

Farmstrong Evaluation 2024

Report prepared for
Farmstrong

March 2025

Allan Wyllie MSoc Sci, PhD



Wyllie & Associates

www.wylliea.co.nz

Acknowledgements

**We wish to thank the persons
who so kindly participated in this evaluation.**



Wyllie & Associates

111a West End Road, Westmere, Auckland 1022

mob : 027 623 9999

email : allanwyllie2@gmail.com

web : www.wylliea.co.nz

CONTENTS

1 SUMMARY 3

2 INTRODUCTION 8

3 PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION..... 9

4 FARMSTRONG IMPACTS..... 15

5 BEST STRATEGIES MOVING FORWARD 20

6 CONCLUSIONS..... 40

REFERENCES 41

APPENDIX A: TABLES AND GRAPHS..... 42

APPENDIX B: FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO SUCCESSFUL DEVELOPMENT, REPORTED IN 2019 49

APPENDIX C: METHOD 50

1 SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

- The Farmstrong mission is to improve the wellbeing of people working in farming and growing.
- This report addresses the following key evaluation questions:
 - How well has Farmstrong been implemented, particularly in the last five years (since the previous evaluation report)?
 - What impacts has it had?
 - What are the best strategies moving forward?
- This 2024 independent evaluation, after nine years of the programme, has been timed to inform the development of Farmstrong's 2025 – 2030 strategy and business cases for funding to support its implementation.
- The evaluation has been informed by the following (see Appendix C for more details):
 - Ten annual random sample surveys of 450 farmers/growers, mostly owners, undertaken by Kantar. In 2024 a survey of 710 was also undertaken by Research First which provided a random sample with all types of farmer/growers/workers. (This company will be used for the future monitoring).
 - ACC Return on Investment modelling analyses.
 - Phone interviews with 36 stakeholders: 14 key stakeholders (primarily with all members of the Farmstrong Governance Group and the Operational Team); 7 with farmer supporters; 6 with internal FMG supporters; and 9 with representatives from community stakeholder groups.
 - An online survey completed by 53 other stakeholders. These stakeholders were selected by the Farmstrong team as people who were likely to be able to provide informed answers to the questions.
 - Research with Māori farmers/growers, informed by 64 Māori farmers/growers/farm workers who participated in the 2024 Research First Farmstrong monitor survey and 10 of these who also agreed to follow-up qualitative phone interviews. The qualitative research and all the reporting were undertaken by Māori researcher Brendon Smith of Maarama Consulting.
 - Qualitative phone interviews with 19 farmers who had attributed improvements to Farmstrong in the 2024 Kantar Farmstrong survey, to examine possible flow-on benefits for others.

KEY FINDINGS

- Farmstrong is delivering a high level of value to farmers in New Zealand, relative to the level of resourcing.
- Insights from those interviewed in the evaluation identify the following as being key contributors to Farmstrong's results: farmers as the face of the programme sharing their stories, repeated exposure to the key messages, quality of the governance and operational teams, success in securing the needed funding and pro bono support, the collaborative approach taken, the use of research, science and robust monitoring of results.
- The Farmstrong programme works. Over the current five-year strategy (2020 – 2025) between 17 – 22% of surveyed farmers and growers attributed an improvement in their wellbeing to their involvement with Farmstrong (this was between 64 – 73% of those who had ever engaged with Farmstrong and equated with 16,000 – 21,000 each year)¹.
- Opportunities have been identified for increasing impacts over the next five years, which are reflected in the recommendations which follow.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- The strategy for the next five years should build on the successes of the current strategy
- Farmstrong should continue to address and build on strategies to address what is not working so well
- Focus on developing strategies which increase Farmstrong impacts for farm workers/shepherds, Māori and Filipinos
- Identify cost-effective strategies to increase engagement with Horticulture
- Continue to increase the focus on providing practical tools that farmers can use to improve their mental skills and wellbeing habits
- Continue to explore further funding options, including with commercial entities
- Develop priorities and strategies to ensure a manageable workload for the operational team
- Increase community engagement by prioritising the following key groups and working with them in a more sustainable way: Farmstrong farmer and grower supporters/champions, FMG supporters, and Rural Support Trusts
- Continue to seek effective partnerships with industry groups
- Undertake research to identify how best to engage with farm workers and Filipinos
- Continue with Sam Whitelock as the high profile ambassador, but be open to the option of ambassadors who would assist with reaching key groups

¹ These figures were based on the 96,120 farmers and farm workers reported in the most recent MPI report, based on 2019 Statistics NZ data.

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Decide what proportion of resources go to comedy nights or other social events**
- **Consider whether there are further opportunities to increase the impact of Farmstrong messaging and tools with those attending social events**
- **Consider research with those who are engaging with Farmstrong but not attributing any improvements**
- **Develop a strategy to ensure responses to extreme events can be addressed without overloading the team and still maintaining the rest of the Farmstrong operations to an adequate level**
- **Identify and implement an easy way of collecting contact details from those who attend Farmstrong events**
- **Consider options for increasing farmer clarity regarding the roles of Farmstrong and RST**
- **Monitor perceptions of the FMG brand in relation to Farmstrong**
- **Maximise use of the website**
- **Build farmer awareness and understanding of the dual focus on building wellbeing and getting through tougher times such as extreme weather events**
- **Encourage those who have engaged with Farmstrong to tell others about it, particularly employers to their workers**
- **Review the use of terms (such as ambassador, supporter) used by those representing Farmstrong**

OTHER FINDINGS

Performance to date

1. Farmstrong's increased use of communications and community channels is consistent with the Farmstrong research reporting greater impacts from those who engage via five or more channels.
2. Awareness of the Farmstrong brand has built to 36% unprompted and 81% prompted awareness by 2024.
3. The proportion who had ever engaged has ranged between 25 – 36% farmers and growers over the last five years.
4. As well as the annual monitor data measuring the impacts of Farmstrong on farmers and growers, in further research completed as part of the evaluation some farmers and stakeholders have been able to report how their improvements due to Farmstrong are having a positive impact on others in their households, farms and the wider community.
5. These findings build on similar themes from the 2019 evaluation that were found to be contributing to the successful implementation of Farmstrong in its first four years.

6. Results from the ACC Farmstrong Return on Investment model for expected claims avoided show that Farmstrong has significantly exceeded ACC's annual expectations on ROI.
7. In interviews there was a widespread perception of a much-improved farmer willingness and openness to discuss mental health and wellbeing.
8. The current strategies have worked well to achieve the impacts to date, but there are opportunities to complement these with new strategies that will hopefully increase impacts.

Increasing Farmstrong impacts moving forward

9. Given levels of engagement (between 25 – 36%) and improvements attributed to Farmstrong (between 17 – 22% of all farmers/growers) have been at relatively similar levels for the last five years, there would be value in prioritising strategies that are likely to increase engagement and impacts.
10. Now that awareness is well established, it is timely to put more focus on providing tools that farmers can use to impact their thinking and behaviours, which will hopefully result in higher levels of reported impacts.
11. Stakeholders were supportive of Farmstrong having 'a greater focus on providing farmers/growers with ways to improve their mental skills'; 89% 'strongly' agreed in the online survey.
12. If farmers are experiencing more impacts, this could well increase the likelihood of them recommending Farmstrong to others, thereby building engagement levels.
13. 'Increasing the number of farmers who are able to share Farmstrong messages and give talks at local community events' was rated 'high' priority by 75% of stakeholders.
14. The Farmstrong research has identified the following channels are the most likely to be associated with impacts, once a farmer has engaged with them: (Farmstrong workshop or webinar, Another sort of event in local community, and Farmstrong website), Therefore more focus on these channels should also increase impacts.
15. The Farmstrong research with Māori found that Māori farmers often have a strong identity as a 'farmer'. What this means is that messaging and channels that target farmers in general are also likely to resonate with many Māori farmers.
16. The rate of conversion of unprompted awareness into improvements attributed to Farmstrong by Māori was generally at a similar level to the total sample. This indicates that the current approaches are working relatively well with this audience, once they know about Farmstrong.
17. Impact within the horticulture sector is currently relatively low compared to other sectors. However, with the exception of Kiwifruit, efforts to work with this sector have been challenging, as there are a large number of sub-sector groups, mostly small, that each have to be engaged with.
18. Farmstrong is playing an important role in supporting farmer wellbeing within communities via events such as comedy nights. Stakeholders gave 'Supporting rural comedy shows or other social events' a mid-level priority rating, with 40% 'high' priority and another 40% 'medium' priority.

Operational workstream areas

19. Operational workload is a key issue that needs to be addressed, particularly with regard to community engagement. Given Farmstrong has limited capacity, decisions on what operational strategies to adopt should in most cases be based on what will make the greatest contribution to increasing the impacts in a cost and resource effective manner.
20. Options to address this need to be considered, including increasing utilisation of personnel beyond the Farmstrong operational team such as Farmer supporters, FMG supporters, RST and other industry and community-based stakeholder groups.
21. The challenge with all of these is to ensure they reduce rather than increase the load on the operational team.
22. 'Collaborating with other farming organisations and rural stakeholders' was given the highest priority rating by stakeholders (81% said it should be 'high' priority and 17% 'medium' priority).
23. There would appear to be good support within FMG for greater engagement of FMG employees with Farmstrong.
24. The four RSTs interviewed reported working very closely with FMG regional personnel, so they along with RST personnel could be getting the Farmstrong resources and messages out into those communities.
25. There was a widespread perception that Sam Whitelock makes a real difference for Farmstrong and almost all thought he should continue. There was no strong desire to see further ambassadors at the level of Sam.

2 INTRODUCTION

About Farmstrong

- Mission: Improve the wellbeing of people working in farming and growing
- Vision: A rural New Zealand that adapts and thrives in a constantly changing world
- Call to action: “Find out what works for you then lock it in.”

Key messages

- The most important asset on any farm is the farmer, their family and the farming workforce.
- Farmstrong is about wellness, not illness. Investing in your wellbeing helps you through the ups and downs of farming. It will also mean you’re better placed to look after your family, your team and it’s good for business.
- Farmstrong shares practical information and tools, to support small but important habits that help you live well to farm well.

Ways in which farmers/growers engage with Farmstrong

- Attending workshops, webinars, visiting Farmstrong at fielddays 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, Podcasts and in Farmers Weekly and other print and online media

Method

- The components that contributed to this evaluation report have been noted in the Summary section above. More detail on the evaluation methodology is provided in Appendix C.

Reporting

- Graphs and tables providing more detail on the findings that have informed this evaluation are included in Appendix A.
- ‘Farmers/growers’ is sometimes reduced to ‘Farmers’ in the reporting.

3 PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

- The programme has continued to benefit from the strong foundations which were established at the beginning, as reported in the 2019 evaluation report. These are included as Appendix B.
- The key stakeholders interviewed were generally very pleased and impressed with the programme implementation.
- More than three quarters (77%) of the stakeholders in the online survey rated Farmstrong's overall performance as doing 'very well' and most of the remainder rated it as doing 'quite well'.
- Areas where close to three quarters of stakeholders rated Farmstrong as doing very well included; providing tools and resources that enable people to improve their wellbeing (74%), building awareness of the Farmstrong brand (72%), and increasing farmer willingness to discuss and improve their wellbeing (70%).
- Refer to Graph 1 in Appendix A for other ratings on how well Farmstrong is doing.

Key factors contributing to the ongoing effectiveness of the programme implementation

The success of the theory of change model adopted

- The initial Farmstrong team developed a theory of change model which has been validated by the Farmstrong research findings. This should continue to be the basis of the strategy for the next five years.
- The theory of behaviour change that the Farmstrong initiative adopted from the beginning was based on Bandura's social-cognitive theory of behaviour (Bandura, 1986).
- The features of the theory of behaviour change adopted were:
 - Partnership - between farmers and supporters of change
 - Ownership – farmers have to own the change process
 - Small steps – understanding the stage the person is at on the change cycle (persistence, as it takes time)
 - Peer support (particularly from other farmers who they trust, have credibility and tenure)
 - Role modelling and storytelling
- This has been refined into three key principles, informed by social and wellbeing science:
 - Small mental wellbeing changes in individuals across large populations will lead to significant changes in overall health improvement and injury reduction
 - Mental wellbeing and mental strengths can be increased through a range of skills that can be easily learned
 - People are motivated to learn health promoting skills by seeing those skills in other people like them, i.e., with whom they share a social identity.
- Another feature of the Farmstrong approach has been its strength-based approach, reinforcing farmers/grower capacity for resilience.

