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PROGRAMME

How do rural women define their success?

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To cohort 43, its been phenomenal. What an inspiring bunch of people to meet and go through this process with. Some amazing friendships made and connections all over the country and within our incredible primary industries. How lucky are we to have this pool of people at our fingertips! I hope we can keep growing and I look forward to seeing everyone's journey, wherever that may lead.

Now to put all these new gained skills and knowledge into practice. Its time now to set more big goals, and to keep moving forwards.



*A little
progress each
day adds up
to big results*

About the Author

Farming is such a passion of mine. Having grown up in Christchurch and not from a rural background, many would suggest this isn't your usual makings of a rural woman in the primary industries. I met my husband Hamish Moore 17 years ago at ITO training in Dunsandle. With him being from a farming background in Waimate, South Canterbury, we have together managed to create our own farming business and work in with his parents Ian and Glenda.

We have two beautiful children, Fletcher and Alexandra, who both have a fondness of rural farm life too. I love working and contributing to our family business and we hope one day our children will be the fourth generation of Moore's to farm here on Linnfield Farm and carry on our family's legacy to this land.

Playing an active role in our small town and local community is a quintessential part of being a rural woman to me. Contributing to several committees, and being available to help where I can as well, as the enjoyment of working towards a goal, is a real pleasure for me. Seeing the visual progress is what makes me proud to be a farmer. I love being able to take something that needs work and have the final product at the end. It is the most satisfying part of a job, starting something and seeing it either grow into a beautiful animal, seeing staff members step up and take on more responsibility within the workplace, or keeping pride in their workplace and the feeling they are part of an authentic team. Being out on the land and being fortunate enough to farm this beautiful part of the country is such a reward for being a farmer.

Having and finding purpose along the journey is part of that too. Doing Kellogg has been a great goal for me. Having never been to university, report writing is not on my resume as yet. Being part of a great team and surrounding myself with amazing, willing people that want to help is what has got me through this process. I feel so privileged to have had this support, it's been great so far.

Executive Summary

Recognition among our rural women and their success is a topic I don't think is acknowledged or emphasised enough. Being able to confidently believe and recognise you make an impactful contribution to meet your values, and have a definition of your success while being content with your moral compass is essential. The aim of this project was to talk to a cross-section of rural women and then make an informed decision about the definition of their success, and how they believe it impacts over their lives and communities.

For this study I interviewed 11 rural women in a semi-structured format as well as recording these conversations and then completing a thematic analysis on the results. Then along with reading plenty of books and articles I have built on these themes to cover the key take-home points. The importance and relevance of defining these characteristics become the main points to understanding and finding the women's definition of success:

- Identifying success and whether it is measurable
- Support systems
- Health and wellbeing
- Challenges and adversity
- Primary industry perceptions and pressures

Following on from these points I then created an understanding and gave clarity to these themes. Having women identifying that their success is a way of how you make others feel and their own needs being met, and that it is measured in reaching a goal or making an achievement. Having the right support systems around to be able to grow and prosper while finding your purpose has proven central to the women interviewed. Creating a life where health and wellbeing needs are being met and can you identify where change can occur also emerged as a central theme. It was recognised that facing challenges and adversity and having the resilience to carry on forwards when these may occur was key to success for many interviewees. And finally, having an understanding of the perception of others on what it is you do and how that represents you, while comprehending the effects this may have on our wider industry and the markets that it involves also impacts on women's understanding of success.

The following are the key observations and recommendations I have discovered during this research:

- A need to recognise that rural women's success comes in different ways;
- Measuring success and taking the time to recognise and reward during this process is a constructive exercise;
- Having support systems in place to streamline the objectives you want to achieve is essential;
- The importance of recognising when you need to address your wellbeing and implement strategies to do this.
- Being able to make good clear decisions to know when things align with your values and morals is a clear priority for successful rural women.

- Being able to rise above others perceptions and keep focussed on your realities is an important message for rural women.
- Joining in with liked-minded groups, such as Rural Women NZ or the Dairy Women's Network, can provide further opportunities and support.

Resolutions to these themes were then identified in the conclusion and key characteristics of success were identified among these women.

