



LIVE WELL, FARM WELL

Farmstrong Four Year Report  
June 2015 to June 2019



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## Messages from

### The founding partners

When we launched Farmstrong in 2015 we were not sure how it would go. With the results outlined in this report it's very pleasing to see the positive impact we have had four years on.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this progress. To the Movember Foundation for their funding early on and to ACC who joined as a strategic partner in 2016. Also to the people and organisations that have hosted events, delivered Farmstrong talks, shared our messages and resources and donated funding. In particular thank you to the farmers and growers who have shared their stories, tips and advice for the benefit of other farmers.

We are both very proud of our association with Farmstrong, and the measureable difference already made to the lives of more than fifteen thousand farmers and growers. Farmstrong's positive impact is a real testament to the power of many good people teaming up to do good things.

We still have a lot to achieve as 'locking in' new habits takes time. We look forward to your continued support in the years ahead as we collectively reach more farmers and growers to help them 'live well to farm well'.



**Chris Black**  
CEO, FMG



**Shaun Robinson**  
CE, MHF







## Farmstrong's ambassador

I come from a farming background, so I know the challenges farmers regularly face with weather events, production targets, fluctuating prices and changing regulations. I reckon rugby and farming are similar in that way—there are always results you need to achieve, whatever the conditions. Dealing with disappointment when things don't go according to plan is also a challenge.

In 2016 I had the privilege of becoming Farmstrong's ambassador. This has involved attending events, talking to rural media and meeting lots of farmers, growers and their families. I have been impressed with the level of interest and openness to discuss topics such as managing pressure and workload, taking breaks and keeping the mind and body in good condition for the demands of the job.

I've also been involved in the creation of resources and videos that farmers, growers and their teams and families can access through the Farmstrong website. It's been great to see the number of website visitors and levels of awareness steadily increase year on year. Farmstrong has obviously struck a chord.

It's easy to see why. Farmstrong's farmer-to-farmer tips and videos are a great mix of the science of wellbeing and practical on-farm advice. They're a huge help for anyone wanting to build their resilience to cope with the day-to-day pressures of farming.

Being a professional athlete has certainly taught me that investing up front in your wellbeing is vital for times when you are under the pump and need to draw on it. It's no different in farming.

Once I complete my rugby career I'll be heading back to the land. When I do, I'll continue applying all that I have been sharing and learning through Farmstrong.

As farmers we have to remember—if we're looking after ourselves then we are looking after our farm and family too. Live well, farm well. It's as simple as that.

**Sam Whitelock**

Farmstrong ambassador





# About Farmstrong

Farmstrong is a New Zealand wide rural wellbeing programme for farmers and growers to help them live well to farm well.

## Founding partners

In June 2015, Farmstrong's founding partners FMG (New Zealand's leading rural insurer) and the MHF (Mental Health Foundation) launched Farmstrong as a give-back to the rural community. The Movember Foundation contributed funding support at the beginning and ACC joined as a strategic partner in 2016.

## Our why

Farming life comes with lots of ups and downs, stresses and pressures. During our foundation research in 2014 farmers told us that they have systems in place to look after their land, stock, produce and equipment but are not as good at putting in place things to look after themselves. Organisations working in farming told us that the time was right to work together on solutions to address this.

## Our core message

Farmers and growers are the most important asset on the farm. Developing small but regular habits that increase your wellbeing means that you will have plenty to draw on during challenging times. It also helps you to perform at your best, reduce stress and prevent injuries.

## What we do

We inform, educate, inspire and motivate through:

- farmer and grower stories about what works for them
- content from topic experts and wellbeing science
- events that assist farmers to learn and stay connected
- tools and resources that help improve wellbeing.

## How we do it

We collaborate with farmers and rural organisations to develop information and design resources, and implement initiatives via our website, social media, rural media and face to face where farmers and growers meet and learn.

## The Farmstrong team

Farmstrong is overseen by a Governance Group made up of executives from both founding partners. The programme is delivered by a small team, supported by FMG employees who donate their time as well as MHF employees and other supporters who come on board and contribute in various ways.