- The Farmstrong research findings, both quantitative and qualitative, have validated the strategies which Farmstrong has adopted based on its theory of change.
- The annual surveys show the extent of the impacts the programme has achieved.
- From Farmstrong qualitative research (Wyllie, 2021) it has become very clear that farmers take notice of other farmers sharing their stories.
 - *'If you can get farmers to trust you, they will take all the information they can get.... Farmers trust other farmers' (Farmer Supporter)*
- This qualitative research has also been able to identify the ways in which Farmstrong brings about changes for farmers/growers. The primary way is through repeated exposure to the key messages. Other contributors were: providing communications which resonate with farmers; and farmers seeing the value in what is being communicated.
- A key part of the Farmstrong approach has been the use of multiple channels providing opportunities for engagement with Farmstrong. The Farmstrong survey research has shown impacts increase more markedly with five plus different forms of engagement (Wyllie, 2024).
- Farmstrong has continued to stay up to date with the research on mental wellbeing and how to achieve behaviour change, which has grown at an exponential rate. Learnings from this have been incorporated into the Farmstrong initiatives. This is reflected in the increasing focus on providing farmers/growers with skills to improve their mindsets and ways of thinking, so they are better able to cope with the ups and downs of farming.

The support from the funders

- The length and extent of funding and support from FMG and ACC has been key to enable the level of effectiveness Farmstrong has achieved. In addition to direct funding, the pro-bono and other support from FMG, including FMG employee support at a community level has been critical.
- The Programme Director noted that not only do FMG provide a large range of pro-bono services (including social media, legal, finance, IT, management, reporting data, and education/learning), but what they do provide is *'top quality'*. Plus they also house the Farmstrong team.
- Other forms of FMG support include: helping Farmstrong with useful connections, contributing extra funding for Farmstrong to join FMG at fielddays, one page for Farmstrong on the FMG calendar which goes to 14,000 households, updated graphics on 250 FMG cars to include the support of Farmstrong, plus the FMG ad agency bcg2 provides 100 hours of free work for Farmstrong annually as a give-back.

The quality of the governance

- The quality of the governance has been a feature throughout.
- Having the CEs of FMG and MHF, and other senior high calibre FMG personnel, plus personnel from ACC with a strong commitment to the programme has been key.

The quality, passion and commitment of the operational team

- The key stakeholders who were familiar with the work the operational team was doing were high in praise for their passion and commitment to Farmstrong, level and quality of their outputs and how well they worked together as a team.
 - *'Very ambitious... this being a positive attribute. The team is very good at finding opportunities where putting in 20% effort returns 80% gains' (Key stakeholder)*
- Other stakeholders also spoke very positively about the team.
 - *'Because there's such good people involved it's easy to want to connect with it.' (Farmer supporter)*
 - *'Lean, mean organisation having a big impact'. (Farmer supporter)*
 - *'Gerard and Krissy are great to work with... open and frank.' (Grower group)*
 - *'Farmstrong make things happen and pretty quick.... Really amazing with people... make doing an interview so easy. They have such a lovely way with people – you get welcomed in.' (Farmer supporter)*

On-going development

- Farmstrong has continued to evolve over the last five years, which is important in terms of efforts to maintain and increase reach and impacts over the nine-year period since launching.
- These developments include the greater focus on community engagement, including the Farmer and FMG supporter groups; the NZME contract which provides reach via Jamie MacKay's The Country radio show plus radio stations and some newspapers; extending to include a focus on getting through (in response to the major weather events, that appear to be an ongoing feature of farming), which includes a book and a new website; developing stronger relationships with other organisations that can provide reach for the Farmstrong resources and messages; podcasts and the Farmstrong books.
- The creation of a community engagement role in the team has been key to increasing the diversity of audiences Farmstrong is able to reach with its limited resources.
- Several, including the two ACC representatives, felt that the growing focus on working at the local level was a key strength.
 - *'When you get amongst the community it's really powerful'. (Farmer supporter)*
- Engagement with the website has been increased from a very low two percent four years ago to now having the second highest level for prevalence of engagement (16%), just behind Farmers Weekly (17%). This is an important change, as farmers/growers are clearly going there for the more extensive high quality content that it provides, given many of the other communication strategies provide touchpoints more so than detailed messages.
 - *'I sometimes go to the website when things get on top of me... I find it uplifting... I realise things are not that bad.' (Farmer supporter)*
- Farmstrong has recently developed fortnightly Toolbox Tips which aim to get out one idea of a concrete thing that people can do. They have created a data base of approximately 90 contacts who have the potential to on-share it with their networks. High open rates were being achieved.

- Farmstrong have also developed toolkits for those setting up events, fundraising or comedy shows.

Increased partnerships

- Partnership with community organisations who have ownership of the projects is extending Farmstrong reach, via the membership and engagement in local communities these other organisations provide.
- The relationship with Rural Support Trust (RST) has been greatly strengthened, with there now being working relationships with about two thirds of the regions. RST were the key partners Farmstrong worked with to undertake 16 community events as part of the Cyclone Recovery.
- Other community organisations Farmstrong has been working with include REAP (Rural Education Activities Programmes), Neighbourhood Watch, Agri-Women's Development Trust (AWDT) and Rural Women.

Other

- Also important is the Farmstrong research and evaluation making available data to show how well Farmstrong is working. Stakeholders noted that this evidence gives the programme greater credibility among funders, farmers and other stakeholders.
- The calibre of people Farmstrong has got involved from the farming community. *'It shows they're doing well - these people wouldn't participate otherwise'.*

Things not working so well with programme implementation

- The level of work that the operational team are taking on is not sustainable.
- Horticulture consists of a large number of sub-sectors, which makes it very time consuming to work with much of this sector.
- It has been difficult to sustain momentum with some organisations in the farming sector when key people who have collaborated with Farmstrong leave that organisation.
- At senior levels in some organisations who are key players in the sector, proactive approaches to improving farmer and grower wellbeing are not prioritised at the same level as other business priorities, which has made it difficult to get meaningful and sustained engagement.

What stakeholders get out of their involvement with Farmstrong

FMG

- FMG employees at governance, operational and supporter levels were clear that Farmstrong fits well with their vision and purpose as an organisation.
 - *'Bringing it [FMG's vision and purpose] to life... farmers like to see that FMG are putting money into this worthwhile rural initiative'.*

- The Farmstrong messaging was also perceived to be benefiting FMG personnel.
 - *'The knowledge aspect, such as the 5 ways of wellbeing, provides benefits for [FMG] employees.'*
 - *'It helps the team think about wellbeing in general – their own, their families, their clients.'*
- Another felt it *'provides alignment with the emotional state of farmers.... Emotions are important in advertising'*.
- When FMG employees were asked if FMG's involvement had a business benefit for FMG, there were mixed feelings as to whether FMG's support of Farmstrong would contribute to farmers becoming a FMG client.
 - *'Farmstrong events do create a platform of farmers that interact with staff, but that is not the driver for FMG doing it'.*
 - *'One of a number of things that would attract clients and retain clients'*
 - *'[FMG involvement at community events provides] extra touch points for potential clients. Get a lot of: "Great thing you guys are involved with Farmstrong"'*.

ACC

- Benefits ACC mentioned from their involvement with Farmstrong included:
 - Cost savings from reduced injuries and reduced time in care and recovery
 - Benefits of being associated with the success of the Farmstrong initiative
 - Farmstrong reach into and engagement with local communities, where ACC cannot reach
 - On-going development of a research/knowledge base of how to run an effective programme, which can be utilised by other programmes
 - Research and information that FMG and MHF are able to contribute to ACC
 - Demonstrating the successful government and private sector relationship, investment and governance model, that could be utilised by other programmes

Mental Health Foundation

- A Mental Health Foundation representative noted that their involvement with Farmstrong advanced their mission, *'reaching a portion of NZ (i.e. farmers and growers) and having a demonstrable positive impact on their wellbeing; that contributes to the core of what MHF exist for'*. Farmstrong had also established a demonstration of how effective mental health promotion can be if resourced and delivered in the right way. He also mentioned about the benefits of being able to use the Farmstrong approach with the construction industry initiatives which the Foundation has been funded to manage. He also mentioned that the Foundation had learned a lot about rural communities from FMG.

Farmer Supporters

- Some of the supporters who were doing Farmstrong presentations in the community reported that the feedback from persons attending left them (the farmer supporters) with a good feeling.
 - *'It's given me a real sense of purpose. I feel like I'm making a difference to the industry and farmers.'*

4 FARMSTRONG IMPACTS

Impacts to date from annual monitoring

- Over the current five-year strategy (2020 – 2025) between 17 – 22% of the farmers and growers attributed an improvement in their wellbeing to their involvement with Farmstrong (this was between 64 – 73% of those who had ever engaged with Farmstrong and equated with 16,000 – 21,000 each year)².
- Of this number 9,600 – 12,500 attributed 'moderate' or 'large' improvements.
- Sharemilkers/contract milkers (30% attribution) and managers (22%) were attributing higher levels of improvements to Farmstrong than were owners (14%), while farm workers/shepherds were at a similar level to owners (15%), although none of these differences were statistically significant because of the smaller non-farm-owner sub-sample sizes.
- Those aged under 45 years had significantly higher engagement and attribution levels, but lower awareness of the Sam Whitelock association with Farmstrong.
- Māori (16% attribution) and Filipino (15%)³ were both attributing similar levels of improvements to Farmstrong as NZ Europeans (17%), despite NZ Europeans having higher awareness and engagement levels.
- There were an estimated 28,000 farmers/growers/workers who had ever engaged and 24,000 in the 12 month period July 2023 – June 2024.
- Unprompted awareness of Farmstrong has continued to increase over time, with a particularly large increase in 2024 from 24% to 36%, which was probably in part due to an increase in media reach and referring to the Farmstrong name in more media communications (Graph 4).
- Total Farmstrong awareness has been at high levels of between 77 – 82% for some time now.
- Engagement levels have been reasonably consistent since 2018 with the proportion who have ever engaged ranging between 25 – 36% (24,000 – 34,600) of farmers and growers (Graph 3).

Impacts on reducing farmer injury

- Farmstrong research has been able to illustrate a link between farmer/grower wellbeing and injuries. In a 2019 survey of recently injured farmers (Wyllie, 2019), almost a quarter (24%) reported that aspects of diminished wellbeing were a 'major' contributor to their injury. These injuries accounted for 30 percent of the farmer injury compensation costs.
- Results from the ACC Farmstrong Return on Investment model, for expected claims avoided for the four year period 2020 – 2024, have shown that Farmstrong has exceeded ACC's expected ROI by over seven times the number of expected claims avoided. ACC expected Farmstrong to provide 1,105 claims saved during this period, and Farmstrong achieved 7,717 claims saved. These results are based on ACC modelling, that compares agriculture with a peer group from a range of industry groups who have a similar injury profile, but don't have a wellbeing programme.

² These figures were based on the 96,120 farmers and farm workers reported in the most recent MPI report, based on 2019 Statistics NZ data.

³ The Filipino data needs to be interpreted with caution because of the small sub-sample size.

Stakeholder perceptions of impacts

Openness to wellbeing messages

- There was a widespread perception of a much improved farmer willingness and openness to discussing mental health and wellbeing issues. Some noted that others had also contributed to this, along with Farmstrong.
 - *'When I began in 2017 it was very hard to talk about wellbeing, I felt like a leper, but now people are seeking out information.'* (Community stakeholder)
 - *'You get people talking about it that wouldn't normally, especially in localised groups of people, they're so much more open about the tough stuff.... It's really hitting the boomer group – traditionally they've been the hardest group to get to open up.'* (Farmer supporter)
- One reported that this change was most prevalent among the younger people:
 - *'Younger people will not stay in the job if their wellbeing is not being addressed.'* (FMG supporter)

Impacts on self, reported by farmers

- The 2021 qualitative study (Wyllie, 2021) provided a lot of detail on how Farmstrong was impacting farmers. The 2024 qualitative study with farmers focussed more on how the improvements farmers were reporting impacted on others, as reported in a later section. However, the following are some examples from this 2024 study of impacts on the farmers themselves.
 - *'If I'm having problems I now go and talk to someone – I let family and friends know.... Farmstrong lets us know what to do if we are having negative thoughts or under pressure.'*
 - Another farmer reported how Farmstrong *'got us to think outside the structure'*, which contributed to them employing a farm manager, and as a result *'a lot of the things Farmstrong promote then happened, such as spending more time with the family and getting more sleep.'*
 - *'I don't get too bogged down in the nitty gritty. I step back and take another look and go again.'*
 - A farmer who had engaged initially with Farmstrong at the beginning and got benefits at that point, reported later going through a down period and had been *'helped a lot'* by one of the Farmstrong farmer supporters.

Impacts on self, reported by stakeholders

- In the stakeholder survey, 25% reported that they had personally benefited 'a lot' from Farmstrong, while another 46% reported 'a moderate amount' and 19% 'a little'.
- One of the farmer supporters reported that Farmstrong '*was one of the things that saved my life*'. This person '*binged*' on a lot of the Farmstrong videos '*trying to understand what others were doing when struggling*'.
- Another farmer supporter reported that for one farmer the Coping Bottle concept was the '*penny dropping*' moment that led to him making changes. For yet another it was watching a Farmstrong video where a farmer reported getting out of the mentality that he had to work harder, and he remained successful. The viewer was impressed that '*He's a really successful farmer, and he's able to do those things*'.
- Another farmer stakeholder said that for him what made the difference was a video on the website on understanding stress and burnout. Prior to this he didn't understand why he was behaving the way he was with his young family and those around him.

