



# | All About Farmstrong 2022

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



Over the last six years more than 36,000 farmers and farm workers have engaged in Farmstrong.

## Introduction

This report is designed to give you a handy introduction to Farmstrong and what makes it tick.

I've been privileged to be involved in Farmstrong as its Ambassador in recent years. I've really enjoyed promoting its messages, attending events and creating farmer-to-farmer resources that help people manage some of the pressures of farming and growing.

I've also witnessed first-hand, at events like Fieldays, just how effective Farmstrong is at starting conversations that might not otherwise happen. It gets farmers and growers talking about things like managing stress, recognising when people are 'under the pump' and doing something about it.

What I like best about Farmstrong is that it's so practical. It shows how people can adopt simple habits and ways of thinking that make them better equipped to deal with tough times. It also comes up with solutions that genuinely work for rural people.

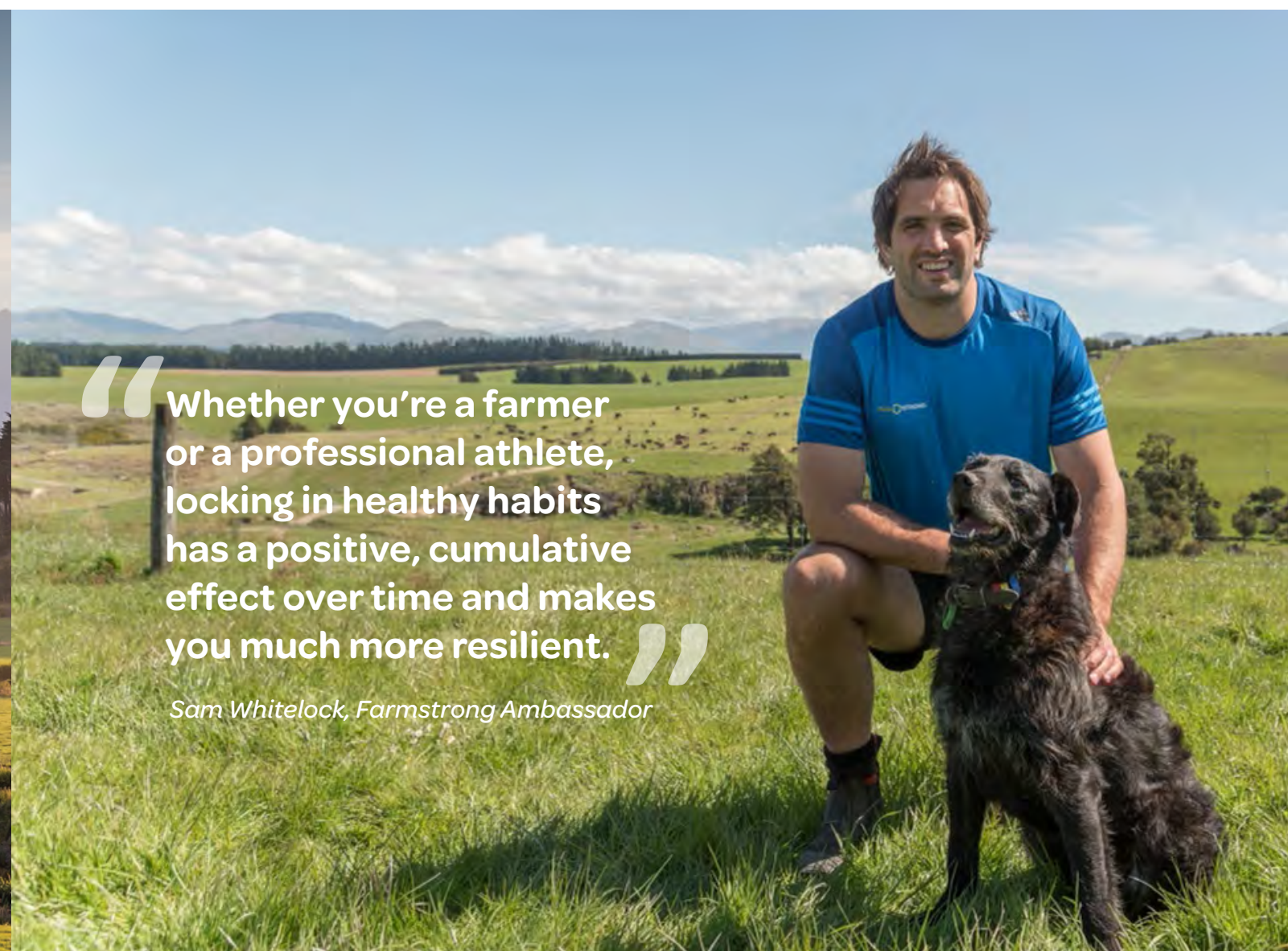
Our challenge now is to reach more people and work with different sectors of farming and growing. It's an exciting time to be involved. I encourage everyone working rurally to get behind Farmstrong and help us spread the word.

