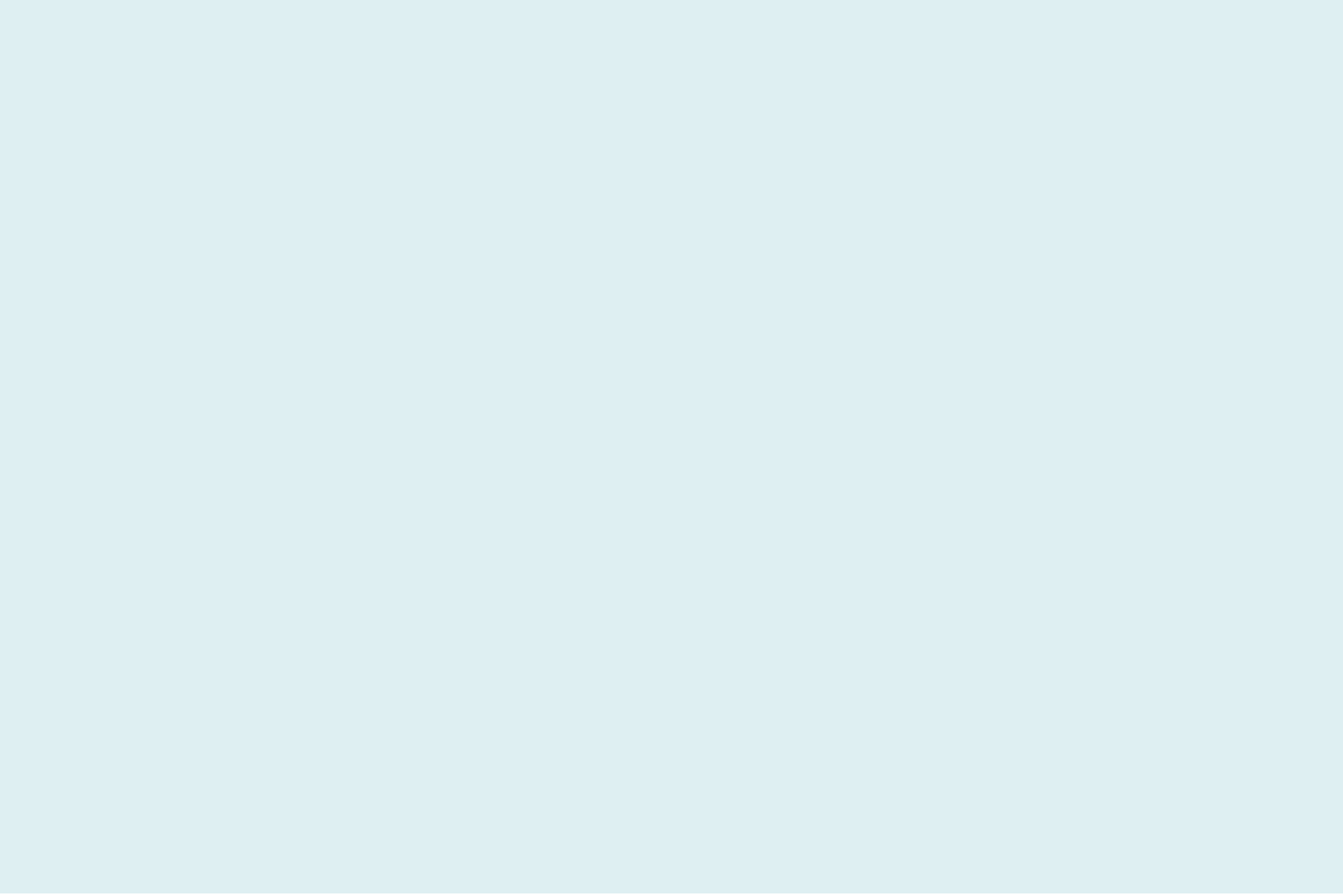




| All About Farmstrong 2025



Every year, for the past seven years, more than 15,000 farmers, growers and farm workers have attributed an improvement in their wellbeing to Farmstrong.



A man with brown hair, wearing a blue short-sleeved shirt with the 'Farmstrong' logo, is crouching in a grassy field. He is smiling and looking towards the camera. A large, dark-colored dog is sitting next to him, looking up at him. The background shows a vast green field with some trees and distant mountains under a blue sky with scattered white clouds.