Impacts on others, as reported by stakeholders

- '*It's pretty humbling some of the feedback I get afterwards [following a presentation]. Some of the people come up and share how much it resonates with them.... One [later] reported going to his doctor and breaking down in tears and pouring his heart out, after what I had said the night before.*' (Farmer supporter)
- One RST coordinator reported that every so often someone will thank them for giving them the Farmstrong book or brochure and people often reported that it started a conversation. This same RST coordinator reported explaining box breathing to someone and getting them to try it when he was with them, and a month later the wife reported that her husband was using it all the time and it was working to deal with his stress.
- '*At events people say they feel better talking to others going through similar things.*' (RST stakeholder)
- '*Rural communities like to know this [Farmstrong] is good and solid and it's there. They like stability, something constant is nice [after three years of storm damage]*' (REAP stakeholder)
- '*Where I am aware the client has been involved with Farmstrong there seems to be a resilience there that might not have been before – when compared back to the Christchurch earthquakes.*' (FMG supporter reporting his experience dealing with farmers during claimable events)
- '*Farmers will feel proud that Farmstrong is in Scotland... it goes to the heart of being kiwi, being on the world stage despite being such a small country.*' (FMG supporter)

Reported flow-on impacts

All but six percent of stakeholders completing the online survey were aware of others benefiting from the changes they (the stakeholders) had made as a result of Farmstrong. Two thirds reported benefits to 'others in the community', half to their wife/husband/partner, 38%

to friends, 35% to children and 23% to farm employees (many of the participants were not farmers) (Graph 5).

- In the 2024 qualitative research with farmers who had reported Farmstrong contributing to improvements in their wellbeing as part of the annual survey, just over half were aware of impacts their improvements had had for others. It should be noted that those who agreed to an interview were highly skewed to those aged 65 years and over (47% of the sample) and their rate of reporting impacts on others was 16% lower than the combined other age groups.
- Examples of impacts on others which were reported are listed below. These come from both the survey participants and Farmstrong stakeholders.

Impacts on wife/husband/partner

- A male farmer who spent a lot of time on the farm with his wife reported that: *'We used to get a bit wound up [about the amount they had to deal with on and off the farm], but we now don't let it get corrosive to the relationship'*. From Farmstrong he had *'learnt to deal with what's in front of you'*.
- A farmer stakeholder reported that the Farmstrong improvements had enhanced his relationship with his wife, as he is now talking with her more and *'not bottling things up'* so much.
- *'Be there to be an ear for my wife – to talk things through.'* (farmer)
- Another farmer reported that having better work-life balance had *'definitely'* impacted his wife.
- *'More family time improves things.'* (farmer)

Impacts on farm employees

- As a result of Farmstrong one farmer supporter was prioritising the wellbeing of members of their team, including them getting sufficient time off the farm. This supporter also felt that Farmstrong resources had played an important role in getting an employee through a difficult time during covid.
- Another farmer reported that his employees were now more focussed on time off the farm, following his encouragement. He noted that *'they enjoy going and doing little camping trips with their kids'*. He had also passed on the Farmstrong book to them, which he had picked up at an event.
- A community group stakeholder had changed the roster on their farm, so that employees got appropriate time off and breaks. She aimed to make sure *'they can be people as well as farmers'* and to *'focus on their whole self'*. She also encouraged them to get to know their neighbours.
- *'You realise that they [the employees] are going to get to burnout, as they are quite progressive people'*. So this farmer *'promoted what a healthy pathway looked like'*. This same farmer reported that a lot of the workers come to her with their problems, which she now has time for because of changes they made that Farmstrong had contributed to.
- Another farmer reported that the Farmstrong impacts on him had contributed in terms of the topics they now discuss at the monthly team meetings.

Impacts on others

- *'I did reach out to a neighbour who was going through a tough time and it worked out quite well.'* (farmer)
- Another farmer reported having a discussion with a neighbour about how depressed he [the neighbour] was.
- One farmer supporter reported that he is *'so much happier and good to be around'*. All of his children had struggles with their mental health and he had been able to talk to them and help them with his knowledge. He also mentioned: *'It is amazing how many of my friends open up and talk about their struggles - this would never have happened before.'* He also has had all his brothers open up and share about their own struggles. *'We are now all very open and helping each other.'*
- *'Ripple effect... I now have a clearer and calmer head space... this has definitely had a positive effect on whanau... I am definitely not leaning on them so much, I can prioritise whanau more.'* (farmer supporter)
- A female farmer stakeholder reported that following her appearing in articles or events she has had people come up to her keen to open up. This was particularly the case for mums who were having challenges with motherhood and the transition to farming.

Key recommendations

- **The strategy for the next five years should build on the successes of the current strategy**
- **Farmstrong should continue to address and build on strategies to address what is not working so well**

5 BEST STRATEGIES MOVING FORWARD

5.1 BEST STRATEGIES FOR INCREASING IMPACTS

Overview

- Given levels of engagement and improvements attributed to Farmstrong have been at relatively similar levels for some years, the priority should be on strategies that are likely to increase impacts.
- Based on the survey findings reported above, there would appear to be good potential to increase Farmstrong impacts for farm workers/shepherds, Māori and Filipinos.
- Impact within the horticulture sector is relatively low compared to other sectors. With the exception of Kiwifruit, efforts to work with this sector have been challenging, as there are a large number of sub-sector groups, mostly small, that have to be engaged with. Working out cost-effective strategies for engaging with horticulture will be important.
- Now that awareness is well established, Farmstrong's more recent focus on providing tools that farmers can use to improve their mental skills and wellbeing habits, will hopefully result in higher levels of reported impacts.
- If farmers are experiencing more impacts, this could also increase the likelihood of them recommending Farmstrong to others, thereby building engagement levels as well.
- Stakeholders were supportive of Farmstrong having 'a greater focus on providing farmers/growers with ways to improve their mental skills'; 89% 'strongly' agreed in the online survey.
- Strategies have been identified for strengthening community level engagement, but these need to be developed in a way that the small Farmstrong operational team can manage.
- Increased utilisation of FMG regional employees would seem to offer a good opportunity to greatly increase the Farmstrong presence in rural communities, given that 58% of farmers are FMG clients, FMG make approximately 17,000 visits to farms each year and assist with approximately 800 community events (as reported by a FMG employee).
- Of the 16 FMG supporters who completed the online survey, all were sharing about Farmstrong at varying levels. Thirty-eight percent shared things about Farmstrong 'widely' and another 28% shared things about Farmstrong as part of the role they have. Another 22% shared with 'a few' people and 11% 'the occasional person'. These levels were similar to those reported by the total stakeholder group.
- While FMG employees will have minimal engagement with farm workers, they may be able to encourage those they are meeting with to pass on Farmstrong resources to their workers. Use of this relatively new channel may also assist in growing the impact among farm owners and managers. While most will already be aware of Farmstrong, it will add another touchpoint to reinforce the Farmstrong messages.
- Increasing collaborative initiatives with other organisations is also a good opportunity to increase reach into rural communities and increase engagement with Farmstrong and thereby

increase impacts. Similar to FMG, increased collaboration with Rural Support Trusts within geographic communities is an opportunity. This is addressed more in section 5.3.

- However, these collaborative ventures do increase the risk that farmers will not perceive some of these to be Farmstrong initiatives, which will be reflected in reported engagement levels with Farmstrong and impacts. There is already some lack of clarity in farmer perceptions of the difference between what Farmstrong and Rural Support Trust each provide.
- The current strategies have worked well to achieve the impacts to date and will need to be retained to at least maintain the current level of impacts. New strategies should be designed to supplement the existing strategies, rather than replacing them.
 - *'There are some really solid, realistic and achievable things you can use [on the website]' (Farmer Supporter)*
- Given Farmstrong has limited capacity, decisions on what operational strategies to adopt should in most cases be based on what will make the greatest contribution to increasing the impacts in a cost-effective manner.
- Farmstrong is also playing an important role in supporting farmer wellbeing within communities via the comedy nights and other social events. Decisions need to be made as to what proportion of resources go to this, and whether there are opportunities to increase the impact of Farmstrong messages and tools with those attending social events.
- Stakeholders gave 'Supporting rural comedy shows or other social events' a mid-level priority rating, with 40% 'high' priority and another 40% 'medium' priority.
 - *'It is sad that rural communities are dying.... Farmstrong has got a role helping those communities get together.'* (Farmer Supporter)

Impacting more farm workers

- There were 23,901 farm workers reported in the 2023 Census, which accounted for 28% of the total farmer/worker workforce. Therefore improving impacts with this group has the potential to improve the wellbeing of a lot of farm workers, many of whom will be young and will hopefully benefit from this for the rest of their lives.
- The primary need is to build more awareness of Farmstrong among this group. It is not just a case of targeting younger people, as the under 45 year olds had higher unprompted awareness (37%) than farm workers (25%), even though a lot of farm workers will be in this under 45 age group.
- The rate of conversion of unprompted awareness into improvements attributed to Farmstrong⁴ is at a higher level for farm workers than for the total sample and a similar level to under 45 year olds.⁵ This indicates that the current resources are working relatively well with this audience, once they know about the programme.
- Strategies for reaching farm workers are discussed in the Communications and Marketing section.

⁴ Of those who had unprompted awareness, this is the percentage who attributed improvements.

⁵ These results are indicative as none of these differences are statistically significant, because of the small sub-sample sizes.

Impacting more Māori farmers/growers/farm workers

- There were 11,127 Māori farmers/farm workers in the 2023 Census, of whom 6,354 were farmers and 4,773 farm workers. Māori accounted for 11% of the farmers and 20% of the farm workers.
- The primary need is to build more awareness of Farmstrong among Māori.
- The rate of conversion of unprompted awareness into improvements attributed to Farmstrong by Māori was generally at a similar level to the total sample. This indicates that the current resources are working relatively well with this audience, once they know about the programme.
- Strategies for reaching more Māori are discussed in the Communications and Marketing section.

Impacting more Filipino farmers/growers/farm workers

- There were 2,961 Filipino farmers/farm workers in the 2023 Census, of whom 2,031 were farmers and 930 farm workers. Filipinos accounted for 3.4% of the farmers and 3.9% of the farm workers.
- The first step would be undertaking some qualitative research with this group, to identify the most effective ways of informing them about Farmstrong.
- Although Filipinos are the largest minority group in the workforce, they are still a relatively small proportion, which needs to be considered when prioritising strategic directions in relation to available resources.

Other options for consideration

Horticulture

- As noted above, efforts to work with horticulture have been challenging. There is a need to find a cost-effective way of addressing this.
- One of the stakeholders who had worked with Farmstrong and had experience across this sector was willing to work more with Farmstrong to assist in getting wider uptake across horticulture.
- A Kiwifruit stakeholder appreciated the past Farmstrong '*concentration on kiwifruit*', which included the book, and would like it to stay. He would be keen to work on longer term planning with Farmstrong. He did add that communications needed to be tailored to appeal to kiwifruit growers: '*The worst thing a grower wants to read about is a farmer*'.

Other ethnic groups

- The size of other minority ethnic groups are probably not large enough to justify any specific Farmstrong focus at this point in time. In the 2023 Census Pasifika accounted for 1.4% of the

farmers and 4.9% of the farm workers, Indian/Sri Lankans⁶ were 1.5% of the farmers and 3.2% of the farm workers, and Chinese were 0.4% of the farmers and 1.1% of the farm workers.

Those engaging but not attributing improvements

- There could be value in undertaking some research with those who have engaged with Farmstrong but are not attributing any improvements to Farmstrong, to see if Farmstrong could work more effectively with them. Once again, a decision on this needs to take into account making the most effective use of the limited Farmstrong resources.

Key recommendations

- **Focus on developing strategies which increase Farmstrong impacts for farm workers/shepherds, Māori and Filipinos**
- **Identify cost-effective strategies to increase engagement with Horticulture**
- **Continue to increase the focus on providing tools that farmers can use to improve their mental skills and wellbeing habits**

Other recommendations

- **Decide what proportion of resources go to comedy nights or other social event**
- **Consider whether there are further opportunities to increase the impact of Farmstrong messaging and tools with those attending social events**
- **Consider research with those who are engaging with Farmstrong but not attributing any improvements**

⁶ Most were Indian

5.2 GOVERNANCE

The Governance Group is reviewing the structure of Farmstrong, including the option of making Farmstrong a charitable trust, which would seem to provide the programme with a number of benefits, particularly in centralising its funding into one system that will create more efficient financial reporting and budget forecasting. Currently Farmstrong funding sits across both FMG and MHF.

