



Younger Farmers On Their Wellbeing Research Summary 2018



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Introduction

Farmstrong is a nationwide rural wellbeing initiative for farmers and growers. Farmstrong helps those working in farming to maintain and increase their wellbeing so they live well, farm well and cope better with the ups and downs of farming. Through its website, presence at agricultural events and its initiatives and rural channels, Farmstrong shares farmer-to-farmer tips and resources informed by the science of wellbeing.

In early 2018, Farmstrong commissioned research to better understand the wellbeing needs of men and women under 35 years of age working in farming and identify things they thought would improve their wellbeing. The research also asked which wellbeing topics interested them most and the best communication channels to reach them.

The following is a summary of the main findings including a selection of the younger farmers' insights and strategies to improve their wellbeing. Together, they represent a compelling picture of the priority wellbeing areas and younger farmers' main areas of interest, along with solutions that are already working for some.

Young people are the lifeblood of any industry—this research shows that young men and women in farming experience a variety of challenges to their wellbeing. Encouragingly, there is also a high level of interest among them to improve their wellbeing.

Addressing an individual's wellbeing brings wider benefits for the sector as it contributes to attracting and retaining a motivated and performing workforce.

A copy of the full, detailed research report is available on request from Farmstrong.



There were three phases to the research.

- A review of relevant literature.
- In-depth face-to-face and phone interviews with 15 women and 16 men.
- An online survey completed by 616 women and 279 men.

Invitations to participate in the survey were issued via emails to members, Facebook, e-newsletters and other online channels by the following organisations.

- NZ Young Farmers
- Farming Mums NZ
- Dairy Women's Network
- Beef + Lamb New Zealand
- Agri Women's Development Trust

NZ Young Farmers were a key channel for reaching younger farmers, through their membership. 44% of the men and a quarter of the women surveyed were members of Young Farmers.

Of the women participating, 57% said they worked 'most of the time on the farm or in farming business'¹, 26% 'some of the time', 12% 'a little' and 5% 'none'. For the men there were 79% working 'all/most of the time on farm or in farming business', 12% 'some of the time', 7% 'a little' and 2% 'none'.

Of the men, 63% were married or living with a permanent partner, while for the women it was 71%. In addition, 2% of the men and 4% of the women were in relationships but their partner lived elsewhere.

Throughout the report, the term 'younger farmers' is used to include all types of men and women engaged with farming—from those working full time on the farm in any role to those living on a farm, but working off the farm.



What We Found Out

Key findings

- 64% of the younger farming men and 77% of young farming women reported that at least one wellbeing issue had had a 'large' or greater negative impact on their wellbeing.
- A vast majority of younger farmers—84% of women and 74% of men—expressed 'moderate' or 'high' interest in improving their wellbeing and resilience.
- While younger farming men and women face similar wellbeing challenges, there were notable differences sometimes in how they rated the impact and significance of these issues. For example, survey results and interviews highlighted the vulnerability of younger women in farming in particular.
- The research surveyed 20 potential sources of negative impact. There were 13 of the 21 sources which at least 20% of the women said were having a 'large' or greater negative impact on their wellbeing. In comparison there were only five sources where at least 20% of the men reported this level of impact. For this reason we have organised the key findings by gender below.

Key findings for men

The main wellbeing challenges for men were:

- My workload/ fitting everything in (23% reporting a 'large' or greater negative impact), challenges with important relationships— including staff (23%), lack of sleep or poor quality sleep (22%), not enough time for myself (21%), not enough time off the farm (either by myself or with family) (20%).

The things younger men thought would most contribute to increased wellbeing were:

- More time off the farm—including by myself or with the family (44%)
- Getting more/better quality sleep (33%).

The wellbeing topics for which the greatest proportion of men expressed 'high' interest (if provided either online or in community settings) were:

¹ For convenience this is described as 'full-time' in the report.

- Thinking strategies to deal with ups and downs (23%)
- Happiness (23%)
- People skills/communication skills (22%)
- Staff management (22%).

Key findings for women

The wellbeing issues which women reported experiencing the highest levels of ‘large’ or greater impact on their wellbeing were: feeling fatigued/exhausted (35%), my workload/ fitting everything in (34%), lack of sleep or poor quality sleep (34%), not enough time for myself (30%).

The women reported significantly higher levels of negative impact from wellbeing issues than the men, particularly women working fulltime as sharemilkers/contract milkers.

The things that younger women thought would contribute most to increased wellbeing were:

- Getting more/better quality sleep (39%)
- Getting more exercise (31%)
- More time off the farm (28%)
- Rating healthier (28%).

Women expressed ‘high’ interest in learning more about the following wellbeing topics.

- Nutrition (32%)
- Happiness (28%)
- Self-confidence, self-worth, self-compassion (27%)
- Thinking strategies to deal with ups and downs (26%)
- Exercise (26%)

Other findings

The research reinforced the correlation between wellbeing and risk of injury/accident. 28% of the men and 24% of the women reported having an injury on the farm in the last 12 months and of these 63% of the men and 69% of the women felt that a wellbeing issue had contributed to their ‘worst injury’ in that time period.

For more detail on the key findings see graphs and tables in appendix.



Workload and Fitting Everything In

Challenges to wellbeing

"Overwhelming at times—always something to do, never a down time."

"Everyone thinks I do silly hours" (sheep/beef farmer)

"I like a challenge—you're only young and dumb once." (dairy farmer).

"I like the work I'm doing, which is why it's not hard to go out and work on a Sunday". (sheep/beef farmer)

"[I'm a] sucker for taking on more than I should [but it's] nice being one of the people others can rely on". (farm worker)

The research showed that workload/fitting everything in was the most pressing wellbeing issue facing New Zealand's younger farmers. Several of the wellbeing issues linked back to work load and trying to fit it all in. These included not getting sufficient time off and time away from the farm, with fatigue often being the end product.