### Our call to action

'Find out what works for you and lock it in'

visit  
[farmstrong.co.nz](https://farmstrong.co.nz)





## Progress at a glance\*



**61%**

brand awareness



**80%**

awareness of brand and  
Sam Whitelock



**30%**

have participated in Farmstrong



**10,000+**

fans on Facebook



**20%**

attribute some improvement in  
their wellbeing to Farmstrong



**10%**

attribute a moderate or large  
improvement in their wellbeing  
to Farmstrong

\* Results from telephone assisted interviews with a random sample of 450 farm owners and growers in June 2019



# “ Farmer to farmer

Farmstrong has been shaped by farmers for farmers. Foundation research of 400 farmers established the topics farmers were most interested in—taking breaks, managing stress, nutrition, sleep, keeping ‘farm fit’ and staying connected with friends, family and mates. The face of Farmstrong is farmers who have come on board and are happy to share with other farmers what they do to look after themselves.



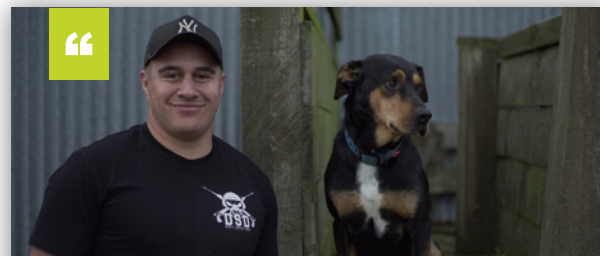
The number one thing is to look after myself. If I don't look after myself, I can't look after my family, my team, my farm.

**Dylan and Sheree Ditchfield**  
Dairy farmers, Southland



Over the past year, my personal health has become a hobby of mine. These days I make sure I eat well, sleep well, get more time off the farm and look after myself.

**Stu Richards**  
Farm manager, Waikato



It's funny isn't it? We do farming courses, but nowhere do we learn about how to look after ourselves by eating properly or making sure we call a friend when we're stressed. That's why I think Farmstrong's the best thing since sliced bacon.

**Tangaroa Walker**  
Contract milker, Invercargill



For me fatigue and lack of sleep have been a problem. So now I design my week and put break time into my schedule.

**Lisa Kendall**  
Hire-a-farmer, business owner, Karaka



Farmers do listen to farmers and it's great to have them telling their stories and their truths because that's what resonates with farmers.

**Cheyenne Wilson**

Farm manager / agribusiness student,  
Southland



Farming is a very physically demanding job. Your body needs to be 100% all the time. If you don't look after it, your farm suffers, it's as simple as that.

**Joe Hintz**

Sheep and beef farmer, Wairarapa



How do I get time off? By having good rosters, good staff and booking it in.

**Tony Colman**

Dairy farmer, Canterbury



Farming doesn't have to be like 'groundhog day'—wake up, let the dogs off and do the same thing every day, 365 days a year. If you're not happy, chat with your wife, yak with a mate. Make doing something about it a priority.

**Leyton and Gretchen King**

Sheep and beef farmer, Hawke's Bay



We're always getting things chucked at us in farming, from weather to financial woes. You just gotta talk about it, surround yourself with people who are there for you and can help you out.

**James Pharazyn**

Sheep and beef farmer, Hawke's Bay



My message to farmers is that while some stress is normal, when it becomes overwhelming you've got to do something about it.

**Marc Gascoigne**

Dairy farmer, Waikato

# What have we done?

Over the last four years we have shared many practical tools and resources through our website, social media, blogs, farmer stories in rural media, educational workshops, fitness challenges, community events and regional field days, inviting farmers to find out what works for them and 'lock it in'.

Here are a few of our highlights:

## 2015–2016

### Launch of Farmstrong and the website

The Farmstrong website houses all our topic tips and advice, videos and print resources.

### Delivered 45 'Healthy Thinking' workshops

Attended by 2,718 farmers and rural professionals. The workshops shared thinking strategies to help manage emotions, thoughts and behaviours during difficult times.