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

Sam Whitelock
Farmstrong Ambassador

Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

SAMUEL WHITELOCK
Farmstrong Ambassador

Our Mission

Improve the wellbeing
of people working
in farming and
growing.

Our Vision

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

Our Call to Action

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





Our Key Messages

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

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

Farmstrong is about wellness not illness.

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

Investing in your wellbeing is good for business.





About Farmstrong

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

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

Farmstrong shares this content through its website (www.farmstrong.co.nz) and own communications channels, as well as through national and rural sector media. It also organises webinars and face-to-face workshops and maintains a strong presence at community events, such as national and regional Field Days.



Investing in wellbeing

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

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





A trusted part of the rural landscape

Since Farmstrong was launched in 2015 it has become a trusted part of rural life, authentically reflecting the experience and insights of farmers and growers. When launched, Farmstrong aimed to make a difference to lives of 1,000 farmers. Now seven years on more than 15,000 farmers and growers each year are attributing an improvement in their wellbeing due to their involvement with Farmstrong.



An award-winning programme

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



A unique partnership

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

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



How Farmstrong

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

Farmstrong encourages farmers to 'lock in' good-for-business habits and thinking strategies by:

- Farmstrong ambassador, rugby great Samuel Whitelock sharing key messages via resources and webinars and attending events.
- Creating tools and resources based on the latest wellbeing science specifically tailored for farmers. These are delivered via webinars, our website, podcasts, modules, toolbox tips and face-to-face at agriculture events, workshops and educational forums.



Works



- Sharing farmer-to-farmer stories about what works for them in rural media and social media channels.
- Organising and supporting events that help farmers stay connected. Farmstrong is also a regular at agriculture Field Days.
- Working and collaborating with organisations such as Dairy NZ, Beef + Lamb New Zealand, NZ Young Farmers, the Rural Support Trust, Hort NZ, Federated Farmers, Dairy Women's Network, Rural Women NZ, Agri-Women's Development Trust, NZ Shearing Contractors' Association and many others.

Connecting rural communities — Farmstrong.co.nz

The Farmstrong website is a one-stop portal to a wide range of resources, events and activities and attracts heavy traffic. It has successfully connected a geographically diverse and remote audience. Farmers can access resources wherever they are, whenever it suits them. In any given year, the website attracts over 45,000 unique visitors.

Farmstrong also makes extensive use of social media to build a community of interest and engages with over 13,000 fans. Throughout the year it supports two-way conversations on wellbeing topics dear to the hearts of farmers and growers and relevant to the seasonal farming calendar. Farmstrong videos receive over 300,000 views a year.

Farmstrong also delivers content online for use by learners and farming and agribusiness education and training courses.

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





You Matter, Let's Natter

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

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

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

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

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

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

You Matter, Let's Natter, visit farmstrong.co.nz



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

Paul Walker, dairy farmer, Pongakawa



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

Stephen Crossan, dairy farmer, Te Puke



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

Todd Reeves, dairy farmer





Working with growers

Building on our work in agriculture, Farmstrong has extended its reach into horticulture. In 2021, we commissioned research to better understand the challenges to the wellbeing of people working in horticulture and viticulture. The sectors covered were:

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

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

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

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



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

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



Grower to Grower

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

Simon Cook, Kiwifruit grower/contractor



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

Sean Carnachan, Kiwifruit grower/contractor

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

Kiwifruit industry stalwart Marty Robinson





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

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



Supporting local communities

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

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

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



Farmer to Farmer



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

Terry Murray, dairy farmer



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

Gary Sunshine-Tervit, farm manager



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

Tangaroa Walker, dairy farmer



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

Amber Carpenter, dairy farmer



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

Cheyenne Wilson, contract milker/agribusiness student



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

Jason Halford, farm manager



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

Geoff Spark, dairy farmer

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

Marc Gascoigne, dairy farmer



Our Research

The better we understand farmers and growers, the more likely we are to develop solutions for them that are relevant and meet their needs.

Farmstrong's launch in 2015 was underpinned by milestone research into the wellbeing of farmers. Since then we have also completed research into the wellbeing of Younger Farmers, Women in Farming, people working in Horticulture and Viticulture and the Link Between Diminished Wellbeing and Farmer Injury.

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

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

Younger farmers wellbeing

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

Who completed the survey?