Funding

- Farmstrong's current ACC funding ends in mid-2025 and a business case will be submitted for further funding to ACC in early 2025. Securing an ongoing strategic partnership with ACC will be important for Farmstrong's future funding needs. FMG received support from their board in late 2024 for FMG's continued support and investment in Farmstrong.
- It is also timely that other sources of funding are explored, including the option of having commercial entities becoming co-funders/strategic partners, and other one-off funding for specific pieces of work similar to the funding received for Getting Through resources and events from MPI and Te Whatu Ora.
- The key Farmstrong stakeholders interviewed (primarily from the governance and operational teams) were generally supportive of having commercial entities as co-funders/strategic partners, if there was the right principled approach and motivation for engaging.
- Financial partnership with rural industry groups was an option that some key stakeholders were keen to advance, which would also seem to be appropriate.
- As noted by some stakeholders, consideration has to be given to how successfully any new parties are likely to fit into the Governance Group.
- Given the current level of fundraising and donations that have been received with very little attempt to obtain them, it would seem that a more concerted fundraising effort may well make a useful contribution to Farmstrong funding.
 - *'People are prepared to give more than you might expect [at fundraising auction/raffle].... Farmers like giving back to organisations investing in their community.'*

Key recommendations

- **Continue to explore further funding options, including with commercial entities**

5.3 OPERATIONAL

Overview

- Workload is a key issue that needs to be addressed, particularly with regard to community engagement.
- Farmstrong needs to be reaching as many people as possible in a manner that is manageable in terms of the workload on the team, unless further capacity is made available.
- The best strategy would appear to be prioritising key groups and working with them in a more sustainable way so that they are increasingly delivering Farmstrong, with support from the Farmstrong operational team. Groups to prioritise are: Farmer and grower supporters/champions, FMG supporters, and RSTs.
- Given the limited capacity of the Farmstrong team, careful consideration needs to be given to what other industry and community based stakeholder groups are prioritised. There are good levels of community support for Farmstrong, but more clarity is needed from Farmstrong on what they are able to provide these groups, and on what these groups can contribute to Farmstrong.
- It would be useful for the Farmstrong operational team to review the hours which go into different components of their work, and identify which could be at least in part handed over to other paid or pro bono support, or given reduced priority. This analysis should extend to any options for changes in strategy.
- Extreme weather events are likely to become even more prevalent. Farmstrong needs to have a strategy to ensure these events can be addressed without overloading the team and still maintaining the rest of the Farmstrong operations to an adequate level. Apart from making resources available, could Farmstrong leave most of the responsibility for addressing wellbeing issues during extreme weather events with RST in regions where there is an effective RST operating with a good relationship with Farmstrong?

Extending reach of Farmstrong resources

- The current strategy of getting other organisations to pass the Toolbox Tips on to their membership is a good strategy, but other options also need to be considered to increase reach.
- There have been some attempts to extend the contact list. An easy way of collecting contact details from those who attend Farmstrong events needs to be found e.g. use of technology solutions such as QR code sign-up at events.
- One option could be to use various communication options to invite farmers and farm workers to send in their email addresses if they want to be sent regular Farmstrong information. Options for the invitations could include an advertisement in Farmers Weekly, or messaging on Facebook and other social media channels. Trialling different options will identify which ones are most effective. These invitations would also be an opportunity to promote the Toolbox Tips, so that people are more aware of them and what they offer.
- One RST stakeholder was not currently on-sharing any Farmstrong information to their data base of about 1100 who they send a monthly newsletter, but they felt this would be a good direction to take. Prioritising collaboration with RST's would increase likelihood that more RST's will regularly on-share Farmstrong content.

- Other stakeholders were not on-sending to a membership list, but were using other approaches. One RST stakeholder advised their team of facilitators to sign up for the Toolbox Tips and reported that she might forward particularly relevant articles to the right people. A grower group stakeholder would sometimes include articles from Farmstrong in their weekly newsletter, which reached 3000 persons, being the largest reach of any publication in their sector. He was willing to do this because Farmstrong had experts on the subject matter.

Engagement with communities

- More tangible ways to support those who do make contact and want some form of Farmstrong engagement in their communities are needed. Farmstrong's lead in community engagement felt there was a real need to focus on packaging of content for different audiences so that it is easily available and accessible. She noted that the work underway with Farmstrong supporters/champions would assist, if there were people available who were able to go and speak about Farmstrong.

Farmer supporters

- Farmer supporters are a key strategy for providing a face for Farmstrong at community events. Their impact is also obviously greatly enhanced if they are sufficiently supported to be able to speak on behalf of Farmstrong. The amount of input required from the Farmstrong team to get presenters up to a necessary standard needs to be taken into consideration. Might there be options where some of the more skilled members of this team take on mentoring roles with others?
- As well as responding to community requests for Farmstrong speakers, the Farmstrong supporters could proactively seek to do presentations at local farm discussion groups and other events.
- 'Increasing the number of farmers who are able to share Farmstrong messages and give talks at local community events' was rated 'high' priority by 75% of stakeholders.
- The current farmer supporter team meetings for this group were appreciated.
 - *'It provides an opportunity for celebration within the group... there has been a tendency for farmers to get dragged down lately.'*
 - *'Just getting a little extra out of Farmstrong – that next level.'*
- Some mentioned that it would be desirable to have a face-to-face meeting, to meet everyone in person.
- Another saw these meetings as an opportunity for the group to consider some new initiatives that could be rolled out in regions and possibly nationally.
- One mentioned appreciating being part of the group's online chat.

FMG supporters/ partnership with FMG

- The FMG supporters are playing an important role, assisting Farmstrong with their knowledge of local communities, identifying suitable persons for sharing their stories and providing links to stakeholders in other national organisations.
- There are opportunities to improve the support Farmstrong receives from FMG personnel, but this has to be weighed up against the time required to provide sufficient training and support for this to happen.
- There would appear to be good support within FMG for greater engagement of FMG employees with Farmstrong. Almost all (94%) the FMG supporters in the online survey would like to see FMG employees donating their time and expertise to support Farmstrong over the coming years. Forty-one percent thought Farmstrong should give 'high' priority to trying to increase the involvement of FMG personnel with Farmstrong initiatives, while 53% thought it should be given 'medium' priority.
 - *'I think that FMG need to provide more of a priority as we have the manpower and already have the relationships. Farmstrong should keep doing what they do best but with FMG providing the base. I am happy to help out whenever and wherever I can.'*
 - *'I would like to be more involved in local events. I would like to have more resources to provide FMG clients. I would like more training on speaking to clients about their wellbeing'.*
- While it is important to note that the FMG supporters are not typical of all FMG employees, the majority of the FMG online survey participants were currently promoting Farmstrong messages to FMG clients (53% 'a lot', 24% 'sometimes', and 18% 'occasionally').
- One of the FMG regional managers commented that *'we could probably do a lot more talking about Farmstrong with clients'*. She felt that, as a manager, it was necessary to talk with her team about Farmstrong on a regular basis, so that it stayed on their radar. She felt that *'head office'* encouraged them to share about Farmstrong with their clients.
- Forty-two percent of the FMG supporters thought there would be 'high' client awareness of FMG's involvement with Farmstrong and the other 59% thought 'some clients' would be aware.
- One FMG supporter felt that it was still the same group of FMG people supporting Farmstrong. He thought a lot of FMG employees would battle to describe what Farmstrong is all about. He suggested possible strategies to address this, such as an internal Farmstrong roadshow or a nationwide TeamTalk on Farmstrong. Another suggested all FMG regional personnel have a script they can use to at least be able to describe to clients what Farmstrong is. One believed that *'staff will talk about Farmstrong if they have got the confidence and skills.'* He felt that there were *'plenty of cases where Farmstrong could be raised as part of discussion'*.
- Another noted that the proposals that FMG prepare for new clients contain a written page about Farmstrong.
- A further stakeholder noted that *'regional teams take a lot of pride in having Farmstrong involvement'*. He wondered if within each regional office there should be designated FMG Farmstrong champions, or at least Farmstrong subject matter experts.

- The idea of regional FMG *'ambassadors'* was suggested by another FMG supporter, who saw them having a role in looking for opportunities to get Farmstrong involved in local events. He thought they would probably need a bit of training and would need to be people who were willing to do some of it in their own time, along with doing some in work time.
- There is a need to provide more clarity to FMG personnel as to what role Farmstrong would like them to take and how that happens. This would include Farmstrong making it clear that Farmstrong are their own small team, separate from FMG, and won't necessarily be available for all events and also that Sam Whitelock has only very limited availability for special events. This information needs to be communicated to the appropriate national office person and the next level down.
 - *'Make it easy for appropriate FMG employees to join events and get involved. Often it's not until the last minute that I'm aware of an event happening in my community and I'd love to be more active.'*
 - *'Give direction on what I should be doing.'*
 - *'Earlier/more comm's on what you are planning/doing for awareness and sharing.'*
 - *'What is FMG's role in making Farmstrong successful?'*
- It was noted by members of the Farmstrong operational team that in terms of enabling more FMG employees to contribute, the work involved in keeping the relationships strong across FMG could be a full time role. Therefore decisions need to be made about what level of input Farmstrong want to make into any further development of the FMG supporter group and utilisation of the wider FMG employee base, that fits within the Farmstrong team's capacity and priorities. As part of this process there could be discussions with FMG to see if there is any way they could assist further with training of their personnel on Farmstrong matters.
- It would appear that in some regions the RSTs have a very good working relationship with local FMG employees and making Farmstrong resources available is part of that, so in those regions at least there does not appear to be so much need for further Farmstrong input.
- The four RST co-ordinators interviewed all reported working closely with their local FMG office. One who reported having seen an increase in FMG involvement locally described them as *'having massive impact'*. This included using their networks to tell people the events were happening, which they were also helping deliver. The RST co-ordinator reported that FMG can target specific geographic areas with texts. These events were often in *'tiny communities'* and they were getting attendances between 110 and 170. *'People will come if they know about events'*. This co-ordinator also reported that FMG are *'around the table'* with their framework development. This same co-ordinator reported that they previously ran just dinner events, but the community had requested they include speakers to share their wellbeing journey.
- FMG have partnered with Triton hearing checks and Melanoma NZ to create mobile Health Hubs, where they take a van to local communities and have a BBQ in association with the checks. They often collaborate with other rural supporters like Farmlands. For FMG their involvement is *'completely about relationships, a platform for a good yarn'*. Currently Farmstrong are sometimes present, but Farmstrong needs to decide what priority they want to put on this and then formalise the relationship. One option would be to rely primarily on the FMG personnel to promote Farmstrong at these events.

Partnership with Rural Support Trust

- The collaboration with RSTs is providing valuable exposure of Farmstrong resources in local communities.
- Some RSTs are reaching large numbers of people. One reported that in their region following the cyclone they had run 135 events with 8,500 attendees. They delivered over 950 care packages, which included the Farmstrong book. Another noted that 11,500 came to events in their region last year. Their main focus with these events was to get people off the farm for social contact. They may bring in a speaker if information is needed, such as around the flooding.
- It was reported that each of the Trusts are operating differently, with variable levels of engagement with their communities.
- The four RST co-ordinators interviewed were all very positive about their working relationship with Farmstrong and were keen for this to continue. They really appreciated the availability of the resources and the fact that there was no cost to them.
 - *'Farmstrong will bend over backwards to help if they can.'*
 - *'Farmstrong is like a posh big brother – they have the resources, great website... we don't have the clever marketing skills.'*
- They were all clear that RST and Farmstrong each has their *'own lanes'*, that the relationship was *'symbiotic rather than working against each other'*.
- One RST co-ordinator and one FMG supporter thought some farmers were unclear about the difference between RST and Farmstrong and this was confirmed in the farmer qualitative interviews. The suggestion of providing something to assist in clarifying the difference, such as a podcast, would seem to be worthy of consideration.
- One noted that in their region the RST support extended beyond farmers to those who support farmers, such as bank managers, who are also impacted by the stresses farmers are experiencing.
- One RST co-ordinator noted that they had strong relationships with local organisations, such as Federated Farmers, Beef & Lamb, the local catchment group.

Partnership with industry organisations

- While efforts to date to achieve partnerships with rural industry organisations have not been very productive, there would seem to be a possibility to address this, as a key FMG employee has identified his willingness to support Farmstrong to more effectively engage with industry organisations. He has a high level of engagement with these organisations and he can help Farmstrong navigate getting in front of the right people.
- 'Collaborating with other farming organisations and rural stakeholders' received the highest priority rating of any of the items stakeholders were asked about (81% said it should be 'high' priority and 17% 'medium' priority).

- The same stakeholder referred to above also thought there needed to be greater efforts to minimise duplication between the work different industry groups are doing in the wellbeing arena.
- Some avoidance of duplication may assist Farmstrong in better utilising its limited resources, however duplication by different organisations can assist in reinforcing messages.
- *'Take a look at the foundations overseas and how they engage with businesses and grant partners. I think there's plenty of businesses that would love to give more to Farmstrong if they knew how.'*
- A dairy farmer noted that Fonterra requires farmers to complete a work 360 questionnaire with Dairy NZ. This farmer thought *'this could be a good place for Farmstrong to be part of that'*.