The research revealed that a lot of the men accepted the long hours, even though it resulted in them feeling tired and fatigued a lot of the time. One contract milker reported working close to 90-hour weeks in the peak of the season. A woman working on a sheep/beef farm had been working 70-hour weeks over the summer, when she was supposed to only work 47.5 hrs.

A quarter of the men and a third of women rated the impact of workload as having a 'large' or greater impact on their health and wellbeing.

The pressure of juggling work and relationships was also evident. Men in relationships were more likely than single men to mention: 'My workload/ fitting everything in' (26% vs 15%), as an issue. Women in relationships were also more likely than single women to mention 'My workload/ fitting everything in' (37% vs 27%).

The negative impact of workload is also apparent in reports of fatigue/exhaustion amongst these under 35s. Nearly half of the men and two thirds of women surveyed mentioned 'feeling fatigued/exhausted' having at least a 'moderate' negative impact. Over a third of women felt fatigue was having a 'large' or greater negative impact on their wellbeing.

One challenge reported by fulltime farming women is having more on their shoulders than men. As one summed up: *"Men can put things into boxes and shut the rest out, whereas women have everything going on—it's all about everyone else, not you—kids, husband, farm. It's not healthy."*

Time off was a major issue for women managing dairy farms and those working as sharemilkers. One manager was supposed to have time off every third weekend, but only managed about once every two to three months. Another woman managing a dairy farm reported that in her first year she only had 15 days off in the whole year. Staff were getting every second weekend off, but as manager she was responsible for the farm.

Strategies to improve wellbeing

“Last winter was the first time we could run a roster and get time off”.

“Even a simple drive is good...”

“Good weekly and monthly plans written down [are the key].”

Workload and fatigue issues were key reasons that 44% of the men and 28% of women thought that ‘more time off farm’ would be one of the three things that most improved their wellbeing.

Planning and scheduling time off in advance is essential and some surveyed were already doing this to provide sufficient time to arrange cover for when the farmer was away.

One sharemilker had learnt, from not taking enough breaks in his first season, to keep weekends during the day clear from farm work during spring. Another sheep/beef farmer made sure he had *“something that he had to go to”* so he got off the farm.

One manager had work-life balance as a KPI in the farm’s business plan, which his boss had implemented. As part of this the manager had to record all of his hours. The strategy for achieving this was having *“good weekly and monthly plans written down”*. Another contract milker reported taking two-hour breaks in the middle of the day.

However, size of farm and the availability of staff remain important challenges to getting time off. For example, three of the sheep/beef farmers said that they needed to progress to a larger farm before they could afford to employ staff and give themselves more time off the farm. One Waikato dairy farmer reported having a team of relief workers they can call on, to assist with workload issues.

Women in farming faced similar challenges to getting time off farm, but women also mentioned not feeling they can go out if their partner is busy working, or feeling guilty if they do so. One woman with young children felt that the most pressure comes from her—trying to be *“super farming mum”*. She knew she should look after herself more and just focus on getting the basics done, but she was *“terrible”* at it. A dairy farm manager mentioned fitting in time for herself during the *“quieter times”*.



Relationships and Social Connection

Challenges to wellbeing

“Being a younger person working their way towards the farming career, [you] need more people willing to be that mentor figure that many people don’t have.”

“People in country areas can be quite cliquey, networks are set in stone.”

“Not too many of us around here, [it’s] hard to find other women in farming that you can yarn or relate to.”

Another series of wellbeing issues had relationships and support as the core theme. This included the quality of the relationship with their partner, the consequences of not having a partner to off-load with, relationships with parents, in-laws, owners and staff. Some women new to districts mentioned challenges making friends in the new community.

Half the women and men reported that ‘challenges in important relationships’ were having a ‘moderate’ or greater impact on their wellbeing.

Nearly 40% of women and a quarter of men thought that ‘challenges developing new relationships in the community’ were having a ‘moderate’ or greater impact on their wellbeing.

44% of women and 30% of men felt they didn’t have ‘enough people to talk things through with’ when they needed to.

These findings are reflected in the sort of improvements they were seeking. Nearly a quarter of both the men and women thought ‘having better quality relationships with people in my community’ was one of the three things which would contribute most to their wellbeing, while a fifth of both men and women identified ‘addressing challenges in important relationships’.

A fifth of women also wanted to have ‘more people I can talk things through with’, reflecting issues of social isolation and many juggling multiple roles within households.

22% of the men and 18% of the women expressed a high interest in learning ‘communication/people skills’.

Strategies to improve wellbeing

“Having a good time with mate—having a laugh every now and then [is important]”.

“Joining the local Young Farmers Club has been the most beneficial thing I have done since moving to a new part of the country. It is something that has helped me make friends and enjoy life even when work is a battle.” (man)

“[I’m] a big fan of Young Farmers... all centred around agriculture, all like-minded... something to bond over.” (woman)

“Having good work mates helps....making the effort to get on with people helps a lot.”

The benefits of being part of a farming team or organisation in terms of social support was clearly evident in results. Organisations were seen as providing social connection via events, while some also provided support via dissemination of wellbeing information. Some mentioned that Young Farmers was putting a lot of focus on mental health and wellbeing. Rural Support Trust was often mentioned. There was also some mention of the work of Federated Farmers, including their support for local farmers at times of crisis, such as heavy snow falls and earthquakes.

Young Farmers was frequently mentioned as a source of friendship and an opportunity to talk with people going through similar issues. Some women also found Young Farmers Club to be useful. One noted: *"It's a really good support network"*. She said she and her husband often didn't have time to socialise, but having organised events with a whole lot of people made socialising easy.

This type of support manifested in survey results. Members of Young Farmers reported much lower levels of 'large' or greater negative impact than other young farmers on a number of items.

Friends in general were also frequently mentioned as sources of support: "Other friends in the same boat—we all talk about it," summed up one man.