The research comprised an online survey completed by 616 women and 279 men and included face-to-face and phone interviews with 15 women and 15 men.

We would like to thank all the younger farmers, organisations and networks that supported and took part in this research.

What did we find out?

- 64% of the younger farming men and 77% of young farming women reported that at least one wellbeing issue had had a 'large' or 'greater' negative impact on their wellbeing.
- A vast majority of younger farmers – 84% of women and 76% of men – expressed 'moderate' or 'high' interest in wanting to improve their wellbeing and resilience.
- While younger farming men and women face similar wellbeing challenges, there were notable differences sometimes in how they rated the impact of these issues for this reason we have organised the key findings by gender.

Things that would contribute most to improved wellbeing

The wellbeing topics which had 'large' or 'greater' impact on wellbeing were:

Men

- 44% more time off the farm – including by myself or with the family
- 33% getting more/better quality sleep

Women

- 39% getting more/better quality sleep
- 31% getting more exercise
- 28% more time off the farm
- 28% eating healthier

Interest in wellbeing topics

Men

Men expressed 'high' interest in the following topics:

- 23% embracing strategies to deal with ups and downs of farming
- 23% how to be happy
- 22% people/organisational issues

Women

Women expressed 'high' interest in the following topics:

- 23% work/life balance
- 23% how to be happy
- 22% people/organisational issues

Wellbeing in the Horticulture Sector

In early 2021, Farmstrong in partnership with Hort NZ commissioned research to better understand the wellbeing needs of people working in horticulture and viticulture. The research also asked which wellbeing topics interested them most and the things they thought would improve their wellbeing.

Who completed the research?

The research focused on improving the wellbeing of growers and workers in the horticulture and viticulture industries. The sectors covered were:

- Vegetable
- Wine
- Kiwifruit
- Other fruit and berries

Qualitative in-depth face to face interviews with 53 people in a range of roles were undertaken (individually and in small groups) and 268 people, (predominantly horticulture business owners and managers) completed an on-line survey.

Main wellbeing challenges

Across the sector, the following were reported as having a 'large' or 'greater' negative impact on their wellbeing (a quarter or more of survey participants):

- 34% Too much work on compliance
- 32% Work/life balance everything
- 29% Lack of available employee/contract workers
- 28% Not enough time away from work
- 28% Feeling isolated

What else did we find out?

The vegetable sector reported the largest levels of negative wellbeing impact, followed by other fruit and berries.

Nearly half (46%) of vegetable growers reported 'not enough time away from work' as having a 'large' or 'greater' negative impact on their wellbeing.

Nearly half (46%) of those working in the other fruit and berries sector reported 'lack of available employee/contract workers' as having a 'large' or 'greater' negative impact on their wellbeing.

The qualitative interviews, availability of good staff, particularly senior Covid, was a major challenge for almost everyone spoken to who was dealing with employees and contract workers.

Things that would contribute most to improved wellbeing

When survey participants were asked to choose the top three things they thought could contribute most to their wellbeing, the most mentioned were:

- Quality sleep (33%)
- Having sufficient good employee/contract workers (30%)
- Exercise (30%)
- Getting enough time away from work (30%)
- Having good personal relationships (29%)

Interest in improving wellbeing

The survey highlighted that participants are keen to improve their wellbeing.

- 82% had a 'high' or 'moderate' interest in improving their wellbeing and resilience.
- 84% had a 'high' or 'moderate' interest in one or more of the wellbeing topics listed, such as thinking strategies, nutrition, exercise, people skills, self-confidence, happiness, employee management and managing work overload.

Thanks

We would like to thank all the growers, their organisations and networks that supported and took part in this research. Without your help it would not have been possible to achieve this snapshot of wellbeing in horticulture and viticulture.

FARMSTRONG
Live Well Farm Well

FOR A COPY OF THE REPORT VISIT farmstrong.co.nz/research

The link between Wellbeing and Farmer Injuries

In 2019, Farmstrong completed research to better understand the ways diminished wellbeing contribute to farmer injuries. The research quantified the extent of diminished wellbeing's contribution and the costs of those injuries to ACC.

Who completed the survey?

The research comprised a telephone survey with 500 farmers who had made an injury claim with ACC during January to December 2018. Prior to the survey, 25 in-depth interviews were completed with farmers who had been injured and had diminished wellbeing had contributed to their injury. Insights from these interviews informed the survey design.