### The Farmstrong Fit4farming cycle tour

Over 1,600 farmers and their families participated over a 12 month period.



## 2016–2017

### Sponsored 46 woolshed comedy shows

Attended by 6,943 farmers and farming families. These shows delivered the message that connecting, getting off farm and having a laugh is good for your wellbeing.

### Video and print resources produced

We produced comprehensive resources on burnout, sleep and nutrition.

### 'Win Sam for a day' competition

We hosted the first 'Win Sam for a day' competition event with Wairoa-based farmer Andrew Powdrell.







2018–2019

2017–2018

### Launched the 'Turn on Your Core' 4-week challenge

A video based body conditioning programme fronted by Sam Whitelock to strengthen your core using simple techniques that take just a few minutes each day.

### Launched 'Fit for Calving'

A six week video based programme for calf rearer's to help get their bodies in shape for calving. The short videos explain simple exercises you can do using ordinary objects found on the farm.

### Produced two Farmstrong resources

'Five Ways to Wellbeing' and 'Under the pump?' Both of these are fronted by Sam Whitelock.



### Refreshed the Farmstrong website

This included a mobile friendly version. Over 12 months since the refreshed website launched we had 61,547 unique visitors, with 4,129 visitors spending three minutes or longer on the site. Plus, 108,000 visitors watched Farmstrong videos.

### 'You and Your Wellbeing' workshop

Developed a two-hour interactive workshop with farmers called 'You and Your Wellbeing.'

### Supported 58 community events

We provided Farmstrong tools and resources to support these events.

### Provided stories, tips and advice

Over a 12-month period Farmstrong featured in 246 media articles and 20 Farmstrong farmer-to-farmer stories in Farmers Weekly.

### Surveyed the wellbeing of rural women and younger farmers

We had 786 completed responses to the rural women and their wellbeing survey and 895 completed responses to the younger farmers wellbeing survey. The findings from these have been used to inform our tools, resources and initiatives.

### Completed research with 500 injured farmers

The research was undertaken to understand the link between the farmers wellbeing and their injury, both in the lead up to and at the time of the accident.

### Completed a 4-year independent evaluation of Farmstrong

With the results from this informing our future plans.





# Awareness and engagement results

Total Farmstrong awareness \*

Proportion of farmers and growers who have ever engaged with Farmstrong \*\*



\* An upward arrow (↑) denotes a statistically significant increase from the previous year and a downward arrow (↓) a statistically significant decrease.

\*\* The definition of Farmstrong engagement was broadened in 2018 to include participation in Farmstrong on Facebook/Twitter and viewing Farmstrong videos/articles, including those with Sam Whitelock.



# Impact results

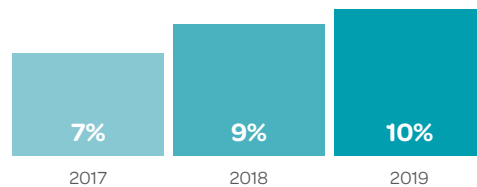
## Improvement in wellbeing attributed to Farmstrong

One of the strongest pieces of evidence of the impact of Farmstrong, is the number of farmers and growers attributing causality to the impact of Farmstrong in their own lives.

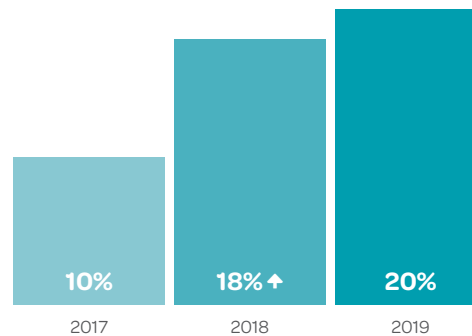
**10,000** farmers and growers (20%) attribute a wellbeing improvement because of Farmstrong.