The importance of parental support was apparent too. Most of the men mentioned at least their father and usually both parents as sources of support. Most felt able to discuss farming issues with their fathers. While some women were getting a lot of support from parents and in-laws who were living on the farm or nearby, especially with childcare, many others were not so fortunate.

Several of the men reported getting support from their employer. One sharemilker reported that having bi-weekly meetings with the farm owner helped him deal with the stresses from droughts and the wet winter. One woman mentioned talking through the problems and getting support from her employer.

In terms of friendships, younger women who had grown up and worked elsewhere were more likely to have friends outside their community. However, they reported maintaining relationships with city friends can be difficult, because of their lack of understanding of farming life and distances to travel.

For those with children, contacts with other parents at schools and play centres were important. One woman without children noted that *"unless you have got children, it is difficult to find connections with other women's social groups"*.

Some women used participation in sports as a way of getting off the farm and having some social contact "because it forces you to go out—it's a set time". For some, their friends were part of sports teams. Several also mentioned the importance of family holidays and weekends away.

'Farming Mums' on Facebook was also an important source of support for some. One liked that it was women *"sharing stories on a personal level and being real."* Another noted *"people post and get instant support"*.

Other sources of support mentioned included: events organised by Dairy Women's Network and Beef and Lamb, co-operatives (such as Silver Fern), Lincoln or Massey, Rural Business Networks and NZ Industry Awards Trust. Agri-Women's Development Trust workshops were also seen as creating new networks of farming women.



Stress and Coping

Challenges to wellbeing

"[I] just go home and go to bed... no time to do the things I enjoy" (sheep and beef farmer)

Nearly half of the women sampled and 45% of the men mentioned that the stress of coping with the ups and down of farming was having at least a 'moderate impact' on their wellbeing. There were 20% of women and 15% of men who said the impact was 'large' or greater.

Issues to do with managing stress, coping with the ups and downs of farming and finding happiness and purpose—the 'why' farming—also featured prominently in younger farmers' feedback.

The weather was a significant source of stress for many younger farmers. Nearly half of the men and 45% of the women specifically identified dealing with weather conditions as amongst the top six things that impacted negatively on their wellbeing to a 'moderate' or greater degree.

The effect was more pronounced for sharemilkers and contract milkers—over a third said dealing with weather conditions had had a 'large' or greater impact on their wellbeing. Several younger farmers during in-depth interviews identified "two years of drought" and "terrible wet weather" as a source of significant stress.

Young farmers' wellbeing and stress levels were also affected by negative perceptions and portrayal of farming among the media and general public. 46% of the women and 40% of the men reported those negative perceptions having a 'moderate or greater' impact on their wellbeing and nearly a fifth of both said the impact was 'large' or greater.

The consequences of not coping well can be serious. Over 60% of those surveyed who had an injury in the last 12 months attributed wellbeing issues, such as stress and workload, to their 'worst injury' in that time period.

Nearly a fifth of women and 15% of men were looking for 'new strategies or new ways of thinking to cope better with the ups and downs of farming' as one of the top three things which would improve their wellbeing.

Issues of purpose were also apparent among young farmers. 34% of women and a fifth of men identified 'not having meaning/purpose in my life' as having a 'moderate' or greater impact on their wellbeing. One in six women and one in 12 men selected in their top three wellbeing improvements 'knowing what I need in order to be happy' and slightly fewer selected 'having meaning/ purpose in my life'.

Strategies for improving wellbeing

"My biggest thing is having tools... How do I teach my brain not to go into negative mode ... to learn how to keep someone else's problem their problem—not mine."

"You need many coping strategies, which can be small but very impactful."

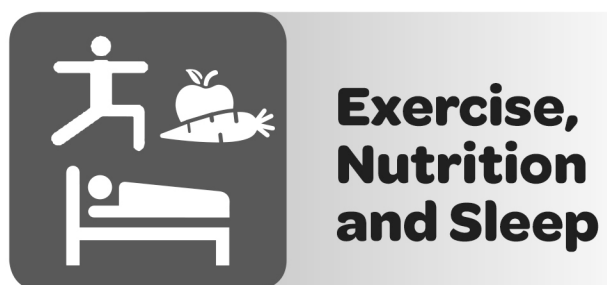
There will always be aspects of farming, such as the weather or market prices, which are beyond anyone's control. Encouragingly, there were high levels of interest among younger farmers about suggested topics to help manage these types of stressors.

Nearly a quarter of men expressed 'high interest' in learning about 'thinking strategies to deal with ups and downs' and 'happiness'.

It was a similar story for women, except a little broader in scope. Not only did over a quarter of women express 'high interest' in 'happiness' and 'thinking strategies to deal with ups and downs', but 27% were also interested in learning more about building their 'self-confidence, self-worth, self-compassion.'

One strategy is for people to find and do more of the things that bring them enjoyment and relieve stress. The insight interviews revealed differences between men and women in how this is best achieved. 'Hitting targets and getting good results' was the thing most mentioned by men that made them feel good about themselves, while for women the most mentioned things were keeping fit, being with animals and enjoying time with family and friends.

Community activities, playing sport, giving to others, being grateful for what you have and staying connected were also given as examples of helping to manage stress.



Challenges to wellbeing

Sleep, exercise and nutrition are top of mind for many younger farmers when it comes to improving their wellbeing.

Two-thirds of the women and half of all the men surveyed reported at least 'moderate' levels of negative impact from 'lack of quality sleep', putting it second only to workload as an issue for young farmers. A number of men mentioned sleep issues due to long hours, or young children, or 'burning the candle at both ends.'

Almost half the women and a quarter of the men felt that 'not getting enough exercise' was having a 'moderate' or greater impact. For 'not eating well' it was 43% of women and nearly a quarter of men.

Single men were more likely than men in relationships to mention 'not eating well' (15% vs 5% reporting at least a 'large' or greater negative impact). A number of single men mentioned rushed lunches and skipped evening meals due to getting in late and being in bed by 9pm. Poor nutrition was also evident in some responses. One dairy farmer described mates who would wake up and have an 'Up & Go' or 'V' for breakfast and then have a pie for dinner, "because they're short of time".