What did we find out?

- 88% reported that at least one of the 15 listed aspects of diminished wellbeing was a contributor to their injury.
- 24% reported diminished wellbeing as a 'major' contributor to their injury.
- 16% reported diminished wellbeing as a 'minor' contributor to a more serious injury.
- 30% of the ACC farmer claim costs had a 'major' diminished wellbeing link.

Most mentioned

The aspects of diminished wellbeing most mentioned as 'major' contributors to injury were:

- 11% Having too much to do and not enough time
- 8% Feeling fatigued or exhausted
- 6% Lack of sleep or poor quality sleep
- 5% Challenges coping with the ups and downs of farming
- 5% Feeling in need of a break away from the farm

Most affected

The groups who were most likely to report diminished wellbeing being a major contributor to their injury were:

- 40% Assistant managers
- 35% Those aged under 35 years
- 31% Dairy farmers

Did participating in Farmstrong help?

Those who had ever engaged with Farmstrong were less likely than others to report diminished wellbeing being a 'major' contributor to a more serious injury where the injury had a 'moderate' or 'larger' impact on their ability to work.

Conclusion

This research has confirmed and quantified the extent to which aspects of diminished wellbeing are contributing to farmer injuries.

That the injuries where these aspects of diminished wellbeing were 'major' contributors accounted for 30 percent of ACC farmer costs, and that farmers are one of the highest cost sectors for ACC, reflects the significance of these findings.

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Monitoring Progress

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

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



ability to cope with the ups and downs of farming,



amount of sleep,



amount of time away from the farm,



balance between work and leisure,



level of contact with friends,



amount of exercise,



contribution to other farmers or local community,



time spent learning new things,



time spent taking more notice of the small things in life that bring enjoyment,



amount of time their work was impaired by an injury.

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

Lots of farmers know about us

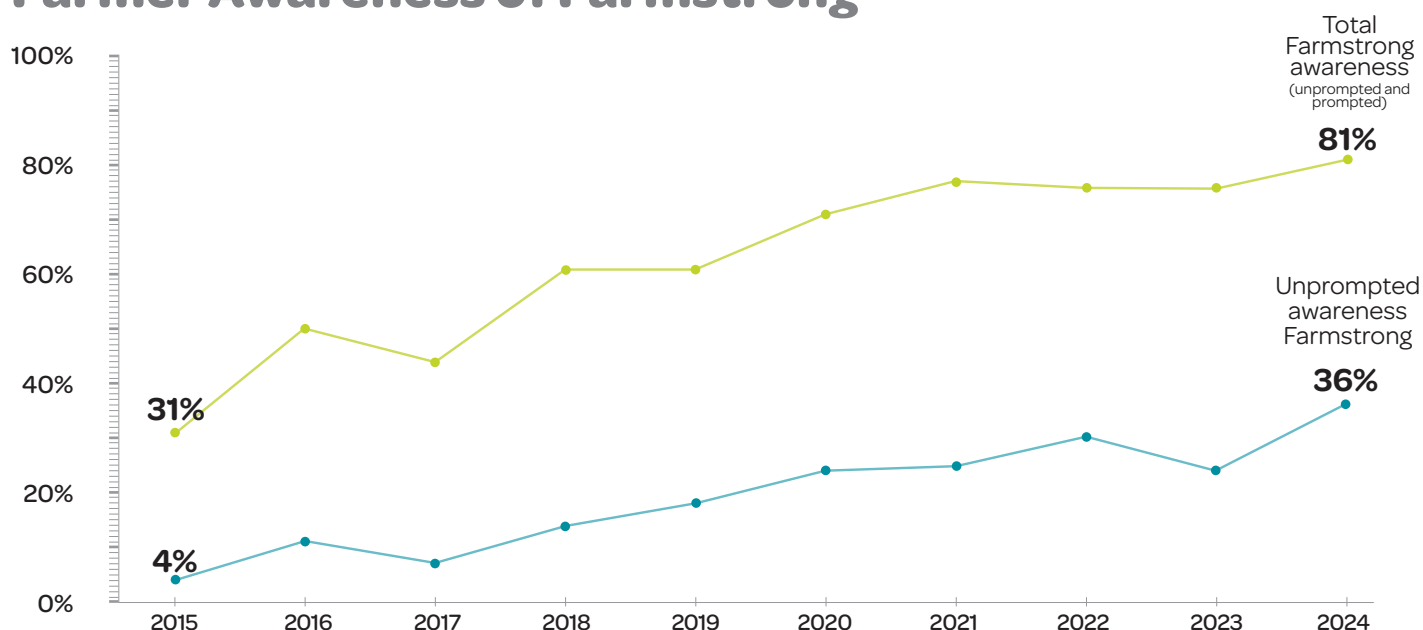
Farmstrong is now a well-established brand.