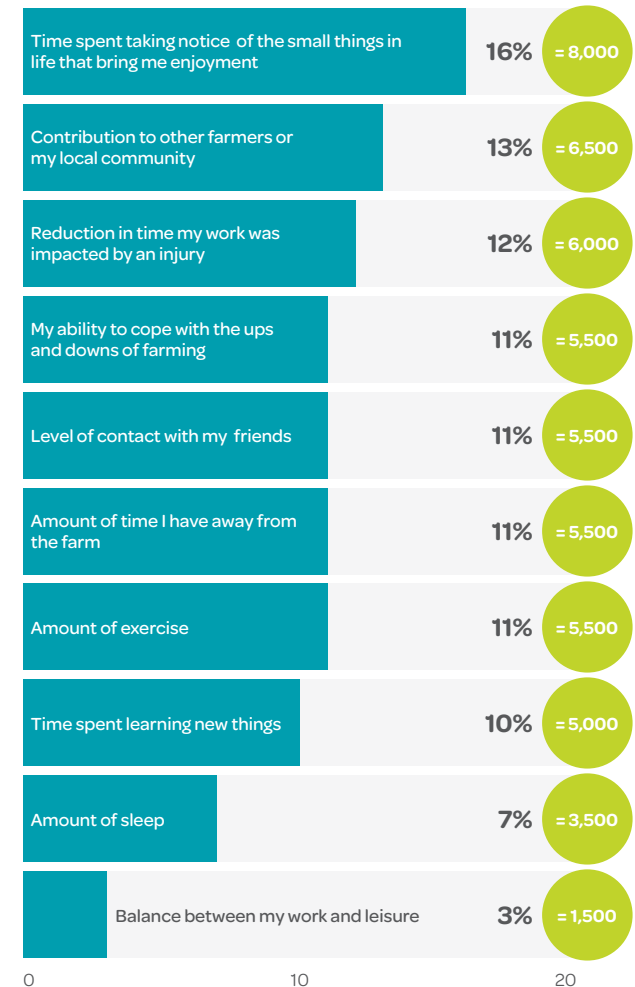
At least one 'moderate' or 'large improvement' attributed to Farmstrong



Any level of improvement attributed to Farmstrong \*



Proportion of all farmers and growers surveyed reporting improvement by each measure \*\*



\* An upward arrow (↑) denotes a statistically significant increase from the previous year and a downward arrow (↓) a statistically significant decrease.

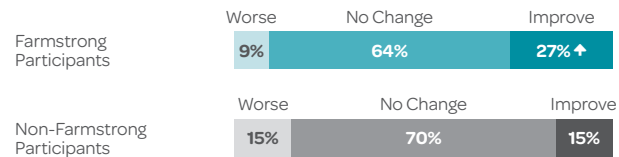
\*\* Results from the 2019 annual random sample telephone interview survey of 450 farmers and growers, mostly who are owners.



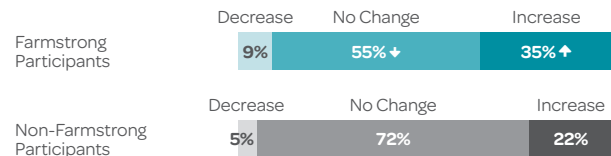
# Impact results 2019 continued.

## Farmstrong Dashboard Results 2019 \* Comparing Farmstrong and non-Farmstrong participants.

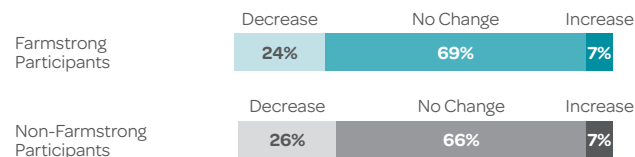
### Ability to cope with the ups and downs of farming



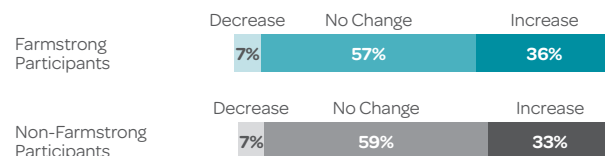
### Contribution to other farmers or my local community