Lack of sleep and fatigue were also mentioned as two of the top four contributors to the injuries young farmers had suffered in the last twelve months.

All of these are areas that younger farmers are looking to improve in. 'Getting more/better quality sleep' was the area women most wanted to improve on (39% had it in their top three), while it was second highest for men (33%). 'Getting more exercise' was second for women (31%) and third for men (23%). 'Eating healthier' was fourth for women (28%) and fifth for men (20%).

Strategies for improving wellbeing

"The fitter you are, the better decisions you make – if you're knackered you don't make the best decisions".

"Love going for a run – taking the load off, go and do something different for a bit".

"If I'm not fit, I feel crap".

Survey participants were well aware of the benefits of eating well, getting enough sleep and keeping active every day and many were already proactively taking steps to address these issues in their own lives.

The benefits of physical activity was frequently mentioned, particularly playing sport. "Sport is a massive thing" summed up one.

Both the men and women were often using sport as a way of getting off the farm and having some social contact. One farmer enjoyed being with *"a unique cross-section of the community"* when working out at a local gym. A dairy farm manager found it easier to create relationships in a new region via an activity that she liked doing, and liked sport *"because it forces you to go out—it's a set time"*.

Some men preferred other active off-farm activities, such as hunting, as these helped take their mind off the farm.

Several women emphasised how important keeping fit was for them. One woman, who recommended doing something physical every day, found that physical activity was relaxing and helped clear her mind. She did note that it needed to be separate from farm work. Another felt that when she was able to get on the farm (she had two young children), she was able to get fit by working.

The importance of being *"farm fit"* and getting the *"body ready for the hard work"*, was also mentioned. As one woman noted, *"Calving is hell if you're not fit for it"*.

Some participants noted the particular challenges with promoting fitness to farmers, as the perception was that farming was already a physical job. But several acknowledged that a focus on fitness and conditioning for farmers so they were 'farm fit' was a good idea.

However, needs around sleep, exercise and nutrition are still clearly linked to the reality of 'trying to fit everything in' and 'time off'. A range of competing demands, especially during busy times, was reported as a cause for people not getting sufficient time for themselves to focus on these aspects.

But doing something about these issues remains a priority for many—exercise, sleep and eating well were the three most mentioned options for improving wellbeing by women. A third of women expressed 'high interest' in the nutrition topic and a quarter in the 'exercise' topic, although for men the levels were lower (19% nutrition and 18% exercise). Meanwhile 'sleep' was one of the two most mentioned options for improving wellbeing by men.



Looking After Others

Challenges to wellbeing

"I think farming women are responsible for keeping it all together for the family while having the burden of financial stress and overwhelming workload too. It's really tough and not a lot of support out there."

"I work off farm in a reasonably stressful role and I work on farm also. The biggest stress for me is not so much the farm—but the fact that my husband works 90 hours a week on the farm leaving me to have a job, kids, and do all of the farm admin and my farm jobs."

The research confirmed many younger farmers, particularly the women, also play a key role in managing the wellbeing of others—partners, children, other family members and employees. Juggling these multiple roles and responsibilities with a heavy workload can be a real challenge.

27% of women mentioned that 'managing and meeting the needs of children' had at least a 'moderate' impact on their wellbeing, and of this number half the women described its impact as 'large' or greater.

For women with children at home, especially pre-schoolers, the stress associated with looking after children added to all the other stresses associated with the farm. Some women with a demanding farm workload felt they were missing out on time with their children.

A third of women and 17% of men surveyed mentioned that 'dealing with the ill health of a husband/partner, children' had affected their wellbeing at least moderately and nearly half the women said the impact was 'large' or greater.

Several women interviewed reported that their husbands/partners had experienced depression. One woman reported that when her partner got "moody", she felt as if she had "to pick myself and him up".

Balancing these demands with the need to feel "useful and wanted" was another recurrent theme. Some women commented that they felt their partner did not adequately acknowledge their farming skills. For others 'feeling useful' meant working off farm—one young woman reported that she felt better about herself when she was working off the farm, but she also felt guilty if her husband was left on the farm by himself. Another relative newcomer in a remote region had probably taken on more work and responsibilities than she really wanted because she felt it was important to be seen as "on top of things" and not be seen as "lazy or disorganised".

Strategies for improving wellbeing

"I would love more info to be out there about women farming while pregnant and with young kids—I guess it's different for everyone, but I felt pretty lost trying to figure what I could and couldn't manage to do."

The research confirmed many younger farming women are the key support for their husbands/partners/families and tended to notice wellbeing issues before the men acknowledged them. One described "keeping an eye on the signs", as part of the role of the woman on the farm as "men are bad at bottling it up".

Many of the young farming women interviewed also presented a picture of partners who “toughed it out” and neglected their wellbeing, unless personal crises forced them to. For example, one young woman noted that her father-in-law only started taking breaks from the farm once he developed heart problems. This had resulted in a greater willingness for all members of the family to take time away from the farm.

Encouragingly, many of the women interviewed felt they could influence their partners to manage their wellbeing better, so the better informed the women are on wellbeing matters, the better off their families are likely to be. Women also thought they could play a role to some extent in improving farm safety by discouraging risky behaviours when they know their husband has wellbeing issues.

One observation was a tendency among some of the younger farmers not to go out to find help. Several suggested that someone dropping into the farm regularly to “provide an ear to vent to, to get things off their chest” would be good.

Strategies women mentioned that would improve their wellbeing were: encouraging men to support their partners more, reviewing workloads, promoting the term ‘woman farmer’ as opposed to ‘farming wife’, men contributing more domestically, men valuing women’s work done in-home as much as work done outside and supporting women during pregnancy.



The Farming Business

Challenges to wellbeing

“[I did feel] a bit of stress from the financials ... but we know what we went into... we wouldn’t have taken it on if we didn’t think we could handle it”.