**SAMUEL WHITELOCK**  
Farmstrong Ambassador



“Whether you're a farmer or a professional athlete, locking in healthy habits has a positive, cumulative effect over time and makes you much more resilient.”

*Sam Whitelock, Farmstrong Ambassador*





## Our Mission

Improve the wellbeing  
of people working  
in farming and  
growing.

## Our Vision

A rural New Zealand  
that adapts and  
thrives in a constantly  
changing world.

## Our Call to Action

“Find out what  
works for you  
then lock it in.”



## Our Key Messages

Farmers and growers are the most  
important asset on the farm.

Developing small and regular  
habits that increase your wellbeing  
means that you will have plenty to  
draw on during challenging times.

Farmstrong is about wellness not  
illness.

Being Farmstrong helps you to  
perform at your best, reduce  
stress and prevent injuries.

Investing in your wellbeing is good  
for business.







## About Farmstrong

Farmstrong helps farmers, growers and their families to cope with the ups and downs of farming by sharing things they can do to look after themselves and the people in their business.

It offers practical tools and resources from the science of wellbeing that help people working in rural industries to live well so they can farm and grow well. Topics covered include managing stress and pressure, sleep, nutrition, keeping 'farm fit' and scheduling rest and recovery time.

Farmstrong shares this advice through its website – [www.farmstrong.co.nz](http://www.farmstrong.co.nz) - and at workshops and various community events, such as national and regional Field Days.



## Investing in wellbeing

Farmstrong encourages farmers to make small regular investments into their 'wellbeing account' so they have something to 'draw on' when times are tough. Healthy habits such as staying in touch with mates, keeping active, enjoying simple pleasures, learning new things and giving back to friends and community can all improve our wellbeing so we can perform at our best.

Farmstrong packages the science of wellbeing into farmer-friendly, accessible chunks using relatable, farm-based examples. For instance, body conditioning videos showing routines to help strengthen and prevent muscle strains are presented using readily available items on the farm like buckets, tractor tyres and hay bales.



## A trusted part of the rural landscape

Since Farmstrong was launched in 2015 it has become a trusted part of rural life, authentically reflecting the experience and insights of farmers. When launched, Farmstrong aimed to make a difference to lives of 1,000 farmers. Now six years on more than 24,000 farmers and growers are attributing an improvement in their wellbeing due to their involvement with Farmstrong.



## An award-winning programme

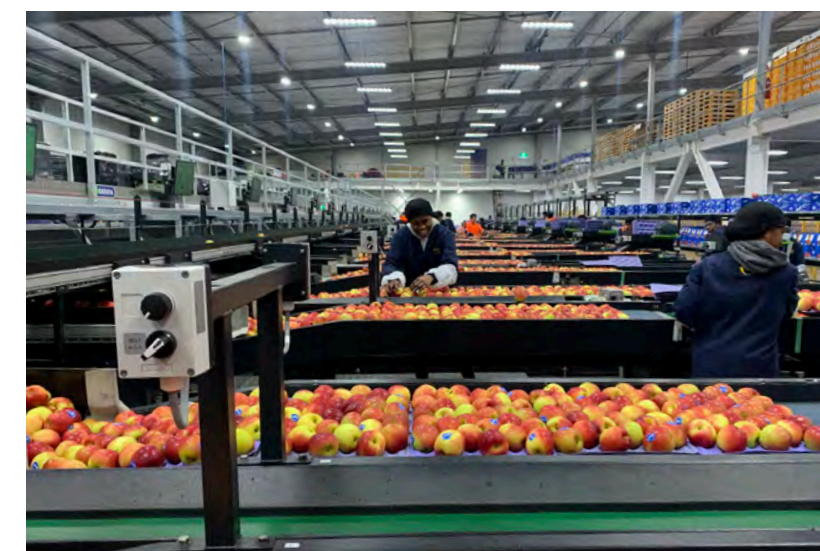
In 2020, Farmstrong took out the top national health and safety award for making the best overall contribution to improving workplace health and safety in New Zealand. It also took out the prize for the best leadership of an industry sector or region.