Our core target audience is the 96,120 people working in agriculture and horticulture production on 50,000 farms in N.Z. (figures from MPI Food and Fibre Snapshot report).

Over the past seven years, our annual survey of 450 farmer and growers has shown huge increases in awareness levels among farmers of Farmstrong.

Awareness levels rose from 31% of farmers three months after launch in 2015 to 81% of farmers in June 2024. Of this number 36% recalled the Farmstrong brand without being prompted.

Farmer Awareness of Farmstrong



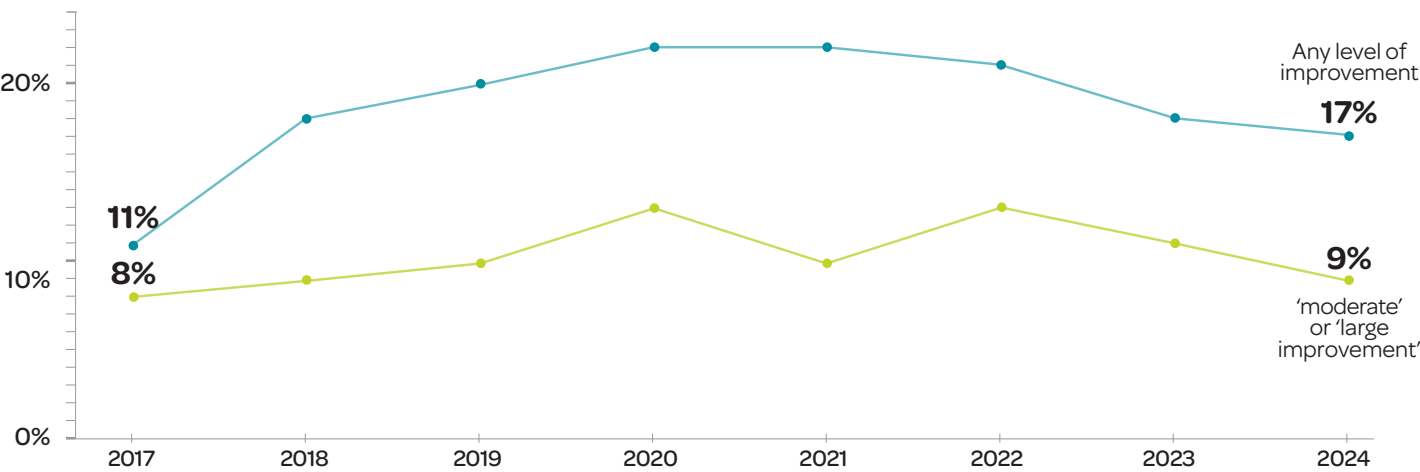
Farmers are making changes

Changing traditional attitudes and behaviours is a significant challenge. Farmstrong’s mix of farmer-to-farmer stories, workshops, podcasts, webinars, events and online resources are making a measurable difference. Our latest 2024 annual dashboard results, based on a random sample survey of 450 farm owners, found:

17% of farmers and growers surveyed attributed some level of improvement in their wellbeing to Farmstrong (over 16,000 farmers and farm workers).

9% of farmers and farm workers reported a ‘moderate’ to ‘large’ improvement in their wellbeing and their ability to cope with the ‘ups and downs’ of farming (over 8,500 farmers and farm workers).

Improvement attributed to Farmstrong



Increasing engagement

Farmers and growers engage with Farmstrong through the following channels:

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

Our 2024 survey found **26%** of all farmers had participated in Farmstrong since it launched (over 24,000 farmers and farm workers.)

23% of farmers/growers reported engaging in the last 12 months (over 21,000 farmers/growers and farm workers).

A key insight is that those who engaged more in Farmstrong report higher levels of improvement. Farmers who engaged with Farmstrong through five or more channels were significantly more likely to report improvements in their wellbeing compared to other farmers.



