.

Improving your diet doesn't mean completely overhauling your diet with weird and whacky superfoods or excluding whole food groups. Think instead of small changes that you can make every day that will add up to a big difference and tangible results. Add a piece of fresh fruit to your lunch, add an extra spoonful of colourful vegetables to your dinner, snack on some nuts or try a poached egg on toast some mornings.

Remember to Snack

When you are doing physical work throughout the day regular snacks are important to top up the fuel in your body and maintain your energy levels.

Keep snacks in the glovebox of your ute, take a backpack if you are heading out on the farm or leave food at strategic places on the farm, so you don't get caught short!



Coming in for a break also creates the perfect opportunity to have a nourishing snack to keep you going for longer. Along with a cuppa, grab a hardboiled egg, or a cold chicken drumstick, fruit muffin, fresh fruit and/or pottle of yoghurt.

Remember, what you snack on should enhance your nutrition, so rather than grabbing noodles, chips or a chocolate bar when you are hungry, try these healthy alternatives instead:

Bought – ‘smooshed’/’bliss’/’fooze’ balls (different manufacturers have different names for them, they are a ball made of nuts and dried fruit and often rolled in coconut), muesli bars, fresh fruit, snack pack of nuts, dried fruit.

Homemade – carrot and orange muffins, bliss balls, scroggin mix, muesli slice.

Eat regular meals, avoid Hungry Anger

Sometimes when we are busy on the farm and pressed for time, it is tempting to sacrifice regular meals. But running on an empty tank is really counter-productive.

If you find yourself coming in after a hard day and feeling irritable and with a short fuse, it may be ‘hanger’ (angry hunger) caused by low blood sugars.

Regular meals and some protein at each meal will keep your blood sugars constant and minimise ‘hanger’. A poached egg on toast instead of just jam/



marmalade toast for breakfast, a handful of nuts with your break or tinned salmon in your sandwich will provide great sources of protein to keep your energy levels on track.

Keep it social

Food provides more than fuel for the body, it also gives us the opportunity to connect, engage, share and relax with people. The social aspect of food is also an essential part of staying healthy and feeling good.

If you work/live alone have a meal with family or friends at least once a week to help avoid feeling isolated. Ring a friend for a game of squash or a hunt, and afterwards enjoy a relaxed catch up over a meal or drink.



Quick Tip: Bringing a plate? Think healthy. ✓

Rural hospitality often involves turning up to someone’s place with baking, meals or beer. Think about options that are likely to sustain them, are practical or are healthier options particularly if they are busy or have got a lot on their plate.

A container of homemade muesli, mini quiches, veggie soup or lemon soda water or low alcohol beer (there’s now some nice tasting citrus ones that are really refreshing after a long day out) would make good choices.

Time-Saving Tips for Busy Farmers

Nutritious Quick Options

It can be tempting when we are busy to rely on fast and convenience food options. However, these quick options often lack the range of nutrients we need to keep healthy and manage the ups and downs of farming.

The thing to remember is that when we are busy and/or stressed, eating well is even more important to stop us getting sick and provide the energy and nutrients we need for our physical and emotional health.

If you don't have the time to prepare a hot meal of 'meat and 3 vege', the following can be whipped up in minutes and will fuel you in the right way:

- poached eggs on toast; muesli/porridge with milk, yoghurt, nuts and chopped fruit; a smoothie; toasted sandwiches with cheese, onion, tomato, cold meat and chutney.

Other Time Saving Tips

Here are some other time-saving tips.

- **Create your own food bank** – When you cook a casserole, bolognaise, curry or soup, cook a double or triple batch and freeze half. In no time you will have a freezer 'food bank' to use in the future when work is flat out and time is precious.
- **Cook once, eat twice** – Do a double batch of your meal and have leftovers the next day. Have shepherd pie one night, the next use the leftover mince, mix in chilli beans and serve as Mexican wraps with salad and avocado.
- **Keep the pantry stocked** – Have plenty of quick options handy in the store cupboard, such as tinned fish, tinned tomatoes, frozen veggies, rice and potatoes so that a balanced meal can be whipped up from pantry items. ■



Summary – The Essentials

- Don't start work on an empty tank. Here are some great pre-breakfast snack options for early morning milkers – smoothies, eggs, fruit, cereal, porridge, grainy toast with peanut butter. Prepare snacks the night before if time is short.
- Choose fresh, nutrient-rich food instead of processed foods.
- Stay hydrated. Keep water bottles handy where you are working.
- Snack between meals to keep energy levels high. Choose snacks low in fat, sugar and salt.
- Don't skip meals. Try and eat 3 meals and two lots of snacks a day. ■



Self-Check Questionnaire

Add up your score to find out if you are eating well.