“Succession plans within families has to be recognised as one of the main stresses in young farming families.”

“Don’t assume women are just mums and wives, some of us are high-achieving farmers in our own right.”

The business of farming—financial issues, managing staff, achieving targets, succession planning, recognition and reward—can be challenging for younger farmers.

Men and women were both likely to mention financial issues as a source of stress. 37% of men and 44% of women thought financial issues were having a ‘moderate’ or greater impact on their wellbeing. These issues were also contributing to the excessive workloads and stress, because farmers could not afford to employ more staff, or they were taking on larger farms and increased stock to try and be more financially viable in the long run.

Having large mortgages and not being able to control weather and other things which impacted their financial returns was mentioned as a source of stress for some of the men. This was linked to “keeping the bank happy”. One sheep/beef farmer noted that they only have income for six to seven months of the year, so it is a question of “how much of a financial hole you get into before you dig yourself out”.

Lack of succession planning was a source of stress for some. A lot of younger farmers are on farms owned by their or their partner's parents or family trusts. Succession planning is sometimes not in place, so it is difficult to know what they are working towards. While there usually appeared to be an assumption that it would work out, the lack of an agreed plan was a stress for some. This was summed up by one woman who described herself as "like a voluntary worker on the family farm". Another male farmer commented: "The succession plan and subsequent fallout with my family since has been the single most stressful event in my life, financially and emotionally."

A number of women also wanted more focus on strategies to address equity issues, including getting more respect for their contribution. 47% of young women farmers surveyed felt 'not having my role and contribution valued enough' affected their wellbeing in a 'moderate' or greater way.

One woman commented that *"there's still a lot who think women can't do certain jobs"*. Another mentioned: *"A man going for a share-milking job will get it rather than a woman..."*. Some women felt that their farming skills were not adequately acknowledged, *"I can feel micromanaged on the farm... I'm not out there enough to have my say... not in charge, despite my experience"*. Others wanted more recognition that farm-related work done in home, such as paperwork, is just as valuable as that done outside.

Feeling valued was not solely a female issue, however. A third of men also reported that 'not having my role and contribution valued enough' as having a 'moderate' or greater impact on their wellbeing.

Many people also reported that finding and managing staff contributed to their wellbeing issues. For example, one young woman, who was managing a farm and workers on her own, reported having had a year of depression, with staffing issues being a major contributor. Another young woman who was managing a herd of several hundred cows with some workers shared that she did *"break down a few times last year... tears, not feeling the best."* If staff leave, this puts added pressure on the others, particularly the managers. The ability to find and manage staff to help to deal with workloads was having at least a 'moderate' impact for 30% of the men.

Given the difficulty of finding good staff, the farmers were keen to retain them when they did find them. Having staff who know the farm made life a lot easier. However, as one farmer noted, the need to keep staff happy also made it difficult to ask them to do "too much". Another contract milker said he had been through a "big learning on employment laws". These comments are reflected in the fact that 22% of men had a 'high' interest in learning more about managing staff as a wellbeing topic.

Strategies to improve wellbeing

"I enjoy the challenges of farming... you can make your own way, you feel like the future's in your hands, you can make decisions to alter your income."

"[I like] working towards goals—ticking things off, or heading towards them".

"When you're at work, knowing you've done a good job, it feels good".

"[I enjoy] being told that you are doing a good job—that the farm has never looked better"

The research confirmed that there is plenty about farming life that young farmers enjoy despite its ups and downs. For many young farmers, farming brings a genuine sense of accomplishment, reward and recognition. For some this manifested in "winning dairy industry awards", "hitting targets and getting good results on farm and having your name out in the farming sector". Others liked the sense of achievement and task-driven nature of the work, "ticking things off".

Others mentioned their fondness for the working environment itself, such as the pleasure of seeing animals or the things they had planted grow and flourish. Here is a brief selection of the many

aspects of farming that ‘turned the crank’ of young farmers: *“Seeing nice healthy cows”, “Seeing the herd improve—buying in good young stock and quitting poorer producers”, “When the dogs behave at work—have a good clean muster”,* improving pastures and getting ‘soil health up’, *“Getting things achieved, completed”, ‘keeping the owner happy’, “looking back on decisions and realising it was the right decision”.*

Women often expressed a joy from being with animals. For some it was getting out on their horses or with their dogs. For others it was making a good job of looking after the animals. One said the time she felt “most comfortable” was in spring and noticing when cows were about to calve. Another was motivated by a desire to *“get the best out of my cows”*. Another dairy farmer talked of *“raising beautiful calves”*.

People also talked about the opportunities farming presents to learn and grow new skills such as budgeting, financial, succession planning, leadership, management and communications.

For example, one farmer who had just bought his herd, noted that although finances had the potential to be a source of stress, “once you’ve got a plan and are on track, it is not a stress”. Others emphasised the importance of budgeting; making sure all the major bills were accounted for and doing the budgets properly. One noted that “as long as you’re budgeting conservatively, you’re not usually hit in the face by surprises”. Another strategy being used by young farmers was ‘removing cost out of the system’ such as working out the most cost-effective container sizes when buying chemicals. Others were seeking appropriate expert assistance. One woman described their bank manager as a “mentor”, who appreciated how hard they were working and understood the challenges they were facing and really wanted to see them succeed.

Many younger farmers were also already successfully using strategies for managing staff effectively. Some saw the long-term benefits of investing in staff. As one farmer summed up “the more you pay, the more you get.” Another reported taking on an extra person three days a week, which for “a little bit of extra cost [provided] a big increase in improved staff happiness”. Other strategies for retaining good staff included: increasing the amount of time off, a friendlier approach, greater job variation, making them feel valued and part of the team, upgrading equipment (e.g. automatic cup removers, new bikes).



Injuries Linked To Wellbeing Issues

28% of the men and 24% of the women reported having an injury on the farm in the last 12 months.

