

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### Milestone study reveals wellbeing is top of mind for younger farmers

New research from the biggest study of its kind in New Zealand, found that farmers under 35 want to invest more in their wellbeing.

Workload, fatigue, relationships, sleep and time off farm, are some of the main wellbeing challenges facing younger farmers today.

The milestone study, commissioned by rural wellbeing initiative Farmstrong, found that 64% of younger farming men and 77% of women reported that at least one wellbeing issue had a large impact on their life.

The research also reinforced the link between wellbeing and risk of injury/accident. Two thirds reported that a wellbeing issue had contributed to one of their worst on farm accidents or injuries in the last 12 months.

"Having such a large response with close to 900 taking part, the surveys shows that wellbeing is definitely on the radar for younger farmers, says Farmstrong spokesperson Gerard Vaughan.

"They are the future of farming and despite the ups and downs of the industry, there is so much they enjoy about it. Knowing that 84% of women and 74% of men are saying they want to invest in ways to improve their wellbeing is really pleasing".

Thinking strategies to deal with ups and downs of farming (23%), how to be happy (23%), people and communication skills, (22%) and staff management (22%), were the topics that younger farming men expressed a high interest in learning more about.

Women expressed a high interest in nutrition (32%), how to be happy (28%), self-confidence, self-worth, self-compassion (27%), thinking strategies to deal with ups and downs (26%) and Exercise (26%).

Women also reported higher levels of issues that had "large" or greater impact on their wellbeing compared to the men, and the effect was more pronounced for female sharemilkers and contract milkers. Several younger farmers during in-depth interviews identified "two years of drought" and "terrible wet weather" as a source of significant stress.

The research confirmed that there is plenty about farming life that young farmers enjoy despite its ups and downs. For many, 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.

The combination of the insight research and survey findings has provided rich data for better understanding the needs of younger farmers.

Farmstrong will increasingly include within its wellbeing initiatives, stories, tips and resources on the topics that younger farmers said were of highest interest. The research has also shed light on the best social, media, organisational and network channels to reach them.

The results will be launched at the New Zealand Young Farmers conference in Christchurch, 1<sup>st</sup> Feb 2019. A summary of the results can be found at [www.farmstrong.co.nz/resources/](http://www.farmstrong.co.nz/resources/)

## **About Farmstrong**

Into its fourth year, Farmstrong is a wellbeing programme that helps farmers to see themselves as the most important asset on the farm. It focuses on wellness not illness, and with resources and advice on its website, provides farmers and growers with information and tools they can use on a day-to-day basis that will help them in the long run to live well and farm well. Farmstrong is jointly run by FMG and the Mental Health Foundation. ACC is involved as a strategic partner.

## **ENDS**

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