## A unique partnership

Farmstrong is a non-commercial, community give-back, founded by rural insurer Farmers Mutual Group (FMG) and the Mental Health Foundation (MHF) in 2015. The Movember Foundation were an important funder for the first three years and ACC joined as a strategic partner in 2016.

Farmstrong is overseen by a Governance Group made up of executives from the founding and strategic partners, and delivered by a small, specialised team. It is supported by a wider group of contributors including farmers, growers, FMG employees, industry groups, businesses and community members who donate their time and funding.





# How Farmstrong Works

The face of Farmstrong is farmers who've come on board, care about improving their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of the sector.

Farmstrong encourages farmers to 'lock in' healthy habits and thinking strategies by:

- Using Farmstrong ambassador, All Black lock Samuel Whitelock to promote key messages, resources and events.
- Creating tools and resources based on the latest wellbeing science specifically tailored for farmers. These are delivered via our website and face-to-face at agriculture events, workshops and educational forums.



- Sharing farmer-to-farmer stories about what works for them in rural media and social media channels.
- Organising events that help farmers stay connected and have breaks such as comedy shows, cycle tours and fitness challenges. Farmstrong is also a regular at agriculture Field Days.

- Working in close partnership with rural organisations such as Dairy NZ, Beef + Lamb New Zealand, NZ Young Farmers, the Handy Landys, the Rural Support Trust, Farming Mums NZ, Dairy Women's Network, Rural Women New Zealand, Agri-Women's Development Trust and Farming Women Tairāwhiti.



## Connecting rural communities — Farmstrong.co.nz

The Farmstrong website is one-stop portal to a wide range of resources, events and activities and attracts heavy traffic. It has successfully connected a geographically diverse and remote audience. Farmers can access resources wherever they are, whenever it suits them. In any given year, the website attracts over 75,000 unique visitors.

Farmstrong also makes extensive use of social media to build a community of interest and engages with over 11,000 fans. Throughout the year it supports two-way conversations on wellbeing issues dear to the hearts of farmers and growers and relevant to the seasonal farming calendar. Farmstrong videos receive over 300,000 views a year.

Farmstrong is also developing online learning modules on key wellbeing topics that will be available for use by online learners and in farming and agribusiness education and training courses.

Farmstrong has a growing and active network of industry and community-based supporters who share its tools and resources locally.



## You Matter, Let's Natter

Just listening to someone who is 'under the pump' can make a huge difference to how they feel. Sharing the ups and downs of farming helps manage pressure.

You Matter, Let's Natter is a Farmstrong initiative designed to pass on the listening skills that help people support each through tough times.

It encourages farmers to regularly catch up with mates and neighbours over a cuppa to see how they're going.

It also provides practical tips on what makes a good listener and how to start a 'convo' with someone who may have dropped off the radar.

Branded mugs and biscuit packs encourage farmers to visit a mate, put the billy on and chat.

To brush up on your listening skills and find out more about

You Matter, Let's Natter, visit [farmstrong.co.nz](http://farmstrong.co.nz)





“As farmers we need to use everything at our disposal to look after each other. One of the easiest resources we have is a set of ears! I spoke to a lot of farmers at Fieldays and you could just see when they walked away that their backpack didn't feel quite so heavy. There's no doubt that having a friendly ear turn to is much better than having none.”

*Paul Walker, dairy farmer, Pongakawa*



“I think Farmstrong's awesome. There are certainly times of the year in farming when people can get very down, like during calving when it's been raining constantly and you've got the wet weather gear on. That's why having good people to talk to and other things happening in your life is essential.”