Having the confidence to create and lead change is a defining part of understanding success. Knowing your place within your role, your community, and the industry, and having a plan to implement clear pathways to affect others perceptions is essential. It is clear that believing in the cause and knowing that you can always create and work towards positive change is a key driver for many rural women. I believe these are the key take home points to rural women defining their success.

“There is no elevator to success, you have to take the stairs”

Contents

Disclaimer.....	2
Acknowledgements.....	3
About the Author	4
Executive Summary.....	5
1. Introduction	8
2. Methodology.....	9
3. What Success means for Rural Women	10
4. Support Systems	12
5. Health and Wellbeing.....	15
6. Challenges and Adversity	17
7. Primary Industry Perceptions and Pressures	19
8. Conclusions	21
9. Recommendations	21
10. References.....	22
11. Appendices.....	23

1. Introduction

In a changing and challenging world, I am wanting to delve into how rural women in New Zealand view and measure success, and how this success is enabled. I will also explore some of the challenges faced in achieving this success and how the perception and pressures associated with the primary sector also impact rural women's understanding of their success. In order to address these issues, 11 women living and working within rural communities have been interviewed and their responses have been analysed, and help inform this discussion.

As the manifesto of Rural Women New Zealand attests, "rural women are the backbone of our rural communities and are vital to ensuring the communities in which they live, work, and play are strong and resilient."¹ We know, having a broad base of knowledge and experience of life, are attributes which contribute to both personal and professional success. For some people success can be an objective measure, such as their salary level, level of responsibility, or job title. For others, however, it is a subjective measure, for example job satisfaction or a personal sense of accomplishment. For some it is both.

This report seeks to examine how women, working and living within rural New Zealand, recognise their diverse knowledge and experience as factors actively contributing to their success. Do rural women view themselves as successful and what measures do they use to define this success?

Is success being part of a large business; working on farm alongside other family; or working independently outside the farm gate within the primary industries or in other sectors? Do rural women see leadership or governance roles in the wider community – whether on local committees or at a regional or national level as being an important measure of success?

This report will also examine how support systems, particularly those provided by husbands and other close family, are essentially linked to rural women's sense of success, and their ability to succeed. Health and wellbeing is also a central theme that will be explored, particularly how rural woman perceive the importance of these issues in their busy lives.

Challenges of rural life are often felt keenly by women, and the competing priorities of careers and family can cause and create barriers for typical notions of success for some women. As a result, it is possible that women in the rural sector minimise the value of their contribution in day-to-day life. This report will examine some of the challenges faced by rural women, and how they address these challenges.

The report also covers how the perceptions and pressures that come from wider than our industry impact on women. There is so much coverage in today's media and more often than not it is the negatives that outweigh possibly seeing the positives. It can have so many effects on our international markets and that is a major concern for continuing our economy in New Zealand. It also has impacts more close to home, applying pressure and stresses to family businesses, and to the women that work so hard for them.

How do rural women define their success? Can it be measured? I plan on utilising the experiences and knowledge of my interviewees and their real life stories, while also reading up on literature that involves women in leadership and governance positions. I will then compare and contrast this information to create my report from articles and works relating to these questions within New Zealand, and then creating themes from this information.

¹ Rural Women New Zealand, Manifesto, <https://ruralwomennz.nz/manifesto/>

2. Methodology

I chose to use a semi-formal, structured interview process over the phone and in person with 11 women with different life experiences as rural women. It was important to me to get a diverse range of women from within the rural sector, to see if this would create common themes. Developing questions to pull the correct data was pivotal in this process.

I then undertook thematic analysis of responses as per Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke's article on thematic analysis in psychology to developed the main points for the report.² Each woman was asked the same set of questions, which were provided in advance of the interview. I was able to complete these interviews over 10 days and that process condensed the information for me being able to process it.

I also voice recorded these interviews so I could refer back to them. I am very grateful for the willingness of these women to participate and accommodate my research. I commend them for their honesty and integrity in answering these questions. I really enjoyed this process and met some inspiring women doing incredible things. These conversations had many take home points and made a lasting impression on me. I got some great feedback on my questions and this has created a lot of talking points in conversations held with many others over my Kellogg journey.

I also utilised a varied arrangement of literature to compare and contrast between the theory of women in leadership and then a variety of other papers I found around women and their involvement within the primary industries. I then formed the common themes based around all of these resources.

² Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology", *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3 (2), January 2006, 77-101.