	ALWAYS 3	SOMETIMES 2	NEVER 1
1. Colourful vegetables provide us with plenty of fibre, vitamins, minerals and antioxidants to keep our mind and body healthy. Do you have at least 4 serves of colourful veges every day?	3	2	1
2. Fruit also contains fibre, vitamins, minerals and antioxidants that are good for our health. Do you have 2 to 3 serves of fruit a day?	3	2	1
3. Healthy fats (eg avocado, olive/canola/ricebran oil, nuts, seeds, olives) are essential to help our brains to function well and as a source of energy and vitamins A, D, E and K. They also help us absorb nutrients from other foods. Do you have at least 3 to 4 serves of healthy fats a day?	3	2	1
4. Fish provides protein for muscles and healthy fats for our brain, eyes and mood. Oily fish like salmon and tuna are great sources of Omega 3 fats. Do you have 2 serves of fish a week?	3	2	1
5. Wholegrain breads and cereals provide more fibre, vitamins and minerals than white or wholemeal varieties? Do you eat wholegrain bread and cereal?	3	2	1
6. Being dehydrated can cause headaches, fatigue and puts pressure on our kidneys. Do you drink 6 to 8 glasses of water a day?	3	2	1
7. Too much caffeine reduces our ability to unwind and sleep. Do you make sure that you don't drink any coffee, energy drinks or caffeinated soft drinks after midday?	3	2	1
8. Drinking alcohol can cause serious health, personal and social problems. Do you make sure that you don't drink any more than 3 standard drinks a day (the Ministry of Health guidelines for men)?	3	2	1

21–24 points – Healthy eating. Keep it up.

16–21 points – Work on the areas that need attention

8–16 points – You need better fuel in the tank. Find out what works for you and lock it in.

YOUR SCORE:

Circle the number that best describes you.



Sarah's Recipes

Here are some quick and nutritious recipes that are perfect for busy farmers and their families.

Orange and carrot muffins [Makes 12 large muffins]

These nourishing muffins come courtesy of Nadia Lim, and have extra seeds and coconut added for delicious flavour, nutrients and texture. They could be iced with a cream cheese icing too for a more decadent option if desired!

INGREDIENTS

3 free-range eggs
 ¾ cup oil (e.g. coconut, grapeseed or canola oil) or melted butter
 ¾ cup liquid honey
 1 very ripe banana, mashed
 1 teaspoon vanilla essence
 2 carrots, medium sized
 1 teaspoon baking soda, mixed with 1 tablespoon warm milk (cows or non-dairy)
 2 oranges, finely zested
 2 cups self-raising flour (use self-raising gluten-free if you need to)
 1 ½ teaspoons mixed spice
 ½ cup desiccated coconut
 ¼ teaspoon salt
 ½ cup pumpkin seeds
 ½ cup sunflower seeds

INSTRUCTIONS

Preheat oven to 180degC.

In a large mixing bowl, whisk eggs, oil or butter, honey, mashed banana and vanilla together.

Grate carrots directly onto a clean tea towel, then wring tea towels to squeeze out excess moisture from carrots. Stir in 2 loosely packed cups of carrot, baking soda mixture and orange zest into egg mixture.

Sift flour and mixed spice into wet ingredients, and add coconut, salt and seeds. Stir into wet mixture, being careful not to over-mix (to avoid tough muffins).

Line a large 12-pan muffin tin with paper cases and spoon batter into cases, dividing equally. Bake for 25-30 minutes or until the tops of the muffins spring back when gently pressed. ■

Scroggin

[Makes 6 half cup serves]

Make up a batch of this energy dense scroggin and divide up into individual snap lock bags for a portable snack to keep you going for longer.

INGREDIENTS

½ cup unsalted, raw cashew nuts
½ cup almonds
¼ cup Brazil nuts
½ cup coconut flakes
¼ cup pumpkin seeds
¼ cup sunflower seeds
½ cup dried fruit (dried apricots, dates, apple and banana chips work well)
18 squares of dark chocolate

INSTRUCTIONS

Combine all ingredients and divide up into ½ cup serves in individual snap lock bags or containers. ½ a cup will provide a good supply of protein, healthy fat and carbohydrates, especially during physically demanding periods. ■

Bliss balls

[Makes 30 balls]

These little balls of energy provide valuable nutrients, as well as the sweetness we so often desire. No added sugar though, the sweetness comes from dried fruit.