*Todd Reeves, dairy farmer*



“I think as a farming community, this is just another way to help each other, isn't it? Look at what happened with the floods down south, farmers were helping each other out straight away with fencing and so on. Well, why can't we have a chat and help each other out that way too?”

*Stephen Crossan, dairy farmer, Te Puke*







# Working with growers

In early 2021, Farmstrong commissioned research to better understand the challenges to the wellbeing of people working in horticulture and viticulture. The sectors covered were:

- vegetable
- other fruit and berries
- wine
- kiwifruit
- avocado.

The main wellbeing challenges identified were: workload/fitting everything in, work on compliance, lack of available employees/contract workers, not enough time away from work, feeling stressed coping with ups and downs of work/business and fatigue.

Encouragingly, there was a high level of interest among growers about learning more about improving their wellbeing through Farmstrong.

94% of those surveyed had a ‘high’ or ‘moderate’ interest in one or more of the wellbeing topics listed, such as thinking strategies, nutrition, exercise, sleep, people skills, self-confidence, employee management and managing workload.



Growers were also keen to share practical wellbeing advice via authentic, horticultural stories.

Farmstrong has now started working collaboratively with the sector, attending industry-specific fielddays, conferences and events where growers come to talk about issues and using industry channels and publications to reach a wider audience with tailored wellbeing resources.



# Grower to Grower

“Farmstrong encourages people to get off farm or orchard and get involved in their community. It’s so easy to get isolated and trapped in your own space and your own head sometimes. That’s why you’ve got make time to do other things.”

*Simon Cook, Kiwifruit grower/contractor*



“I like what Farmstrong is on about. Now is the time to discuss these ideas and act before things get potentially even tougher. People have different levels of anxiety and stress in all jobs so it’s good to reach out. It takes an ongoing commitment to look after yourself, it’s not a short fix.”

*Sean Carnachan, Kiwifruit grower/contractor*

“To a certain extent, we all have to grin and bear things, but if you’re really feeling under the pump, don’t be afraid to step out, leave the phone at home and do something different for a day. Once you’ve got things in balance, you’ll be all right no matter what’s happening in the industry.”

*Kiwifruit industry stalwart Marty Robinson*







“ If you are doing right by people, they will do right by you. It’s an intentional journey to improve workplace wellbeing. You have to keep trying and keep moving forward. ”

*Paul Fawcett, general manager of engagement and culture, Baygold.*



## Supporting local communities

Supporting events that help farmers stay connected and have breaks is a big part of what we do. We network with communities to help them organise events that boost people’s wellbeing and raise awareness about living well to farm well.

Over the years we have been involved in comedy shows at rural halls, community fund raisers, sporting events such touch rugby tournaments, cricket games and even a cycle tour involving 1,600 farmers and their families.

Farmstrong is also a regular at agriculture Field Days round the country and iconic events such as Golden Shears.





# Farmer to Farmer



“I really care what happens on this farm physically and environmentally, but I can't run my business without good staff. That's why I tell people, 'I'm not in the dairy industry, I'm in the people industry.' Farming is not just about cows or sheep, it's actually about people and if you get the people side right, you'll get it all right.”

*Terry Murray, dairy farmer*



“I'd love our industry to get to the stage where people ask you not 'how's it going?', but 'Are you good, are you ok?' You don't need to fix people's problems to have these conversations. All you have to do for someone going through tough times is sit there and listen.”

*Gary Sunshine-Tervit, farm manager*



“It's funny isn't it? We do farming courses, but nowhere do we learn about how to look after ourselves, how to eat properly, how to call a friend if you're in a stressful situation. That's why I think Farmstrong's the best thing since sliced bacon.”

*Tangaroa Walker, dairy farmer*



“If you keep every farming challenge inside your own head, life soon becomes overwhelming. That's the stuff that wakes you up at three in the morning and no one working on a farm needs lack of sleep. That's why it's great to have a natter and get things off your chest.”

*Amber Carpenter, dairy farmer*



“Managing the isolation can be the toughest thing. Moving to places where you know no one. I've made sure I've established a network of people I can reach out to when I need to. People who are dealing with the same issues I am. People are willing to share knowledge and provide feedback if they can, but first, you've got to talk.”