3. What Success means for Rural Women

Success differs for everyone and it can be difficult to measure. Commonly the feeling of happiness or the impression of happiness of those around you are the main factors for a feeling of being successful. How you make people feel directly correlates back to a feeling of success, be that in your workplace team, family members, or your local community. The women interviewed identified a number of key themes which drive their notions of success, including achieving a defined goal, personal and family wellbeing, intellectual stimulation, and a good work/life balance. These themes will be discussed in this section.

An achieved goal or accomplishment, big or small, was one of the most commonly described measures of success – “a box ticked on a to do list and the feeling of satisfaction.”³ The feeling of making a positive contribution to the work you are doing and also the people you do that with but not having that come at the cost of your own happiness and success. That you can give back to those who may have helped you and having a sense of purpose that aligns with your morals and values. As one interviewee stated, “doing something that makes a difference”⁴ is a driver for continued efforts. This also aligns with expressed feeling of job satisfaction and having a job well done and the reward that brings is success. All of these examples of success align with the definition of success according to the Oxford Dictionary: “The accomplishment of an aim or purpose ... A person or thing that achieves desired aims or attains fame, wealth, social status etc.”⁵ perhaps excepting the “fame” for these particular women. To feel accomplished is a massive part of being successful to every woman I interviewed.

Personal wellbeing was also clearly articulated by the women interviewed as an important element of feeling successful. This included having a sense of your own wellbeing and having other outlets to be creative and that are fulfilling to you. Being successful is confidence in what you are doing and having the available time to do things you love. Time to step away from work, time to do things for yourself, and time to spend with those you hold closest to you. As one woman stated, “success is growing a family and having the ability to give them confidence in life to be aspiring people without the expectations of where their lives should lead them ... The rewards that come from that make me feel successful as a mother.”⁶

Success was also described as “having continuous intellectual and social stimulation ... Being solution based and working towards resolutions and having opportunity with organisations that matter the most to you.”⁷ It was clear from interviewees that positive contributions to problem-solving in both a professional and person capacity gave a strong sense of accomplishment and success. Empowerment of rural women is a strong point of view from Rural Women New Zealand, who state that “the voices of rural women must be included in consultation and policy development to ensure positive outcomes for rural communities.”⁸ This aligns perfectly with the opinions from many of the interviewees.

Achieving a balanced lifestyle amidst the many competing priorities gave all the women interviewed a sense of success. Prioritising time and family commitments was one of the most important factors for all of these women. Creating schedules and time to cater firstly for their families and “budgeting your time”⁹ was commonly referenced. During the

³ Quote from Interviewee J.

⁴ Quote from Interviewee F.

⁵ Oxford Dictionary, “Success”.

⁶ Quote from Interviewee G.

⁷ Quote from Interviewee A

⁸ Rural Women New Zealand, Manifesto, <https://ruralwomennz.nz/manifesto/>

⁹ Quote from Interviewee E.

interviews, creative ways of managing to fit time in for themselves and work and all of their other life commitments emerged.

The women were then asked how they measured their success – could it possibly be measured? The replies received were similar to the topics discussed above but included more a sense of reward or feeling – “seeing other people’s growth and change occurring ... Receiving feedback and being open to receiving positive or negative feedback to create change.”¹⁰ Comments such as this revealed that to these women, success is not always measured by money or achieving key performance indicators. Measures of success are “more intrinsic. Happiness, personal rewards, couple satisfaction.”¹¹ To these women, success is measured in happiness and being content with where you are. It’s striving to be “as good as you can be and having a contribution while making it fun along the way.”¹²

Being successful is having the ability to make good decisions, and is not necessarily based on work or life pressure. Having confidence in what you put your hand to and doing it well. Producing a good product, amazing service and having a good reputation are many ways of measuring success. “I don’t see success as a dollar figure.”¹³

One interviewee described measuring her success as being able to be a mum and making her family time a priority now. After her focussing so much on her career and growing a business and her team she found she could measure her success with having available time and not feeling guilty for being in one place or the other. Working from home and prioritising productivity was a huge part in her being able to achieve this measure. And she always refers back to whether her values and morals being met and then questioning how she could do better. She discussed how she could then reflect and be content that she was getting it right, and the sense of success that accompanied this.