Of those who reported an injury, nearly two thirds of the men felt at least one of the listed wellbeing issues had contributed to their ‘worst injury’ in that time period, while for the women the level was higher still—69%.

The men and women had the same top four most mentioned contributors.

- Having too much to do and not enough time.
- Feeling fatigued/exhausted.
- Feeling stressed.

- Lack of sleep or poor quality sleep.

On this evidence, it is reasonable to expect that efforts to address these wellbeing areas for young farmers might contribute to a reduction in preventable injuries.



Best channels to reach young farmers

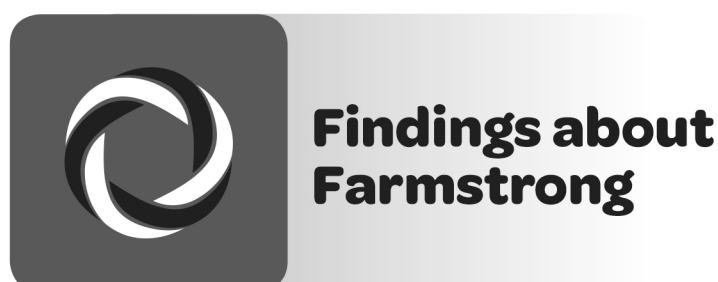
The research showed that social media is a key vehicle for providing information and maintaining contact with young farmers.

Most of men and women were using Facebook pages/posts and messenger at least once a week. Almost half the men and 59% of the women were using Facebook at least two hours a week.

Snapchat was also popular—70% of men and women were using it at least weekly. Instagram was popular too—although more so among women. Nearly half of the women and almost a third of men used Instagram at least once a week.

The most mentioned farming-related social media/online channels were NZ Farming (72% women, 70% men) and NZ Young Farmers (56% men, 40% women), Dairy NZ (47% men, 45% women), Beef + Lamb (40% men, 38% women). Farmstrong online and social media was mentioned by 25% of the men and 28% of the women.

The papers the greatest proportion of young farmers 'regularly look through' were Farmers Weekly (nearly three quarters of men and over half of the women) and NZ Farmer (55% men and 41% women). Local newspapers were popular too—half of the young farmers surveyed regularly read them.



There is an encouraging level of awareness of Farmstrong among young farming men and women. 70% of women and 68% of men contacted had heard of Farmstrong and of that number 85% of both men and women knew at least 'a little' about it. Over a quarter of men and over a fifth of women knew 'a moderate' amount or 'a lot'.

Facebook was the most cited source of information about Farmstrong by 70% men and 67% women. The next most popular source was Farmers Weekly—43% of men and 24% of the women specifically mentioning articles in Farmers Weekly.



Summary and Conclusion

This research found that the greatest impacts on younger farmers' wellbeing were in the areas of: fatigue, workload, lack of sleep, challenges with important relationships, not enough of time for myself and time off the farm. Sharemilkers/contract milkers working fulltime reported the highest levels of reduced wellbeing.

This research has shown a strong link between younger farmer injuries and wellbeing issues. These findings complement other research which Farmstrong is undertaking on this topic.

A notable feature of this survey were the lower levels of negative impact on wellbeing reported by the men compared to women, but this difference could reflect a gender difference in awareness and openness about wellbeing issues.

The research has also identified the key things that younger farmers saw as contributing to an improvement in their wellbeing, with getting time off the farm and more/better quality sleep being in the top group for both men and women, plus women also keen for more exercise and eating healthier.

In addition to existing wellbeing topics about managing stress (including thinking strategies), eating well, sleeping well, physical conditioning and social connection, there was also high interest in wellbeing topics related to purpose. Areas such as happiness, people skills/communication skills, staff management, self-confidence/self-worth/self-compassion were also identified as topics of interest.

The combination of the insight research and survey findings has provided rich data for understanding the needs of younger farmers. This can now be used by Farmstrong and others to inform their efforts in improving the wellbeing of younger farmers.

Based on the research it is recommended that Farmstrong increasingly include within its wellbeing initiatives stories, tips and resources on the topics that younger farmers say are of highest interest. The research also shed light on the best social, media, organisational and network channels to reach them.

Collaboration with a wide variety of organisations and networks has been key to the high response rate in this research. It is recommended that this collaborative approach continue throughout the design and implementation of solutions by Farmstrong and others.