*Cheyenne Wilson, contract milker/agribusiness student*



“To be a high-functioning person on farm you need recovery time. The All Blacks don't play 50 tests a year, but as farmers we often think we can do it, but you just can't. It's not possible. It's going to catch up with you. I think the bigger question farmers should ask is this - why are we farming? We all want to provide our families with this great lifestyle, but if you're not going to be there for them, what's the point?”

*Jason Halford, farm manager*

“My message to farmers is that while some stress is normal, when it becomes overwhelming you've got to do something about it. Don't wait for years and years and suffer like I did. The main thing I've learnt is that before you can look after your family, your farm and your animals, you've got to look after yourself.”

*Marc Gascoigne, dairy farmer*



“I'm a firm believer in Farmstrong. I love the idea of 'live well, farm well' and the notion that if you've got your life in balance, then the farm is just naturally going to go well. That makes a lot of sense to me.”

*Geoff Spark, dairy farmer*





# Our Research

The better we understand farmers and growers, the more likely we are to meet their needs and change behaviours.

Over the past four years, Farmstrong has completed milestone research into the wellbeing of Farmers, Younger Farmers, Women in Farming, people working in Horticulture and Viticulture and the Link Between Diminished Wellbeing and Farmer Injury.

These large studies have attracted widespread interest and media attention. Each has identified the key challenges to wellbeing faced by the study participants, the wellbeing topics they are most interested in and their preferred communication channels.

Farmstrong actively shares its research, methodology and key learnings with a wide range of other organisations and industry sectors, nationally and internationally.



## Monitoring Progress

Farmstrong uses the Results Based Accountability (RBA) Framework to measure and track progress so we know what improvements farmers have made through their involvement in Farmstrong. We use both quantitative and qualitative research methods to track and monitor progress.

An annual telephone interview survey with a random sample of 450 farmers and growers asks about their awareness of and engagement in Farmstrong, and what changes have occurred over the last 12 months in the following areas:

- ability to cope with the ups and downs of farming,
- amount of sleep, amount of time away from the farm,
- balance between work and leisure,
- level of contact with friends,
- amount of exercise,
- contribution to other farmers or local community,
- time spent learning new things,
- time spent taking more notice of the small things in life that bring enjoyment,
- amount of time their work was impaired by an injury.

Farmers/growers who have engaged in Farmstrong are also asked how much they would attribute improvements in these 10 areas to their involvement in Farmstrong.



# Raising awareness

Farmstrong is now a well-established brand in the rural sector.

Our core target audience, based on 2013 Census data, is 78,024 people identifying themselves in ‘farmer’ and ‘farm worker’ occupational groups.

Over the past six years years, our annual survey of 450 farmer owners has shown huge increases in awareness levels among farmers of Farmstrong and its messages via Sam Whitelock.

Awareness levels rose from 31% of farmers three months after launch in 2015 to 77% of farmers in June 2021. 25% of farmers can recall the Farmstrong brand without being prompted.