It is clear that from the interviews undertaken that success is defined in far less material ways that might have been assumed. All of the women identified a sense of personal and family wellbeing, closely linked with a good work/life balance as being central to their notions of success.

*Success is very circumstantial –
It can be dangerous to adopt
somebody else’s measures of
success, or that yours is the only
measure of success.*

INTERVIEWEE C

¹⁰ Quote from Interviewee C.

¹¹ Quote from Interviewee J.

¹² Quote from Interviewee G.

¹³ Quote from Interviewee E.

4. Support Systems

The importance of strong and varied support systems emerged as a clear theme from among the women interviewed in helping them achieve personal and professional success. As discussed previously, a balanced lifestyle was highlighted as an important measure of success, and for many of the women interviewed, support systems are an essential part of achieving this balance.

Many forms of support occur naturally within the rural family environment. With young, growing families, time and needs cannot be met for everyone. As one woman stated, in this time-short environment her “career doesn’t always come first.”¹⁴ Having early starts to get ahead of the day was one technique used by an interviewee to get everything done without the distress of ‘mum guilt’. Another way of approaching these pressures expressed was being realistic and not overcommitting to other tasks, with the family coming first. “It just doesn’t work without them”¹⁵ – clearly showing that without having support systems, other forms of success are not going to work or come easily.

A lot of the women interviewed have very supportive families that live close by, working in with mothers and in-laws that are willing and able to pick up the slack when they couldn’t be there. Some mentioned having nannies over the years that became like family, basically having an extension of support and care in a paid position, but with family values being met. Also the use of early childhood centres for those women who lived close enough to be able to utilise these services were essential to being able to undertake work at home, on farm, or in other roles.

While there may be a notion that life may get easier once the kids are all at school, most women when asked this question agreed that it was in fact busier. With school events and sports and extra-curricular activities taking over already busy schedules and becoming more involved in the family’s time. However, while children’s education and their other activities add further jobs and pressures for already busy rural women, the support and social connects provided through child care and school were also incredibly important for these women. “Having a supportive network of friends and sharing the load between us, and the feeling of belonging in good rural communities”¹⁶ was a feeling commonly expressed.

Some of the women interviewed also utilised boarding schools so that the children didn’t go without any opportunities due to living rurally and some noted that their children’s development and growth that came from attending these schools was immense. The strain of travel for children’s sport and after-school activities was taken away somewhat by having these institutions available for rural families.

All of the women interviewed who were married stated that their husband was their biggest supporter. Aligning both their needs to meet and be equal together strengthened this sense of support by putting “Family first: work second.”¹⁷ One woman said “having someone that believes in you” is the most important, “I can’t do what I do without their support”¹⁸ It’s one thing to be in a happy and content marriage, but when the strain comes on from outside influences it can be tough to make this work. Many of the women interviewed shared their views that having a supportive husband at home when you are not there, or doing their part in keeping the home and cooking meals takes that pressure away.

¹⁴ Quote from Interviewee E.

¹⁵ Quote from Interviewee F.

¹⁶ Quote from Interviewee G.

¹⁷ Quote from Interviewee G.

¹⁸ Quote from Interviewee I.

As highlighted by Sheryl Sandberg in her internationally acclaimed work, *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead*: “as women must be more empowered at work, men must be more empowered at home.”¹⁹ Sandberg speaks of women needing these support systems and it is totally necessary to be equals in the marriage or partnership. She discusses the term “maternal gatekeeping”, where “women inadvertently discourage their husbands from doing their share by being too controlling or critical” of their effort to contribute.²⁰ It becomes obvious that you can’t let go and you take over to impede the fathers involvement. And in questioning or doubting his contribution he may in turn do less around the home. “Anyone that wants her mate to be a true partner must treat him as an equal – and equally capable- partner.”²¹ It is obvious you need to work as a team and be confident in each other’s contribution and abilities.

Smaller forms of external support were also noted by the interviewees to help streamlining things around the home, or reduce domestic workloads. A number of interviewees mentioned the value of employing cleaners, gardeners and relief staff as needed to help relieve pressure, particularly at busy times of the year. Other simple strategies like using online grocery shopping or ‘My Food Bag’ were noted as being helpful, so the thought was taken out and everyone knew what the end goal was, even just for that day, or for seemingly smaller tasks.