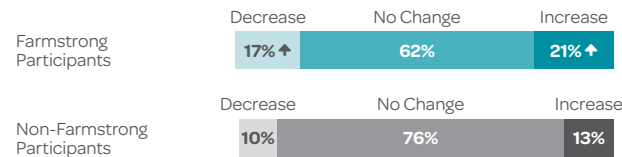
### Sleep



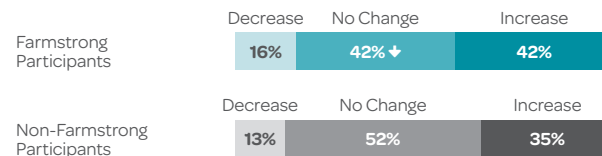
### Time spent learning new things



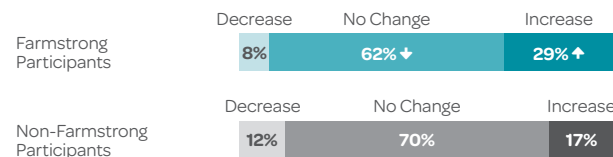
### Level of contact with friends



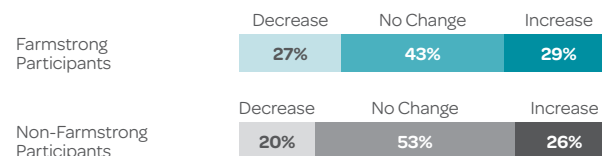
### Time spent taking notice of the small things in life that bring me enjoyment



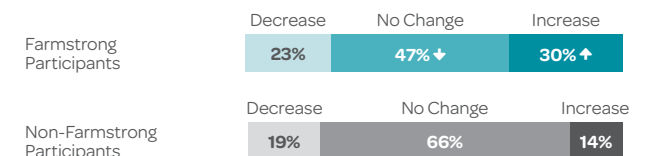
### Amount of exercise



### Amount of time away from the farm



### Balance between work and leisure



Farmstrong uses a Results Based Accountability Framework (RBA) to report on progress. This measures; how much we have done, how well we have done it and is anyone better off?

The following results are from our annual surveys that measure ten indicators of Farmstrong impacts. They are measured by farmer perceptions of changes in their behaviours over the last 12 months. Comparisons are shown between those who have and have not participated in Farmstrong (based on 121 participants and 329 non-participants from the 2019 survey).



\* An upwards arrow (↑) denotes a statistically significant higher level for the Farmstrong participants compared with non-participants and a downward arrow (↓) a statistically significant lower level.

# Other research

## Younger farmers wellbeing research

In early 2018, Farmstrong commissioned research to better understand the wellbeing needs of men and women under 35 years of age working in farming.

The majority of younger farmers—**84% of women** and **74% of men** expressed 'moderate' or 'high' interest in wanting to improve their wellbeing and resilience. The top three main challenges to the wellbeing of younger farmers were; workload 23%, relationships 23% and lack of sleep 22%.



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.



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's something that has helped me make friends and enjoy life even when work is a battle.

## Farming women on their wellbeing research

In 2018 Farmstrong commissioned research to better understand the wellbeing needs of farming women.

The top four things women in farming rated as having a high interest in were nutrition 26%, exercise 25%, self-confidence, self worth and self compassion 24% and thinking strategies to deal with ups and downs 22%.



During calving I still have to do the dinner—like housework is not a job, you feel like a one man band trying to hold everything together and on social media you have to act as if everything's perfect.



My biggest thing is having tools. How do I teach my brain not to go into negative mode.