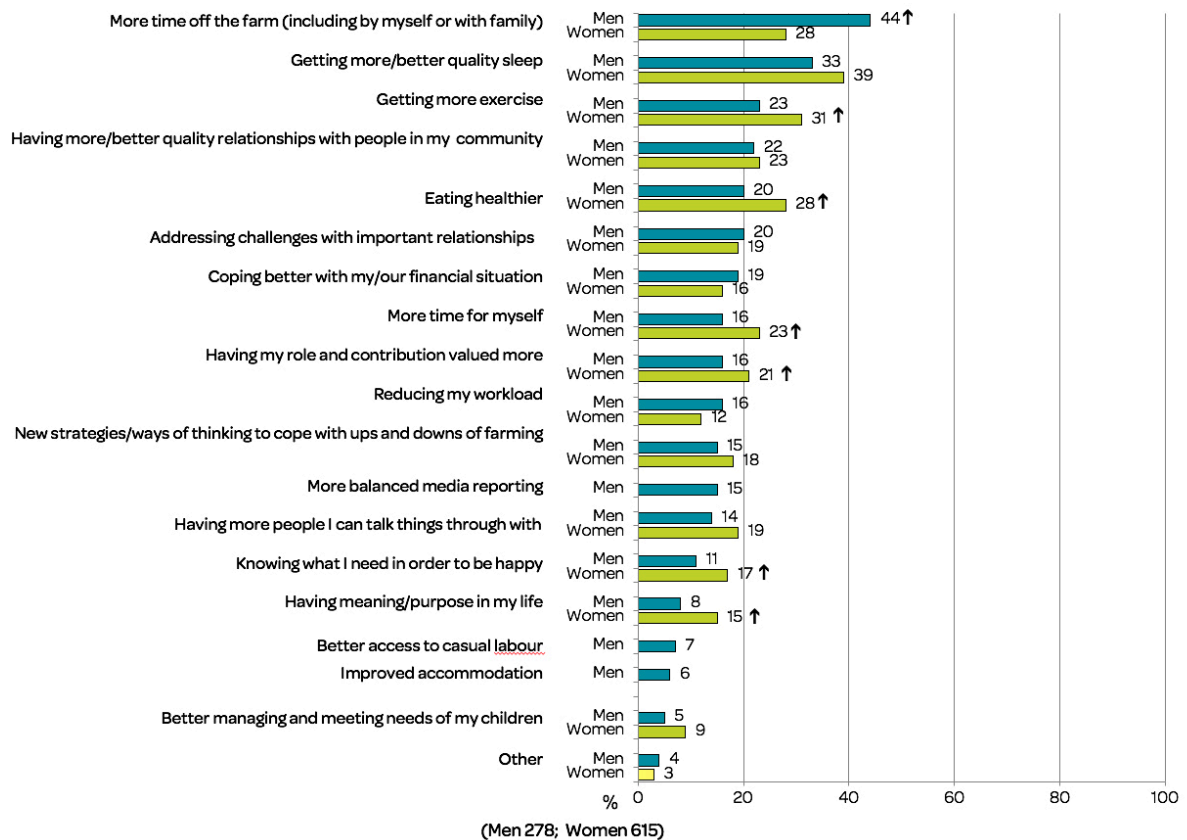
We would like to thank all the younger farmers, organisations and networks that supported and took part in this research. Without your help it would not have been possible to achieve such a high response rate and compelling picture of younger farmers' wellbeing.

Appendix – Graphs and tables

Graph 1: Things contributing most to wellbeing improvement

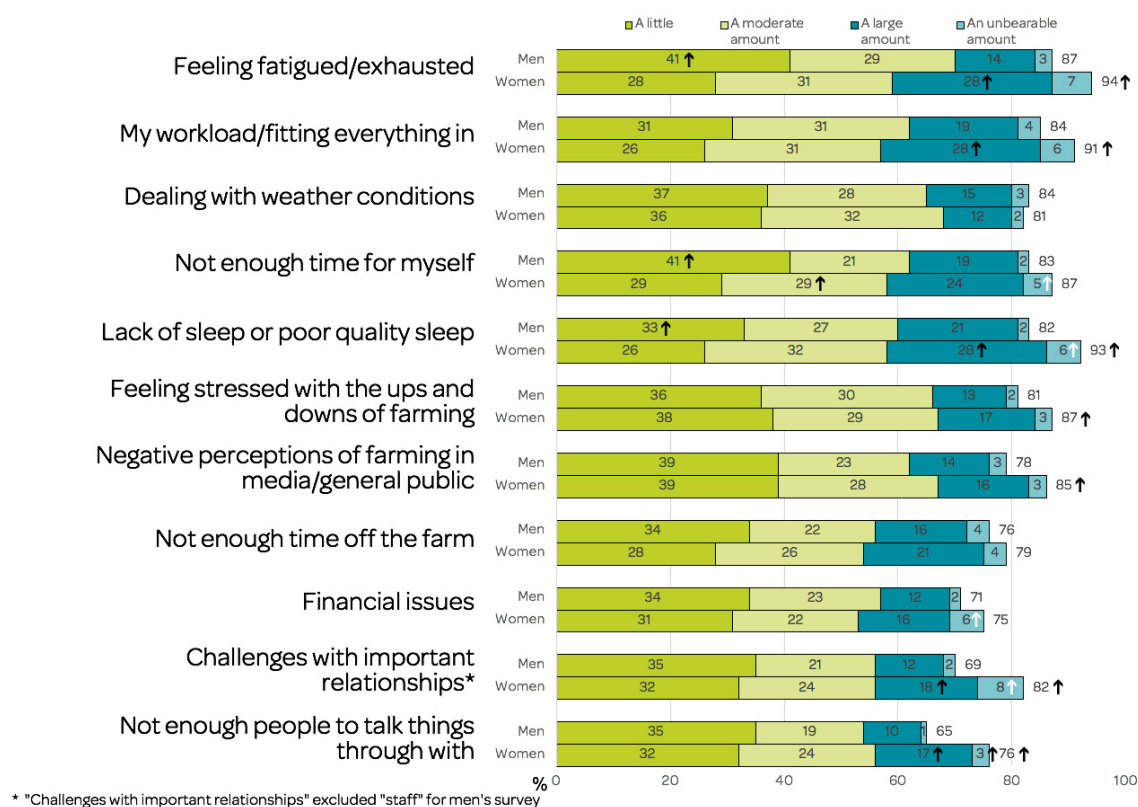
The graph below shows the things which the men and women thought would contribute the most to their wellbeing (their top three). (Upward arrows (↑) denote significantly higher levels compared with the other group.)