# Changing behaviours

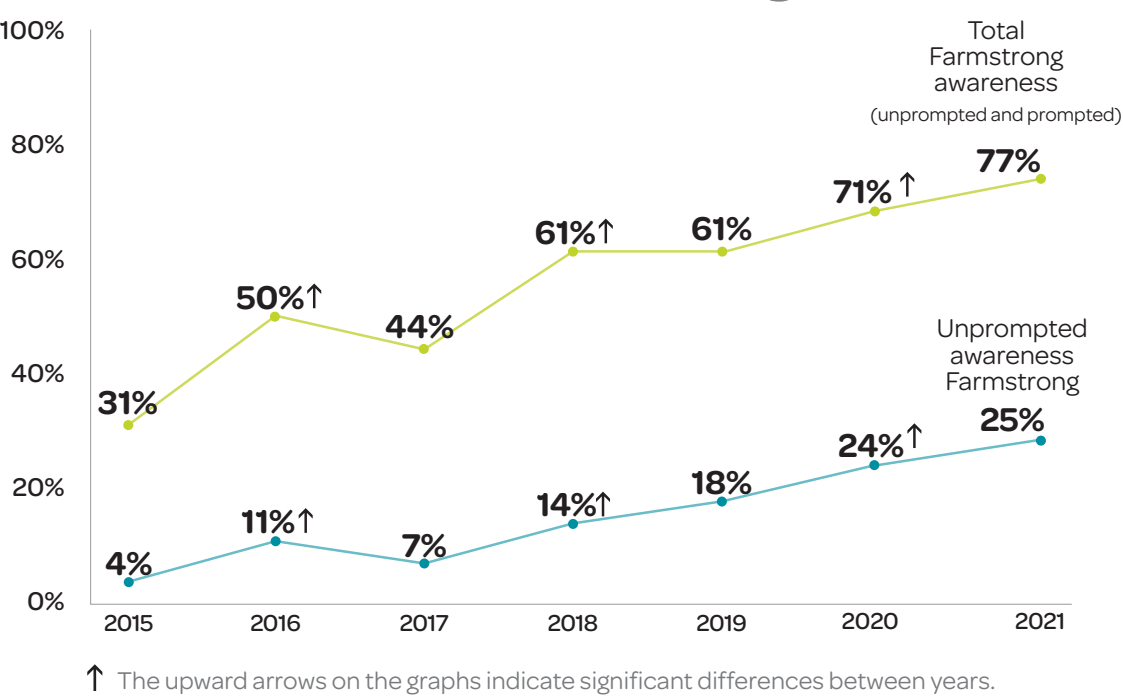
Changing traditional attitudes and behaviours is a significant challenge. Farmstrong’s mix of farmer-to-farmer stories, workshops, events and online resources are making a measurable difference. Our latest 2021 annual dashboard results, based on a random sample survey of 450 farm owners, found:

**23%** of farmers surveyed attributed some level of improvement in their wellbeing to Farmstrong (over 15,000 farmers and farm workers).

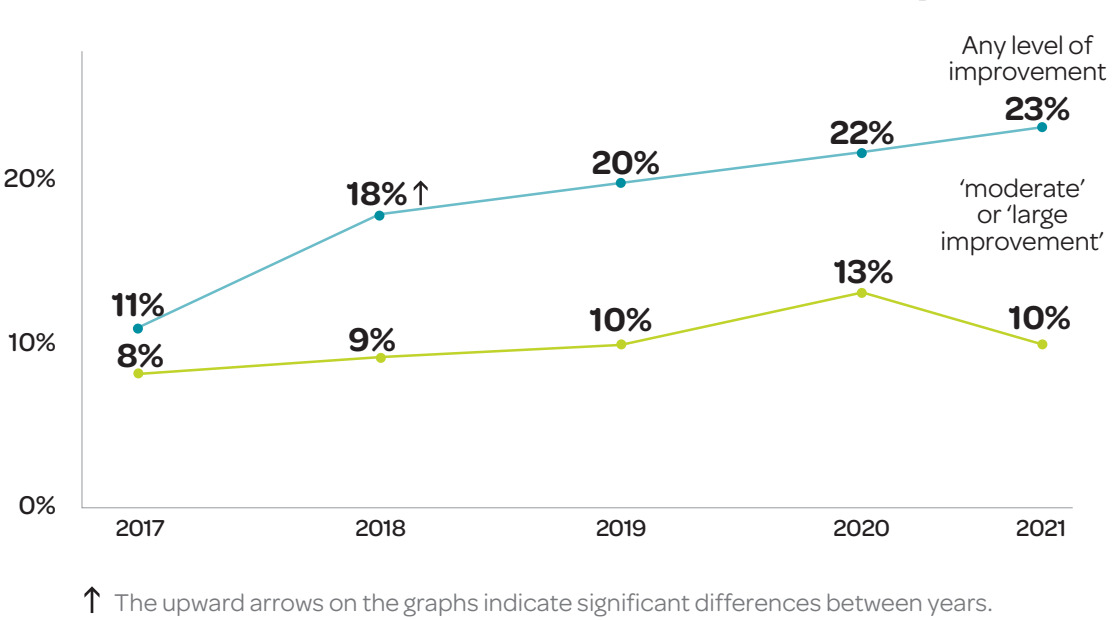
**10%** of farmers and farm workers reported a ‘moderate’ to ‘large’ improvement in their wellbeing and their ability to cope with the ‘ups and downs’ of farming (6,000 farmers adn farm workers).