# Other research continued.

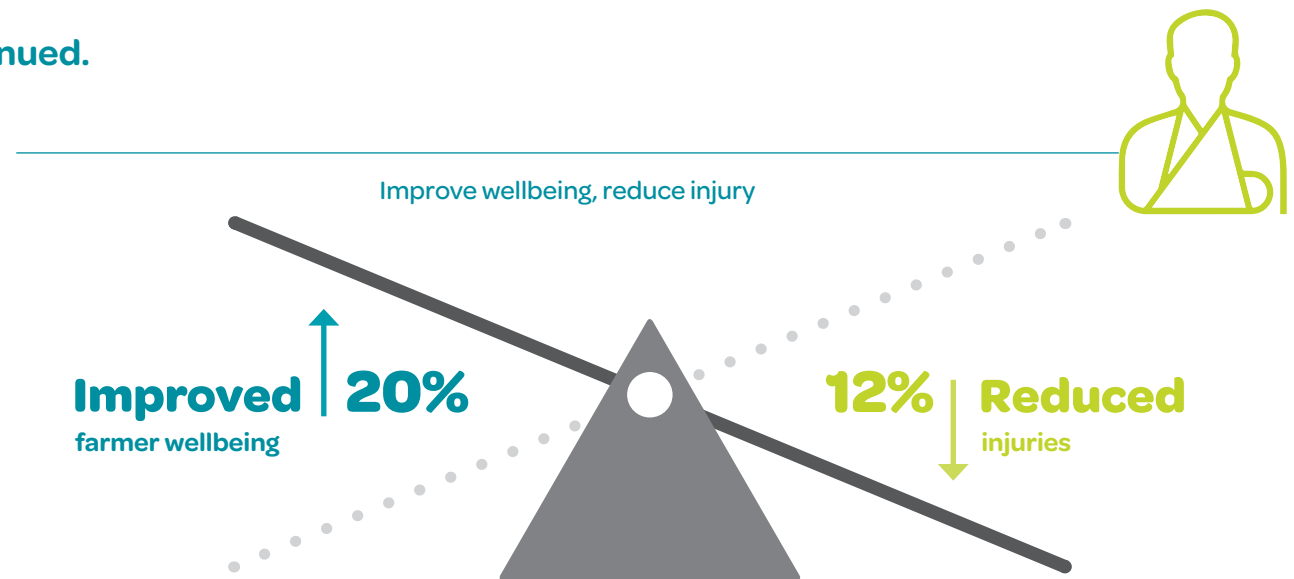
## Link between farmer injuries and wellbeing research

In 2019 Farmstrong commissioned research to better understand the relationship between farmer wellbeing and farm injuries.

A strong theme of the research was that an aspect of diminished wellbeing resulted in farmers doing something they normally wouldn't do, which then contributed to their injury.

**24%** of recently injured farmers reported that aspects of diminished wellbeing were a 'major' contributor to their injury.

This equates to 30% of ACC farmer claim costs.



**20%** of all farmers attributed some level of **improvement** in their wellbeing to Farmstrong. **10%** attributed a 'moderate/ large' improvement.

**12%** of all farmers attributed some level of **reduction** in the time their work was impacted by an injury to Farmstrong. **3%** attributed a 'moderate/ large' reduction.

“

A head cut resulted from a farmer trying to trim a ram's feet in the crate on the back of his ute, when he should have taken it to the yards. He realised it was a stupid thing to do in a confined area, but he made the call because of time pressure and fatigue.

“

One farmer, who was rushing to get on with calf feeding, tried to jump off a stationary quad bike and grab a calf as it ran past. She missed the calf and fractured her knee. As a result, she was on ACC for 3 months.

“

One farmer, who hadn't had any time off for 4 months, was feeling tired and stressed when his two wheeler hit a large rock, tipped him off his bike, causing him a broken shoulder. He was off work for 12 months.



# Focus for the next three years

Support local groups to facilitate increased sharing of Farmstrong tools and information

Develop new initiatives on wellbeing topic areas that prevent injuries

Increase use of online channels for our information and resources particularly via social media

Extend reach to everybody working on farms, particularly women and 18–35 year olds

Increase community support for farmers to sustain new wellbeing habits

Increase knowledge of what Farmstrong provides and how you can participate

Sustain delivery of all current components of Farmstrong programme





[farmstrong.co.nz](http://farmstrong.co.nz)

Founding Partners

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Strategic Partner

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2014–2017 Co-Funder

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