Key recommendations

- **Develop priorities and strategies to ensure a manageable workload for the operational team**
- **Increase community engagement by prioritising the following key groups and working with them in a more sustainable way: Farmstrong farmer and grower supporters/champions, FMG supporters, and Rural Support Trusts**
- **Continue to seek effective partnerships with industry groups**

Other recommendations

- **Develop a strategy to ensure responses to extreme events can be addressed without overloading the team and still maintaining the rest of the Farmstrong operations to an adequate level**
- **Identify and implement an easy way of collecting contact details from those who attend Farmstrong events**
- **Consider options for increasing farmer understanding of the different roles of Farmstrong and RST**

5.4 COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING

Overview

- Farmstrong has, rightly so, been focussing on using a range of communication channels and marketing strategies. Current and new options need to be reviewed in terms of:
 1. How likely are they to attract new people, particularly from segments that have been identified as having growth potential?
 2. To what extent will they contribute to keeping people engaged; retaining the existing users?
 3. To what extent will they contribute to impacts?
 4. What is the cost relative to numbers reached and impacted?
- It is difficult to draw firm conclusions due to the limited knowledge we have about how farmers do respond to the different channels and messages. However, it might be expected that given Farmstrong has now been present for almost 10 years, strategies which deliver tools which assist farmers to improve their mental skills, as with the Toolbox Tips, workshops and online modules, are likely to contribute to items 2 and 3 above. So then the question is, what is the best way to get these to the widest audience?
- In terms of attracting new people (item 1), the inclusion of Farmstrong within the recent FMG TV advertising is likely to have been a contributor to the marked increase in unprompted awareness, given the large reach of TV advertising. Anything else which FMG can do to extend the promotion of Farmstrong would be useful.
- There is a need to decide how much focus is on the 'getting through' messaging versus the traditional Farmstrong messaging. Natural disasters are likely to be an increasing phenomenon. It sometimes takes reaching a low point for people to consider other options, so the getting through focus may be an opportunity for beginning the Farmstrong journey with some people, that can then potentially extend into the broader Farmstrong journey once the disaster recovery is over.
- When asked if they would support an increased focus on tools and resources to help farmers and growers to get through tougher times such as cyclones, financial downturns etc., 63% of stakeholders agreed 'strongly' and another 27% agreed 'somewhat'.
- FMG and Farmstrong have kept the active promotion of FMG's founding partner role relatively low profile because FMG did not want their support to be seen as being for commercial gain, which is certainly not their intent. However the role of FMG as a founding partner needs to be clearly profiled, so that any commercial sponsorships do not over-shadow FMG's key role.
- How best to do this in communications of the FMG and Farmstrong relationship does need to be monitored.
 - *'We need to make sure we do not ruin the Farmstrong brand by over-commercialising. Staff need to be under license to know what they can say to clients [about the link with Farmstrong]. People can see past it and feel you're just trying to sell stuff.'* (FMG employee)
- In terms of cost effectiveness (item 4), maximising utilisation of the website is a good option, which Farmstrong is already doing well. All Farmstrong resources should include the website details, preferably with encouragement to visit it. For example, the recently produced Toolbox Tips resource has no mention of the website.
- When asked whether more reminders about the value of the material on the website would be useful, 25% of the stakeholders agreed 'strongly' and 45% agreed 'somewhat'.

- When asked if the current rate at which Farmstrong produces new content and messaging is sufficient 30% agreed 'strongly' and 32% agreed 'somewhat'.
- E-newsletters would also seem to be a relatively low cost option that has relatively good levels of engagement.
- While most who are presenting about Farmstrong do provide Farmstrong resources at their events, there were a few of those who were interviewed who were not, so this needs to be addressed. They all should be encouraged to promote the website. They should be encouraged to also include Farmstrong resources at wellbeing related events where they are presenting but which Farmstrong is not involved in organising.
- More than half the stakeholders rated the following items as 'high priority' over the next five years: 'presence at agricultural events' (67%), 'delivering talks and workshops on Farmstrong content' (66%), 'social media promotions on wellbeing' (57%) and 'developing new tools and resources' (57%). The one exception was 'producing podcasts' (30%) (Graph 6).
- It is worth noting that the two highest were the options that involved face to face contact. There is a common message coming through that farmers/growers like to see Farmstrong having a personal presence in their rural communities.

Delivery of tools which change thinking

- More focus on tools which support farmers to change their way of thinking and thereby their behaviours would be an important part of strategies to increase both engagement and impact levels.
- Promoting the use of these tools is consistent with the emerging literature on behaviour change, as noted earlier.
- Farmers need to see that Farmstrong is providing something new and valuable, that will encourage them to check it out. After nine years it is getting harder to maintain farmer interest and engagement with messaging that most are now very familiar with. How to give this newish focus a high profile in the Farmstrong marketing strategy is part of the challenge for the team.

Communicating the dual focus

- Consideration needs to be given to how best to communicate to farmers about the dual focus on building wellbeing and getting through tougher times such as extreme weather events.
- There need to be clear links between the Farmstrong website, and the newly created web resources for Getting Through, so that farmers are able to quickly access the online content that is most appropriate. Each website needs to make it clear how the two differ and how they are part of a whole package.

More effective channels

- The following channels are the most likely to be associated with impacts, once a farmer has engaged with them:
 - Farmstrong workshop or webinar (based on both prevalence and frequency of engagement)

- Another sort of event in local community (based on both prevalence and frequency of engagement)
- Farmstrong website (based on both prevalence and frequency of engagement)
- At the next level down are:
 - Farmstrong book (particularly those engaging more frequently with the book)
 - Fieldays or other agricultural event day (based on both prevalence and frequency of engagement)
 - E-newsletters (particularly when based on prevalence)
 - Jamie MacKay's The Country radio show (those engaging more frequently)
- The two notable exclusions from this list are Farmers Weekly and Facebook. These channels will still be important for keeping Farmstrong messages in front of farmers because of the high exposure rates.
- Table 1 in Appendix A provides details.

Farmstrong Resources

- Many of the stakeholders reported how popular the Farmstrong books were. However one RST co-ordinator found that when they ran a series of BBQs no one took the new adverse events books, so she had to hand them out. She didn't understand why; she wondered if perhaps they thought they were too flash to be free.
 - *'The books are fantastic... they can just be lying there... you can pick it up if you're not tech savvy.'* (farmer supporter)
 - *'Getting something you can hold and not throw away'* (sector stakeholder)
 - *'It was massive being able to give something tangible to people [as part of the cyclone recovery]'* (farmer supporter who worked for 12 months assisting with the recovery)
 - *'The Farmstrong resources, particularly the books, stay the course... when all the initial focus has gone [when there is lots of activity and support], there's always the long tail that makes it really hard'.* (FMG supporter)
- Apart from the book, the two main resources that stakeholders gave out were 'Five Ways of Wellbeing' and 'Under the Pump'. Some mentioned liking being able to get people to go through the tick box items with them, so they actually engaged with the resource and could see its value.
 - *'Making people do an exercise [when with them] ... It gets people to think and starts conversations.'*
- One noted that after the cyclone some people were without power for 28 days, so they needed written resources as they could not access the website.
- There may be a need for some shorter communications:
 - *'I often end up shortening some of the Toolbox Tips for our email update and social posts, as I feel they're a bit long. It'd be good to have shorter versions with a quick message that might get stuck in people's brains.'*
- The Farmstrong merchandise was also reported to be very popular.
 - *'Coming with goodies, people like free stuff, it's a bit of an icebreaker'.*
- When providing resources, if there is any uncertainty about how they are going to be used, it would be useful to ask, as one stakeholder was providing beanies and mugs to school children, which may not be the best use of them.

- A farmer who engaged with Farmstrong at the beginning reported still having the Farmstrong fridge magnet with the five ways of wellbeing. He described this as *'critically important'* and noted that he was *'going through a bit of a process at the moment to try and hone these a bit'*.

Reaching farm workers

- More research needs to be undertaken with farm workers to understand how best to reach and engage with them.
- Farm workers will often have a different mix of wellbeing needs than those who own or have management roles on farms. For some workers it will just be a job, as they have no chance of ever owning a farm, or don't want to move on to a manager role. Some farmers noted that the issues farm workers were often dealing with were not farm related, such as social and homelife issues. One of the stakeholders, who also works for RST, reported many workers were unmarried, often working by themselves, have poor nutrition and sleep patterns. It was noted that they are on a new learning curve. Relationships with bosses is a likely topic of relevance to them.
- A RST co-ordinator noted that they see a lot of issues with *'younger ones... huge'*. A FMG supporter wondered if Farmstrong has got it right for younger people, adding: *'There are some massive holes young people are falling in.'*
- Farm workers spend a lot of their life on the farm, so Farmstrong encouraging those who employ staff (which may be managers and sharemilkers as well as some owners) to share about Farmstrong with their employees would seem to be a good low cost option. Some are already doing this. It was pointed out that it is an appropriate thing to do in terms of ensuring the health and safety of employees. One noted that the annual performance reviews are a good opportunity to *'talk more deeply'*.
- Some farmers also realised that placing the Farmstrong books in places where the workers could access them was a good idea.
- It would be useful to make farm employers more aware that they can access resources off the website to share with their workers.
- As noted previously FMG staff visiting farms could be encouraged to offer farmers Farmstrong resources to pass on to their workers. This would also be an easy way for them to introduce Farmstrong into their discussions with farmers. This could possibly include laminated posters displayed in areas workers frequent (e.g. milking shed, tractor shed, where they take their lunch break). There could be posters targeting the different ethnic groups farmers employ. The posters would need to be done in a way that appealed to them visually, with the main purpose being to build awareness of Farmstrong and encourage them to access the website.
- The survey data, feedback from some stakeholders, and high use within the wider 18-35 age group indicates that social media is where workers spend much of their time, but can it be utilised successfully? Farmstrong is currently using Facebook, but Farmstrong team members leading work in these areas thought that Facebook is losing its appeal. However NZ Social Media Statistics 2024 reported that as at January 2024 Facebook was still the most used in NZ (used by 83% aged 18 years and over), followed by Messenger (77%) and Instagram (62%), then WhatsApp (46%) and TikTok (43%). The majority of Instagram users were aged 18 to 35 year olds, which is the most common age of farm workers. TikTok is also a popular option among the young.
 - *'Social media and podcasts. The power of quick sharing is powerful. People want easy.'*

- There would be a number of issues which would have to be addressed before engaging with another or different social media channel, including:
 - What strategies could be used to reach farm workers? They are not likely to be searching for information about farming and/or wellbeing. A common strategy is to get the messages promoted by someone who already has a following, but such people might not exist in the farm worker sector and there is the important issue of managing their messaging. One stakeholder perceived that young people have a very short attention span and they respond to humour and *'outrageous things'*, which they are constantly bombarded with.
 - Extending to Instagram or TikTok would be a major undertaking in terms of cost. A Farmstrong team member described Instagram as content hungry and thought it would probably require engaging a digital media agency. Even then, there would be checking to be done by the Farmstrong team, where capacity is already stretched.
- Consideration could be given to developing some specific resources for farm workers, although as noted previously, the current resources appear to be working relatively well. It would probably be quite difficult finding farm workers who have had life experience they would be willing to share in Farmstrong videos etc, but it would still be worth exploring this option. One stakeholder felt that Tangaroa Walker would resonate with younger people in farming, because he is younger and not someone who inherited a farm and he is *'really engaging'*.
- In the Farmstrong annual survey, farm workers had a relatively high prevalence of using the Farmstrong website, so possibly having a section featuring younger farmers/growers might be worth considering.
- There is an ethnic mix within the farm worker grouping which needs to be factored in.
- One farmer supporter and a farmer both thought farm discussion groups might be an option, as they had observed farm workers attending these. However another farmer supporter thought the workers tended to get left at home to run the farm while others attended.
- A dairy farmer mentioned that a lot of workers attend 'Brunch on Us' events, which include mini-health checks. *'Farm workers love that stuff – something free'*. This farmer liked opportunities like this to *'do something as a whole team'*, but did note there were only a few times in the year when they could all get off the farm together, these being around November and the end of June, although with this second option there was the issue of not knowing how long new staff were going to stay.
- A few mentioned the possibility of linking in with ITOs.
- One pointed out that Ag in Schools is *'a bit of a broken thing at the moment'* and he didn't think it would be a good thing for Farmstrong to try and get involved in.
- Other options suggested by stakeholders included:
 - Young Farmers, but some thought it tended to mostly attract those who saw their future in farming.
 - Young Growers.
 - Beef & Lamb Generation X course, which includes wellbeing topics, which it was reported Farmstrong had helped develop. This two day course is targeted at 25 to 40 year olds *'coming up through the ranks'*.
 - 'Growing Future Farmers', where cadets spend two years on a farm and attend training one day a week.