Things contributing most to wellbeing improvement

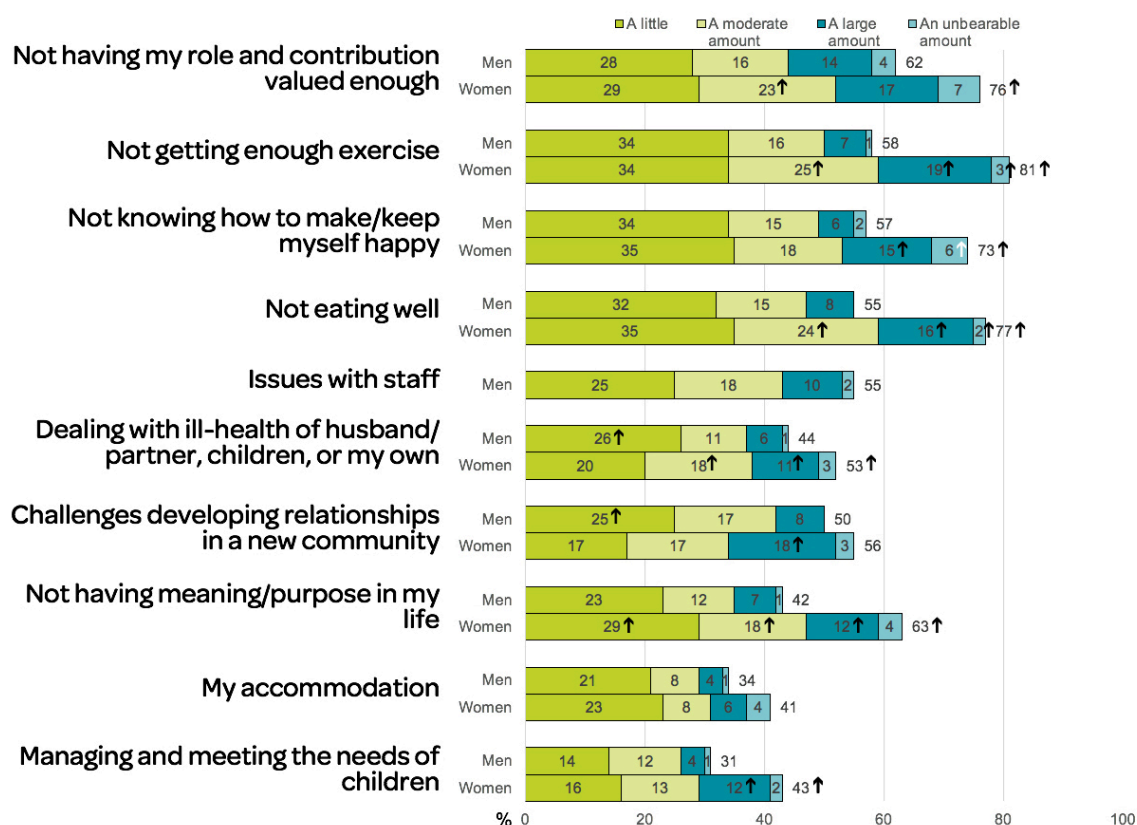


Graph 2: Levels of negative impact on younger farmer wellbeing

Levels of negative impact on younger farmer wellbeing (1)

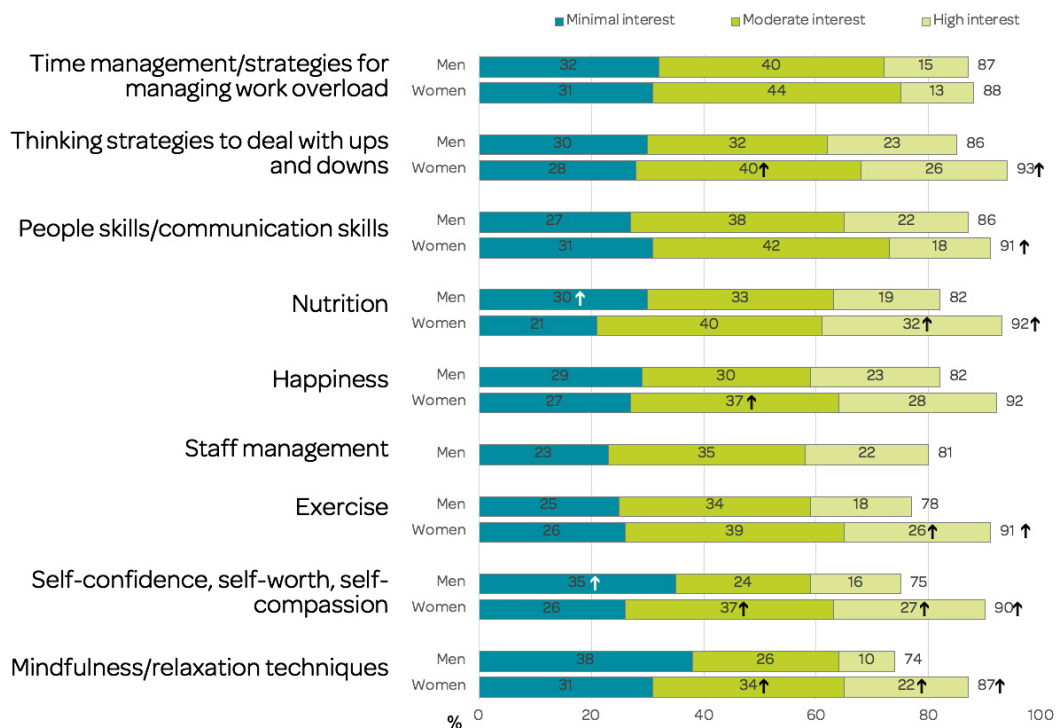


Levels of negative impact on younger farmer wellbeing (2)



Interest in wellbeing topics

Interest in wellbeing topics



Wellbeing issues contributing to injury

	Men with injury last 12 months (76)	Women with injury last 12 months (153)
WELLBEING ISSUES CONTRIBUTING TO INJURY	%	%
Having too much to do and not enough time	33	32
Feeling fatigued/exhausted	29	34
Feeling stressed	24	33
Lack of sleep or poor quality sleep	24	26
Feeling in need of a break away from the farm	20↑	7
Challenges with important relationships (i.e. husband/partner, parent, in-laws, employer, staff)	18↑	8
Feeling frustrated	17	19
Worrying about something else unrelated to what you were doing	14	20
Challenges with staff	14	NM
Feeling unappreciated or under-valued	12	14
Being hungry or dehydrated	9	9
Feeling down	9	8
Not being particularly fit	8	18↑
Feeling angry	8	8
Challenges coping with the ups and downs of farming	3	5
Other wellbeing issues	3	4

Sources of information about Farmstrong

Sources of information about Farmstrong