**12%** attributed Farmstrong with a reduction in the amount of time their work was impaired by an injury (over 7,000 farmers and farm workers).

Farmer Awareness of Farmstrong



Improvement attributed to Farmstrong





# Increasing engagement

Farmers and growers engage with Farmstrong through the following channels:

- attending workshops, webinars, visiting Farmstrong at Field Days and local Ag events
- accessing resources and blogs on the Farmstrong website and via social media,
- reading articles and sharing their stories via Farmstrong, on radio, TV and in Farmers Weekly and other print media.

Our 2021 survey found **36%** of all farmers have participated in Farmstrong over the last six years (over 24,000 farmers and farm workers.)

**32%** of farmers/growers reported engaging in the last 12months (over 22,000 farmers/growers and farm workers).

A key insight is that those who engaged more in Farmstrong report higher levels of improvement. Farmers who engaged with Farmstrong through three or more channels were significantly more likely to report improvements in their wellbeing than those who had never engaged with Farmstrong.

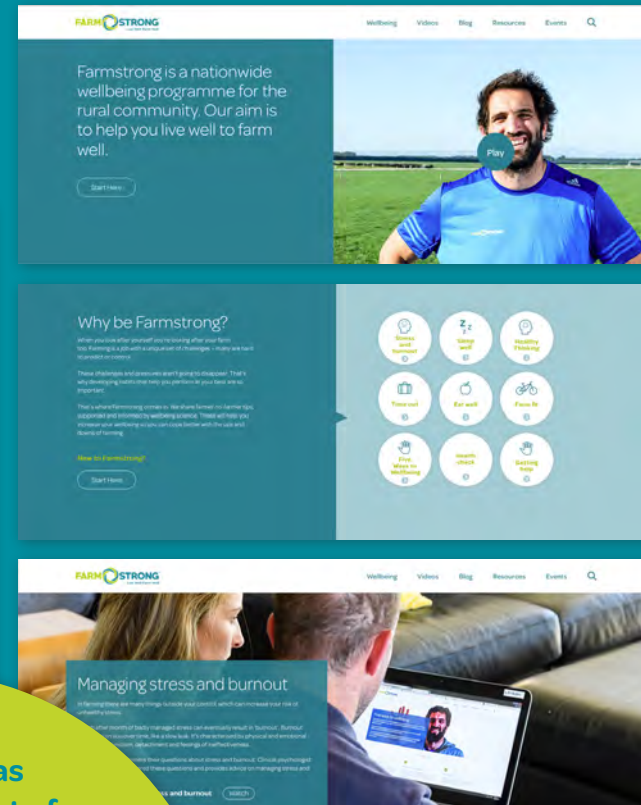




## Spreading the Message

Farmstrong's website is the main portal to an extensive amount of farmer-based video and downloadable resources on the various wellbeing topics. Over xxxx people have visited the website over the past six years. More than 30 rural media outlets have featured Farmstrong stories. Farmstrong stories and ideas feature also heavily during Mental Health Awareness week in television, radio, print and social networks.

Farmstrong has collected the best of these stories into an inspiring book that shows what it takes to be Farmstrong. A range of farmers share how they overcome the challenges of physically and mentally demanding job and make time to look after the most important asset in their business – themselves, their families and their team.



## People who stay Farmstrong invest in 5 simple habits. I call them the 5 Ways To Wellbeing.



**FARMSTRONG**  
Live Well Farm Well

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







# Looking Ahead

Our Strategic Priorities 2020–2025 are to:

- extend Farmstrong’s reach to more groups working in agriculture and horticulture
- increase the number of people attributing improvement in their wellbeing to Farmstrong
- support more people to share Farmstrong messages and content
- Increase the scope and depth of our wellbeing content, with material for both individuals and workplaces.

By 2025 we want:

- **20%** of farmers and growers attributing an improvement to their wellbeing to involvement in Farmstrong
- **30%** unprompted recall of the Farmstrong brand.
- **40%** of farmers and growers engaged in one or more ways with Farmstrong initiatives.



“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 Ditchfield, Dairy farmer, Southland*





Founding Partners



Strategic Partner