- Federated Farmers, in association with MSD, 'Get Kiwis on Farms'. The Farmer Liaison Managers for this programme were suggested as a channel for Farmstrong information to reach this group.
- At dog trials (for shepherds).
- Use links into sporting clubs, hunting clubs
- One farmer noted that Surfing for Farmers was attracting a lot of farm workers.
- *'A way for employers to incorporate Farmstrong messages into their existing Health & Safety programmes. Some ideas of how employers could bring up the subject with their workers (I think a lot of people struggle with the subject still).'*
- *'Maybe in a collaboration with FMG we could hold more local workshops with a focus on inviting these people. I do think that these are some of the most important people to get in front of, to ensure that they set good habits for the future.'*
- *'Keep things free / low cost. Clear visuals for non-English speaking migrant workers.'*
- *'Advocate for farm employees to have access to face-to-face training opportunities like they used to through the ITO. These face-to-face interactions were definitely beneficial to the wellbeing of trainees. It also increased the retention of staff.'*
- *'Be more explicit about it being for more than "farmers" - which tends to make people think owner operators and not staff. Maybe some specific staff events - recognising that at times the presence of owners could be a barrier to staff feeling comfortable.'*

Reaching Māori

- In the Farmstrong Māori qualitative research (Smith, 2024), all the Māori farmers had a very strong sense of identity as farmers. What this means is that messaging and channels that target farmers in general are also likely to resonate with many Māori farmers.⁷
- The perceptions held of Farmstrong were largely positive.
 - *'I think it's great that they give you ideas and tips to look after your wellbeing.'*
 - *'This really hits home as I know a few farmers that have committed suicide. The pressure is huge on some farmers. This programme can help stop things getting that far.'*
 - *'It's good that it's not just information but also personal stories.'*
- There is a need to build Māori awareness of Farmstrong and this is most likely to be achieved with strategies which target Māori, with tailored messaging, channels, programme content, stories.
- Options suggested by Māori farmers included connecting through Māori networks, kanohi ki te kanohi (face to face) visits to farms, sharing more stories of Māori farmers and their experiences, using Māori champions and advocates that they can look up to (such as winners/finalists of the Ahuwhenua Trophy).
- It could also include tailored messaging and content, such as: te whare tapa whā; use of Rongoā, Mirimiri, Karakia; importance of connection to the whenua (land) and te taiao (the environment), being kaitiaki (guardians/custodians); talking about the collective – whānau/ community based; looking after yourself and looking after others.

⁷ It needs to be acknowledged that Māori who agreed to participate in an interview may not be representative of all Māori.

- *“Like what you’ve done with Sam Whitelock – someone who would resonate with Māori.”*
- The Māori farmers interviewed mentioned three areas where they thought Farmstrong could improve in general: being more involved in networking/local social connecting events (that will get farmers off the farm, socialising and talking); aligning more with other rural programmes events (such as Tractor Trek, Bark Up, Mates at the Gate, Surfing for Farmers); and keeping fingers on the pulse with the current situation for farmers (being there in times of need).
 - *“Keep pushing what you are doing, especially as there’s likely to be many farmers going through tough times now – how do we make sure they’re ok?”*
- In the annual Farmstrong survey there were no dominant channels for Māori with several being at relatively similar levels, the most mentioned being Facebook. Their highest frequencies of use were for: Farmstrong website, Farmers Weekly, and ‘Another sort of event in local community’. They were also higher for the combined options that involved face to face contact.
- A Māori farmer supporter was expecting that Farmstrong will be well suited to Māori, as she felt *‘Farmstrong has real respect for a Te ao Māori lens’*.

Reaching Filipinos

- The very small numbers of Filipinos in the Farmstrong survey who had engaged in the last 12 months does not enable confidence in the survey data on their channel use, but that will improve when annual surveys can be combined.
- One farmer noted that Filipinos and other ethnic groups (they gave the example of Seikh Indians) tend to *‘stick together and look after each other’*.
- Churches were suggested as a possible access point for Filipinos.

Sam Whitelock/ other possible ambassadors

- Having Sam Whitelock as ambassador was a very good move by Farmstrong. There was a widespread perception that Sam made a real difference for Farmstrong and almost all thought he should continue.
 - *‘Having someone well known is so good when you have such an intangible product... shorthand for trust, taking it seriously.’ (FMG supporter)*
 - *‘It’s probably been the best thing, because he’s so down to earth.’ (RST stakeholder)*
 - *‘Everyone likes a famous face.’ (RST stakeholder)*
 - *‘The use of Sam Whitelock is really inspired – he carries real mana’. (sector stakeholder with large proportion of Māori members)*
 - *‘I think the role will get better for him now that he’s retired [from rugby] and is a farmer. I think most saw him as an All Black rather than a farmer... the relatability will get stronger.’ (Famer Supporter)*

Other ambassadors

- Among those interviewed there was no strong desire to see further ambassadors at the level of Sam.
- However, these people were not aware of the priority segments that this report is recommending be a focus, so it makes sense to keep open the option of other ambassadors.
- The Māori research did mention a Māori ambassador as an option to assist with reaching more Māori.
- A few, particularly the female stakeholders, would like to also see a female ambassador.
- One noted that while another ambassador would spread the load, it also increased the risks.
- It should be noted that some of the farmer supporters who were interviewed referred to themselves as Farmstrong ambassadors, so the use of this term for this group needs to be reviewed.
- One saw it as important to have farmer supporters as ambassadors:
 - *‘People in the trenches – a mix of well-known farmers and others [such as Sam].’*

Other

- When asked if they would like Farmstrong to stay in touch with them on a regular basis, 50% of the stakeholders agreed ‘strongly’ and another 32% agreed ‘somewhat’.
- The most preferred channel for Farmstrong staying in touch with stakeholders was definitely email.
- A farmer supporter, who had provided contacts for three farmers whose stories have been included in Farmstrong material, noted that, despite knowing the Farmstrong material, all three had become unwell through the recent challenging periods. The person thought it would be useful for Farmstrong to show some of that vulnerability, so others can see these people are not perfect and have not got it right all the time.
- While podcasts were rated less highly as a priority, some did mention the value of them:
 - *‘More experts on podcasts. Nutrition, exercise, community advice and stories from around NZ. We relate to people, not websites and wording. Farmers have a high percentage of dyslexia. Podcasts, webinars and short clips on social media are the future.’*
- One Farmstrong team member felt that, if there were sufficient resources, there could be other productive media channels for Farmstrong to also utilise, such as the Stuff regional papers.
- One farmer supporter was running a rural touch competition in her region, which had the five ways of wellbeing woven into it. This was a three week activity that involved children and adults. This person would love to roll it out nationally.
- Another farmer supporter felt there were three topics that Farmstrong could add to its strategy, as he had found these *‘incredibly important’*: optimism, gratitude and resilience (he was unsure whether Farmstrong explicitly covered resilience).
- Promoting the statistics to farmers, so they know how effective Farmstrong is.
- One farmer suggested having Farmstrong resources in rural medical centres, where people are *‘a captive audience’*.

- A couple of farmers reported liking the FMG calendar, with its monthly tips. One noted that he keeps it beside his workstation, so sees the tips regularly.

Key recommendations

- Undertake research to identify how best to engage with farm workers and Filipinos
- Continue with Sam Whitelock as the high profile ambassador, but be open to the option of ambassadors who would assist with reaching key segments

Other recommendations

- Monitor perceptions of the FMG brand in relation to Farmstrong
- Maximise use of the website
- Build farmer awareness and understanding of the dual focus on building wellbeing and getting through tougher times such as extreme weather events
- Encourage those who have engaged with Farmstrong to tell others about it, particularly employers to their workers
- Review the use of terms (such as ambassador, supporter) used by those representing Farmstrong

6 CONCLUSIONS

- This evaluation has confirmed that this is a very successful programme, delivering a high level of value to farmers in New Zealand, relative to the level of resourcing.
- Levels of engagement and improvements attributed to Farmstrong have remained at relatively similar levels for some years, raising the question as to whether this is as good as it gets. However, the research undertaken in 2024, including that undertaken for this evaluation, has identified potential opportunities to increase Farmstrong impacts. This report has outlined these opportunities and recommended strategies for achieving these.

REFERENCES

Bandura A. (1986). Social foundations of thought and action: a social cognitive theory. Prentice-Hall.

Ministry of Primary Industries (2021). Food and Fibre Workforce: Snapshot.

Smith B. (2024). Evaluating the Farmstrong programme amongst Māori farmers to guide future improvements. Report prepared for Farmstrong.

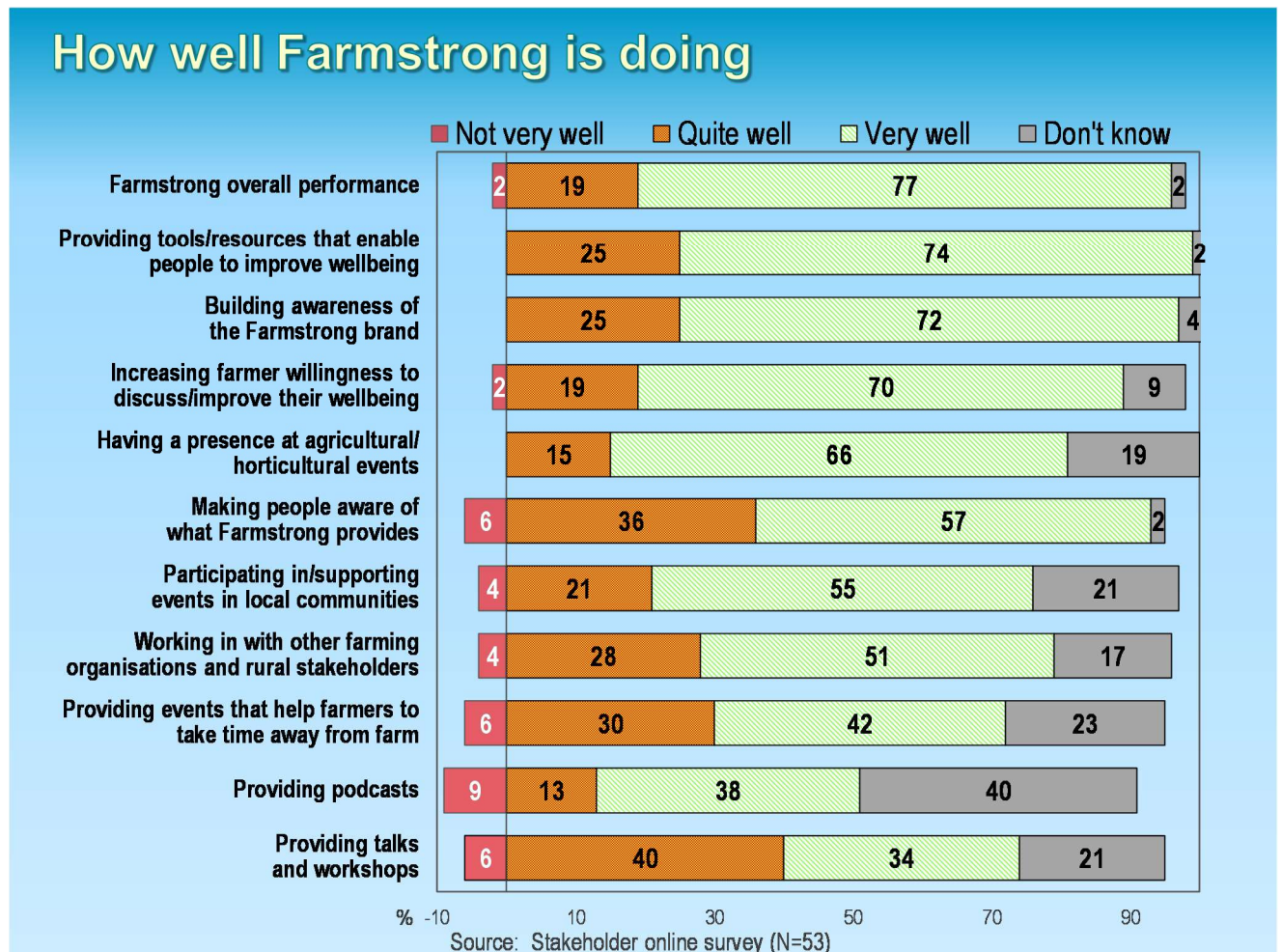
Wyllie A. (2024). Farmstrong ninth year monitoring technical report. Report prepared for Farmstrong.

Wyllie A. (2021). How Farmstrong impacts farmer behaviour, to improve wellbeing. Report prepared for Farmstrong.

Wyllie A. (2019). Link between aspects of diminished farmer wellbeing and injuries: Technical report. Report prepared for Accident Compensation Corporation and Farmstrong.