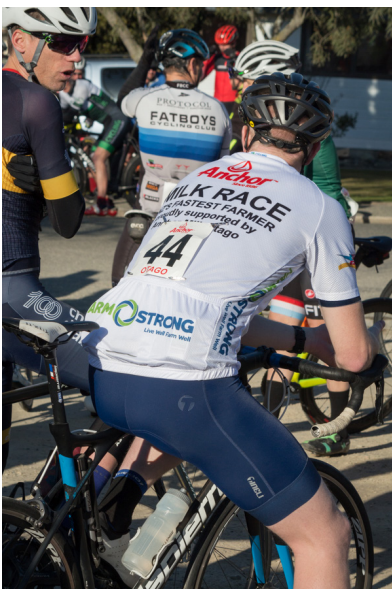
“ You can’t just be head down, bottom up and chasing your tail all the time in farming or you’ll burn out. Your wellbeing has to come first. People need to recognise when they are under the pump and do something about it. Talk to your partner, talk to your friends, keep an eye out on your mates. If people aren’t turning up at Field days and farm discussion groups get in touch with them. ”

Richard Tosswill, sheep and beef farmer, Wairarapa



“As farmers we’re buffeted by so many external factors beyond our control that it’s easy to focus on the negatives and forget about the good things that are constantly happening. That’s why it’s important to celebrate your wins. The fact that your ewes are in tremendous order or your feed is finishing your lambs well. If you stop to celebrate these things, I’m convinced it keeps you and your business in good shape.”

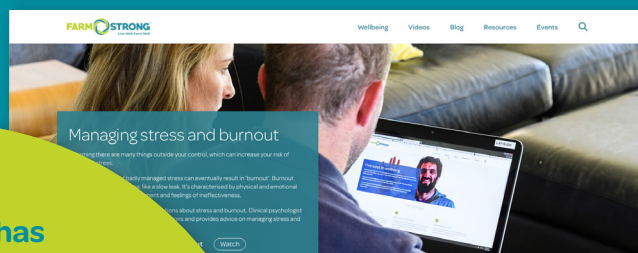
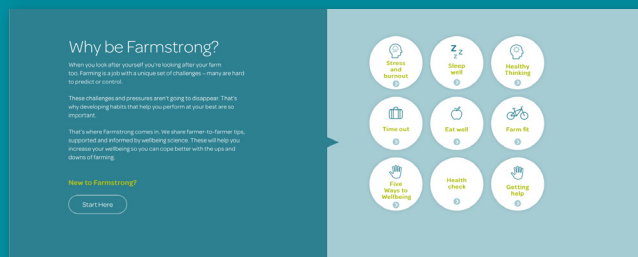
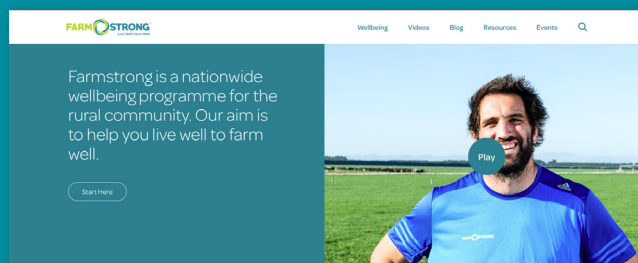
Jack Cocks, sheep and beef farmer, Mt Nicholas Station



Spreading the Message

Farmstrong's website is the main portal to an extensive amount of farmer-based video and downloadable resources on the various wellbeing topics. Since 2016 there have been over half a million unique visitors to the website. More than 30 rural media outlets have featured Farmstrong stories. Farmstrong stories and ideas also feature heavily during Mental Health Awareness week in television, radio, print and social networks.

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



People who stay Farmstrong invest in 5 simple habits called the 5 Ways To Wellbeing.



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www.farmstrong.co.nz





Looking Ahead

Our Strategic Priorities 2025–2030 are to:

- extend Farmstrong’s reach to more groups working in agriculture and horticulture.
- increase the number of people attributing improvement in their wellbeing to Farmstrong.
- support more people to share Farmstrong messages and content.
- increase the scope and depth of our tools, resources and topics.



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

Dylan Ditchfield, Dairy farmer, Southland





Founding Partners



Strategic Partner