INGREDIENTS

300g dates
100g dried apricots
400g ground almonds
5 tablespoons cocoa
1 orange, juiced and zested
Coconut or cocoa for coating

INSTRUCTIONS

Cover dates with very hot water and soak for 15 minutes (add apricots in for last 5 minutes). Drain and reserve liquid. Blend dates, cocoa, juice and zest in a food processor until smooth. With the processor going slowly add in almonds until a mixture forms that can be rolled into balls. Roll into balls and cover in coconut or cocoa. Refrigerate or freeze. ■

Muesli slice [Makes 30 squares]

Homemade muesli slice with more of what you need and less of what you don't. Make it your own by mixing up the nuts and dried fruit to your preferred tastes.

INGREDIENTS

2 cups rolled oats
1 cup each sesame, pumpkin and sunflower seeds
½ cup almonds
½ tsp cinnamon
1 cup dried fruit – cranberries and apricots are good
120g butter
½ cup brown sugar
¼ cup golden or maple syrup
1/3 cup peanut butter

INSTRUCTIONS

Preheat oven to 180 degrees. Combine oats, seeds, nuts and cinnamon in a roasting dish and bake for 15 minutes until golden. Tip into a bowl to cool. Combine butter, sugar, syrup and peanut butter in a pot and heat gently until sugar dissolved and mixture combined. Bring to a boil for 5 minutes, stirring to prevent catching. Add to oat mixture and stir through dried fruit to combine evenly. Press into greased tin and refrigerate for at least 2-3 hours to set. Chocolate buttons can be pressed on top if desired to make it more appealing for lunchboxes. ■

Beef Satay Noodles [Serves 2]

This quick and easy dinner can be whipped up quickly and incorporates lots of veges in a silky, peanut sauce. What's not to love?! The recipe can be easily doubled or trebled depending on numbers to feed.

INGREDIENTS

1 tablespoon olive oil
300g sliced rump steak
1/2 diced onion
2 cups mixed vegetables eg sliced mushrooms and courgettes, broccoli and cauliflower florets, green beans, capsicum, spinach
200g udon or egg noodles
1/4 cup each peanut butter and soy sauce
1 tablespoon each of lemon juice and brown sugar

INSTRUCTIONS

Heat oil in a large frypan over medium heat and cook steak to your liking, then remove to a plate or chopping board. Gently soften onion for 8-10 minutes then add in vegetables and cook for 5-8 minutes. Add in noodles and heat through. Make satay sauce with final 4 ingredients, adding in boiling water to achieve pouring consistency (~3 tablespoons). Add sauce and beef back into the pan and stir to coat the noodle mixture. Serve hot.

Noodles can be subbed for rice if preferred (cook rice separately and spoon beef, vegetables and satay sauce on top once cooked). ■

Bolognaise or Savoury Mince [Serves 6]

Once you have made this flavoursome bolognaise, your meal options are only limited by your imagination. Use this base to whip up Shepherds pie, nachos, wraps, lasagne, pizza or trusty old spaghetti Bolognaise.

INGREDIENTS

1kg beef mince
1 onion, diced
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 tablespoon ricebran, canola or avocado oil
1 carrot and 1 zucchini, grated
¼ cup tomato paste
1 tin tomato puree
1 tin of tomatoes
1 cup chicken stock

INSTRUCTIONS

Brown the mince in a frypan over moderate-high heat. Add in onion and garlic, stirring until onion is translucent. Add grated vegetables, tomato paste, tomato puree, tinned tomatoes and chicken stock, and bring to a simmer. Cook for 30 minutes stirring occasionally until sauce has thickened and is deep red. Season with salt, pepper and ½ tsp sugar if desired.

Top with fluffy mashed potato for a warming shepherds pie, spread onto a pizza base with added cheese and toppings of your choice for a meaty pizza, place on a bed of nacho chips with sour cream, guacamole and extra tomato, add to tortillas with some salad, avocado and minty yoghurt for a Mexican inspired wrap, or pop on some pasta with a few extra veges and grated cheese. ■





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