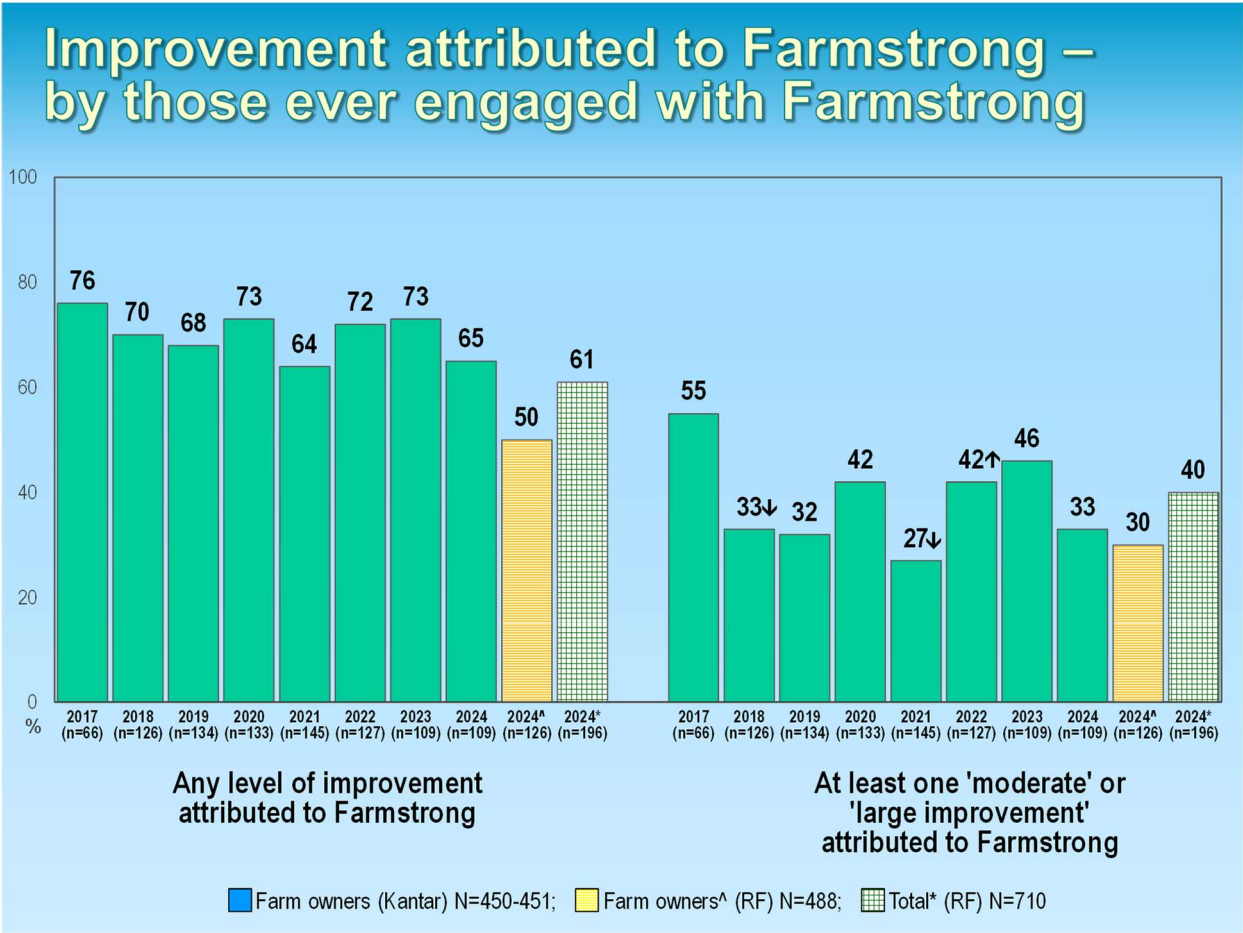
APPENDIX A: TABLES AND GRAPHS

Graph 1: Stakeholder performance ratings



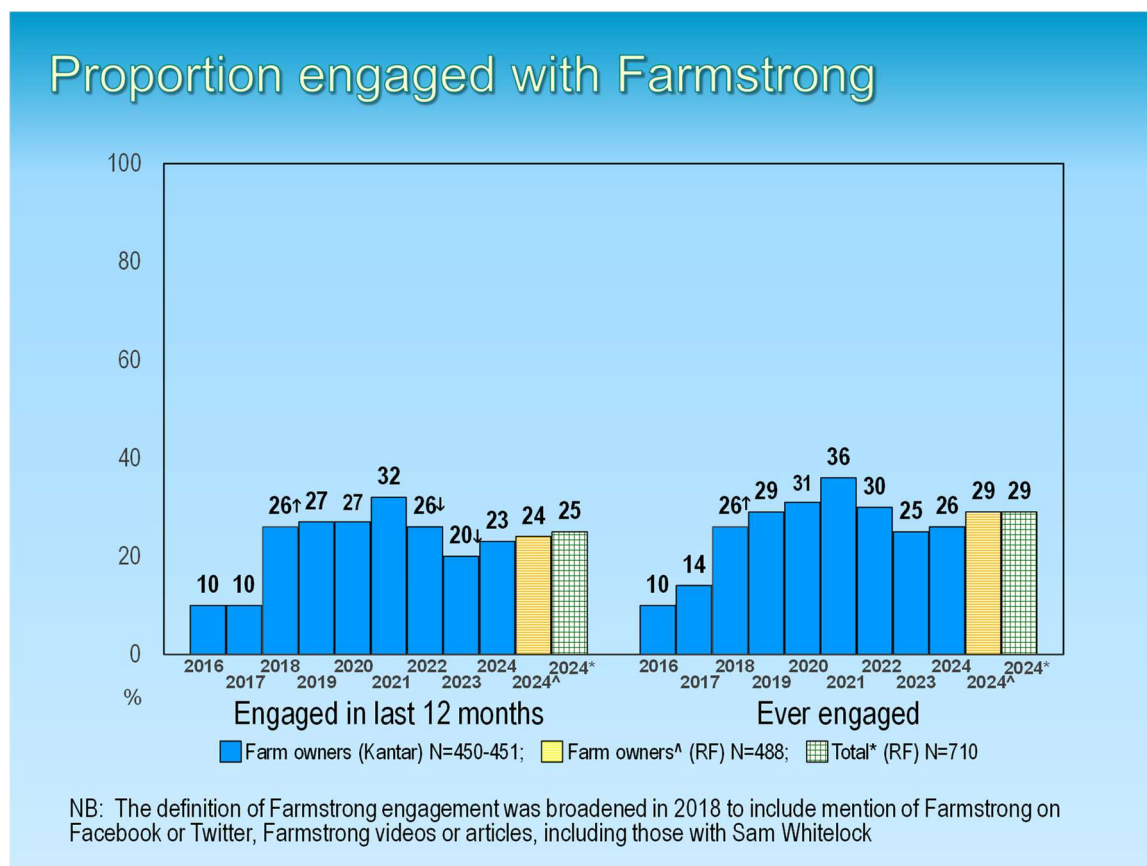
- The lower ratings in some of these areas in the graph will to some extent reflect the limitations of what Farmstrong can deliver with its small team.

Graph 2: Improvement attributed to Farmstrong by those ever engaged

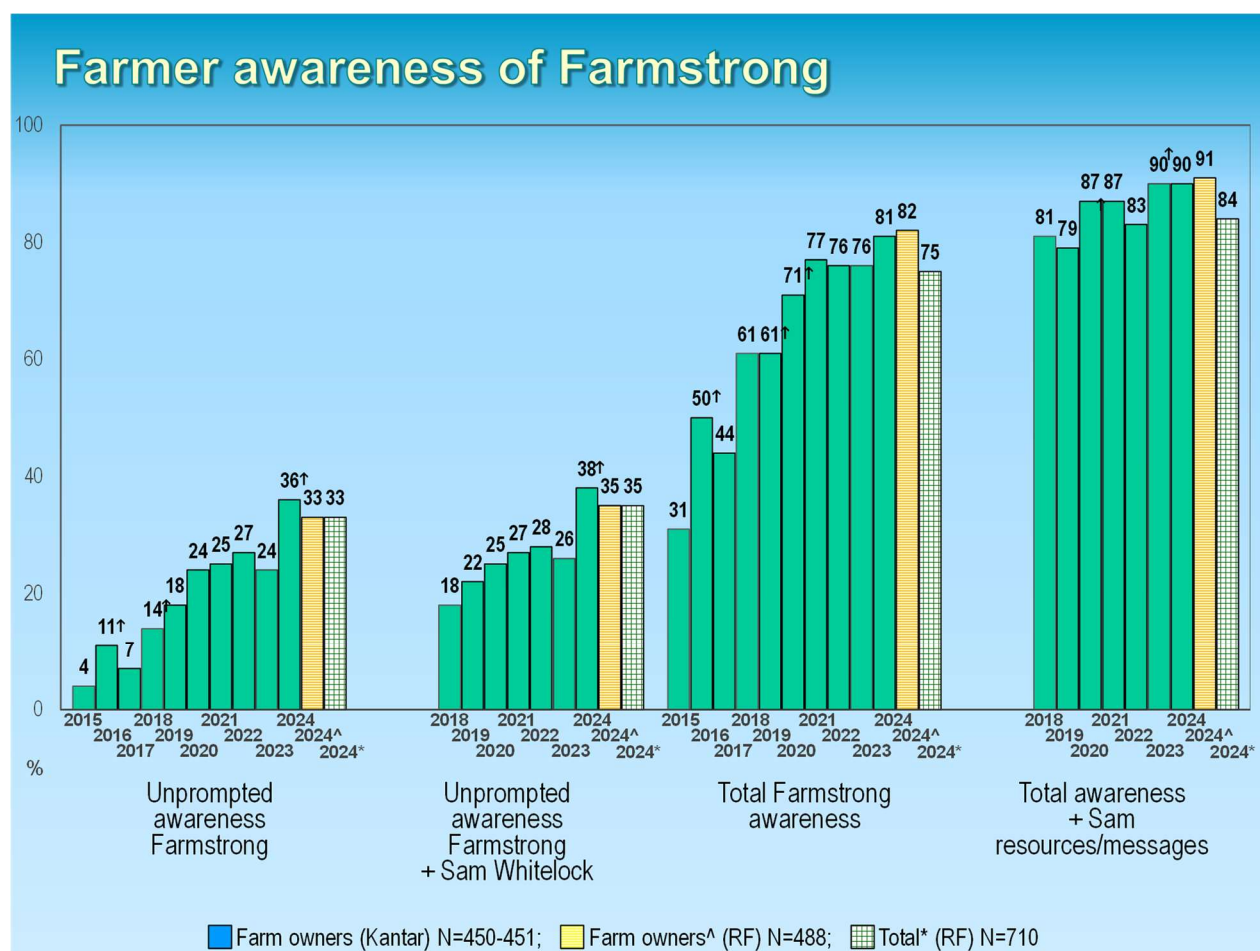


- The graph above shows that levels of attribution have remained relatively consistent over time. (The last two bars are from the Research First (recently renamed truwind) survey which began in 2024, the yellow bar with parallel lines being farm owners for comparison with the Kantar trend data which is primarily from farm owners, while the cream bar with a criss-cross pattern is total sample for the Research First survey.)

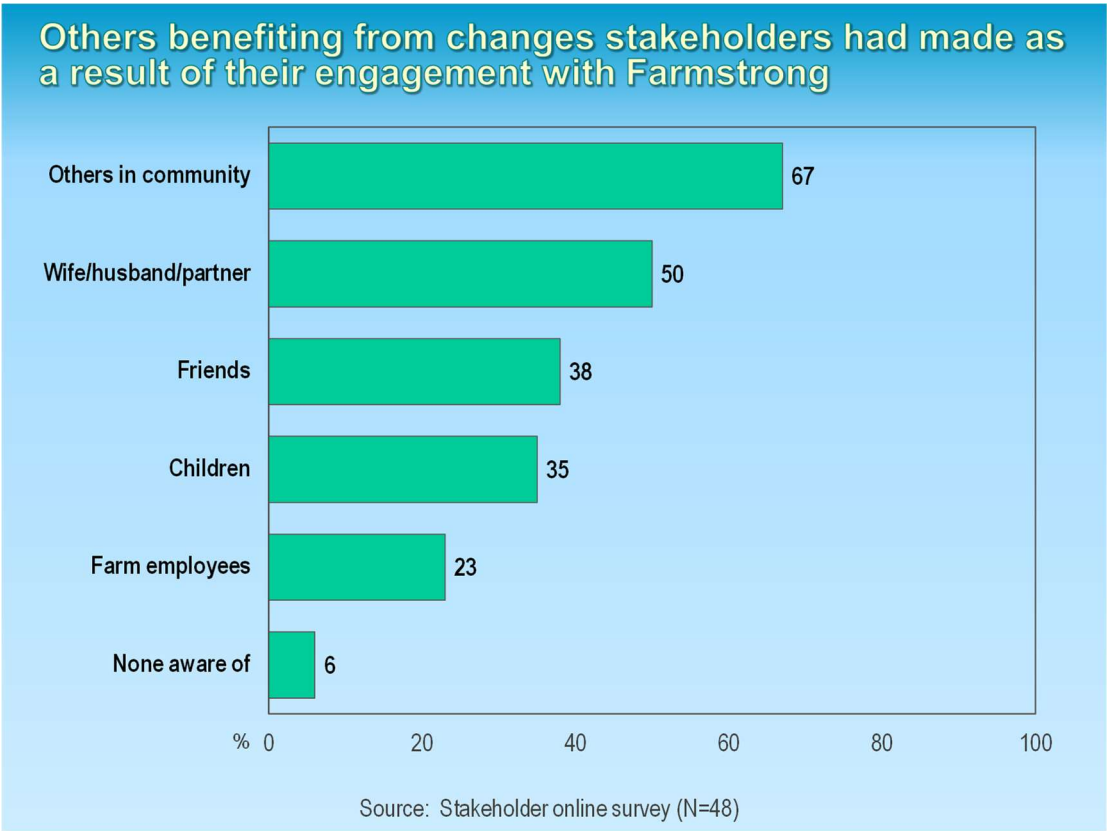
Graph 3: Engagement with Farmstrong



Graph 4: Awareness of Farmstrong



Graph 5: Reported flow-on impacts



Graph 6: Priority over next five years

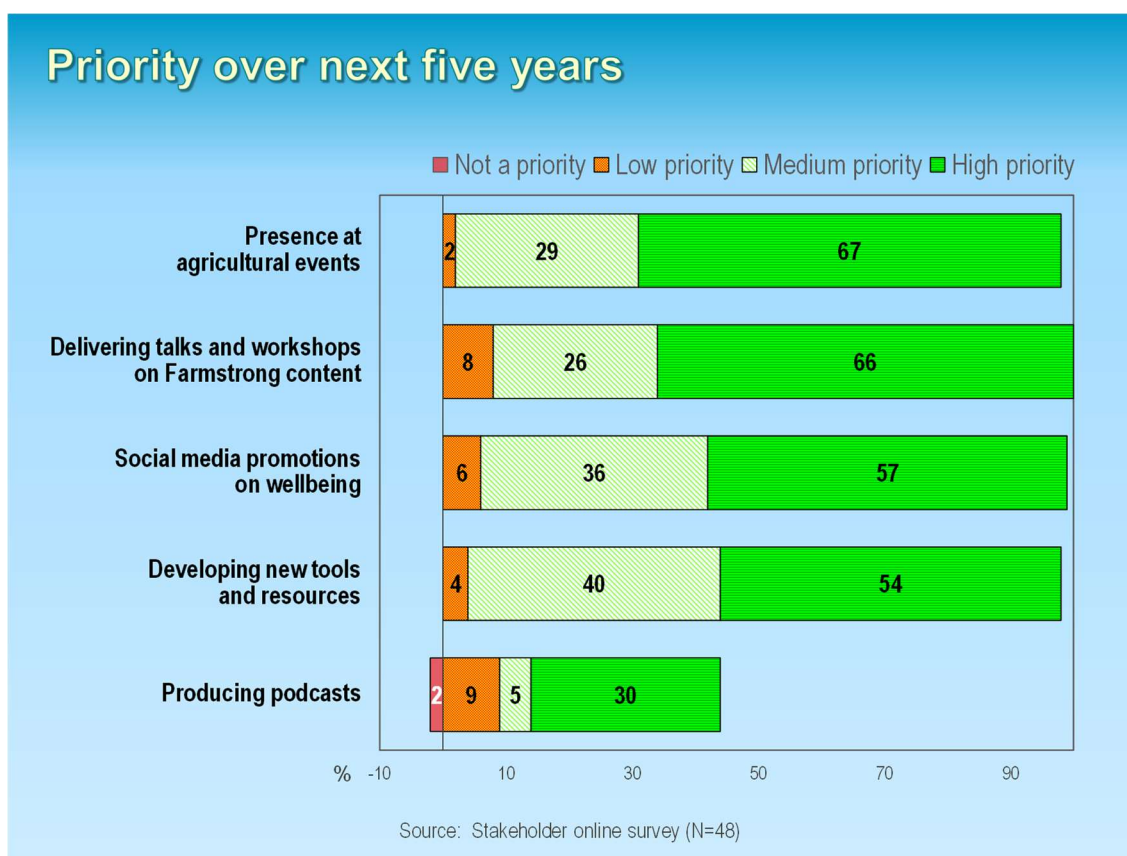


Table 1: Most effective forms of engagement

FORMS OF ENGAGEMENT 2024 (RF)	Any level improvement	5+ improvements	Any moderate/ large improvement	3+ moderate/ large improvements	Total Engaged last 12 months
Farmers Weekly: %	71 (13)	71 (13)	71 (13)	69 (10)	63
Mean	10.5 (7)	8.7 (-11)	9.8 (-)	7.8 (-20)	9.8
Jamie MacKay's The Country radio show: %	44↑ (29)	43 (28)	44 (29)	44 (29)	34
Mean	6.4↑ (36)	7.0 (64)**	6.0 (28)	8.0 (70)**	4.7
Other agriculture or horticulture magazines: %	46 (12)	50 (22)	47 (17)	45 (10)	41
Mean	4.1 (-)	2.9 (-29)	3.2 (-22)	3.2 (-22)	4.1
Facebook: %	58↑ (29)	60↑ (33)	58↑ (29)	66↑ (46)*	45
Mean	5.4 (23)	5.5 (25)	5.6 (27)	5.9 (34)	4.4
Farmstrong website: %	64↑ (45)*	76↑ (73)**	72↑ (63)**	73↑ (66)**	44
Mean	4.9↑ (36)	6.8↑ (89)**	5.6 (56)**	7.1 (97)**	3.6
On other radio stations, TV, or in a newspaper: %	55↑ (38)	60↑ (50)**	55↑ (38)	57 (33)	40
Mean	5.0↑ (28)	4.1 (5)	4.2 (8)	3.0 (-23)	3.9
E-newsletter: %	36↑ (38)	43↑ (65)**	38 (46)*	37 (42)*	26
Mean	4.5↑ (45)*	4.3 (39)	3.6 (16)	4.1 (32)	3.1
Fieldays or other agriculture event day: %	49↑ (32)	55↑ (49)*	56↑ (51)**	58↑ (57)**	37
Mean	1.5 (15)	1.9 (46)*	1.8 (38)	2.3 (77)**	1.3
Another sort of event in local community: %	37↑ (48)*	43↑ (72)**	43↑ (72)**	51↑ (104)***	25
Mean	2.8 (40)*	3.2 (60)**	2.8 (40)*	4.2 (110)***	2.0
Farmstrong workshop or webinar: %	20↑ (54)	25↑ (92)**	23↑ (78)**	36↑ (177)***	13
Mean	0.9 (50)	1.4 (133)***	1.2 (100)***	2.2 (267)	0.6
Farmstrong book 'Live Well, Farm Well': %	34↑ (30)	37 (42)*	35 (35)	37 (42)*	26
Mean	2.8 (40)*	3.8 (90)**	3.5 (75)**	4.6 (130)***	2.0
Combined face-to-face contact: %	60↑ (33)	63↑ (40)*	67↑ (49)*	69↑ (53)**	45
Mean	5.1 (38)	6.3 (70)**	5.5 (49)*	8.5 (130)***	3.7

- In the above table data is provided for each channel for both prevalence (% who engaged with it in the last 12 months) and frequency (mean number of times engaged in last 12 months). The table, based on the 2024 Research First (truwind) survey, compares data for those who had engaged with Farmstrong in the last 12 months (the last column) and those reporting different levels of impacts. The figures in brackets in each column report what percentage higher or lower the figure in this column is compared with the figure for 'Total engaged in last 12 months' (the last column). The grey shading with triple * shows figures that are more than double (i.e. over 100% higher) the Total engaged figure. Blue with double * denotes being 50-99% higher and yellow (single *) 40-49% higher.

APPENDIX B: FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO SUCCESSFUL DEVELOPMENT, REPORTED IN 2019

Factors contributing to the very successful implementation of Farmstrong included:

- The considerable amount of time that was allowed to engage with the farming community and identify how the initiative could best meet their needs and to develop good working relationships with key stakeholders
- The complementary expertise of FMG, who know farmers, and the MHF who know the science of wellbeing
- With the focus on the promotion of wellbeing, rather than helping people in crisis, the initiative filled a gap in services being provided for farmers
- The development of a roadmap which identified the programme goal, objectives and strategies, and was underpinned by a theory of behaviour change
- By the time Farmstrong was launched in June 2015, a good website and resources had been developed and initiatives were in place to be able to immediately engage effectively with the rural community and build awareness of the initiative
- Keeping partner branding to a low level, to assist Farmstrong to develop a clear identity
- Being initially independent of government funding sources allowed a lot of flexibility in design
- A range of strategies built high awareness of Farmstrong over the first two years, including Healthy Thinking workshops with key persons in farming communities, the 'Fit for Farming' cycle tour (to promote farmer fitness), and woolshed comedy shows (to get farmers off the farm and have some fun)
- Sam Whitelock becoming the Farmstrong ambassador in 2016
- The quality of the Farmstrong resources, with their focus on sharing farmers' wellbeing strategies and involving credible experts on wellbeing topics
- Refreshing of the website in September 2018, including the version for mobile phones (86% of the stakeholders who had used the new website found it either 'very' or 'somewhat' helpful)
- Appropriate choice of a limited number of topics to focus on
- Value and quality of the on-going research and evaluation programme
- Effective collaboration with other organisations
- The expertise and contribution of the Project Lead, Gerard Vaughan
- The commitment, passion and effort from all those working on the initiative

APPENDIX C: METHOD

The following research was undertaken to inform this evaluation report.

Annual Surveys

- Ten annual random sample surveys of 450 farmers/growers, mostly owners, were undertaken by Kantar. In 2024 a survey of 710 was also undertaken by Research First (since renamed truwind) which provided a random sample with all types of farmer/growers/workers. (This company will be used for the future monitoring).
- Undertaking both surveys in 2024 allowed comparisons of the two surveys, to assist with on-going monitoring of trends with the switch of companies.
- Data has been collected from national surveys since 2015. Awareness was included in this survey for the first time in 2018. Prior to that, it had been measured in a separate survey in November each year, using the same methodology as the May surveys.

Kantar

- The random national phone surveys of approximately 450 farmers/growers were undertaken for Kantar Research Company, using their Farm Market Index Panel. This panel has more than 15,000 farmer contacts built up over the years, from which survey participants were randomly selected.
- Kantar has quotas to make the sample more representative. The data is also weighted by age and gender.

Research First

- The Research First survey used stratified random sampling based on their data base of over 25,000 farmers and growers. There were quotas to obtain client specified minimum numbers in each of the following groups: Horticulture, Managers, Sharemilkers/Contract milkers, Farm workers/shepherds, Māori, Filipinos, Persons aged under 35 years and persons aged 35 to 44 years. There were also quota parameters for farm type, region and gender.
- The data was weighted by age, gender, farm workers and type of farmers/growers.

ACC Return on Investment modelling analyses

- ACC use a model that compares agriculture with a peer group from a range of industry groups who have a similar injury profile, but don't have a wellbeing programme. The modelling predicts expected claim saving from the Farmstrong programme.

Research with Māori

- This research was informed by 64 Māori farmers/growers/farm workers who participated in the 2024 Research First Farmstrong monitor survey and 10 of these who also agreed to follow-up qualitative phone interviews. The qualitative research and all the reporting were undertaken by Brendon Smith of Maarama Consulting. He has approved the reporting of this research in this evaluation report.

Stakeholder interviews

- A total of 36 stakeholder phone interviews were undertaken with the following stakeholder groups: 14 key stakeholders (primarily with all members of the Farmstrong Governance Group and the Operational Team); 7 with farmer supporters; 6 with internal FMG supporters; and 9 with representatives from community stakeholder groups. They were all selected by the Farmstrong team, in terms of persons likely to be able to make the most useful contributions.
- All the interviews and reporting were undertaken by the evaluator, Dr Allan Wyllie, who has been undertaking the research and evaluation for Farmstrong since its inception.
- As with all the interviews, they were audio-taped, with the participant's permission. In any interview where the evaluator felt there was a chance that comments reported could possibly be linked to individuals this was checked with the participant prior to inclusion in the report.
- The first set of interviews were undertaken with the key stakeholders and these informed the content of the interviews with the other groups. These key stakeholder interviews were typically approximately one hour in duration. They were undertaken between May 29 and July 4, 2024.
- The remainder of the interviews were undertaken between 27 September and 31 October, 2024. The durations were as follows: farmer supporters between 30 and 65 minutes, internal FMG supporters between 30 and 55 minutes, community stakeholder groups between 24 and 50 minutes.

Stakeholder online survey

- An online survey which was completed by 53 other stakeholders, was undertaken between 30 October and 4 November, 2024. These stakeholders were selected by the Farmstrong team as people who were likely to be able to provide informed answers to the questions.

Qualitative interviews

- Qualitative phone interviews with 19 farmers who had attributed improvements to Farmstrong in the 2024 Kantar Farmstrong survey. The purpose to these interviews was to identify whether these farmers, who had reported Farmstrong as contributing to improvements for themselves, were aware of any flow on benefits to others.
- These interviews lasted between 7 and 30 minutes.
- There were also four follow-up interviews (between 7 and 20 minutes) undertaken with stakeholders who reported in the online survey that farm employees had benefited from the changes they (the stakeholder) had made as a result of Farmstrong. The purpose of these interviews was to understand more about the nature of these benefits.