While in many ways these support systems helped to share the burden of a very busy life for these rural women, other examples highlighting times when employment and lifestyle changes were made to provide support for these women. One interviewee detailed how, to make her new business partnership work, her husband had stepped back from his career in farming to let her move forward. She commended him for believing in what was best for her needs and their young family so they could both be successful. She struggled in her family’s younger years being at home and for all of their wellbeing she worked part-time initially to just have further purpose and challenge, beyond her role as a mother. She recognised that her needs were not being met and they found a solution to suit them and this contributed to her success and that of her family. Sandberg’s also supports this statement with “I truly believe that the single most important career decision that a women makes is whether she will have a life partner and who that partner is.”²² She also mentions “I don’t know of one women in a leadership position whose life partner is not fully – and I mean fully – supportive of her career.”²³ This places such importance of the benefits and commitment it takes to choose the right life partner and to believe in each other’s capabilities and to have those support systems.

In discussing the importance of a range of supports, it was noted that recognising the need for support in the first place was essential. One interviewee stated, “there is no perfect recipe in trying to find that balance, you can’t be everything to everyone.”²⁴ She also went on to say “you get in a cluster of being busy”²⁵ and don’t always stop and consider its toll. It’s easy to be busy being busy and have that frame of mind every day. Being stopped by a parent at school and them simply asking, how are you? The classic reply is often ‘oh good, I’ve been so busy’. It’s like we think we can wear this as a badge of honour and the busier you are the higher in hierarchy you think you are. As highlighted by Brene Brown, in her book *Dare to Lead*, “we are a culture of people who’ve bought into the idea that if we stay

¹⁹ Sheryl Sandberg, *Lean in: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead*, (United Kingdom, WH Allen, 2015), 108.

²⁰ Sandberg, 108.

²¹ Sandberg, 109.

²² Sandberg, 110.

²³ Sandberg, 110.

²⁴ Quote from Interviewee F.

²⁵ Quote from Interviewee F.

busy enough, the truth of our lives won't catch up with us."²⁶ As with those interviewed it highlighted that rural women need solid, positive and grounding support systems to be successful in every part of their lives.

In conclusion, it is clear to understand that all rural women need strong support systems around them, even those that didn't have children, agreed having a solid group of close friends was pivotal for them to "getting off the wheel" and surrounding yourself with "your people"²⁷ is what makes life seemingly easier to navigate. If you don't have these support networks around you, my recommendation would be to identify how you can create these supports and what value you want to gain from having them.

²⁶ Brené Brown, *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead*, 2012.

²⁷ Quote from Interviewee H

5. Health and Wellbeing

Many people can identify with times in life where your health and wellbeing is compromised or perhaps hasn't been a priority. There is a much greater awareness of this topic these days and more commonly we hear phrases such as "burnout" or "run down". We are much more conscious of our feelings and mental state. Having a sense of knowing what triggers you to these emotional places and how you can be proactive in solutions is just one way of addressing it.

The women interviewed all talked about the importance of having time out from the stresses of life. One interviewee stated "turning my emails off on Friday and looking at them again on a Sunday night"²⁸ was a technique she used to ensure a break. This was her way of making her family a priority over the weekend and not thinking about outside noise beyond family life. She mentioned being precious about her weekends, and protecting her peace. That leads onto her knowing when to be in or out of a situation by "listening to that gut feeling."²⁹ Knowing she needed to address her health she also committed to fitness groups with her friends. They chose to do this, early in the mornings twice a week, and it is her absolute non-negotiable. "It's just like being part of a team now and I can't let my team down."³⁰

Most of the women when asked this wellbeing question talked about making their health and fitness a priority or another project or activity they were working on. Getting out with the family in summer to go water skiing, bike riding and still competing in competitive horse riding were some of the activities highlighted. Plenty spoke of simple strategies such as getting out for a walk, having a wine with girlfriends or getting away with the family for some recreational time as coping strategies. For them, it was identified as a need from past experiences where time management wasn't being utilised and burnout occurred.

Reflections such as "I got better at knowing when to step out"³¹ highlighted a sense of learned self-awareness around mental and physical wellbeing amongst the women interviewed. Working with people after adverse events such as the Kaikoura earthquakes and Mycoplasma Bovis has been tough on the wellbeing of a number of interviewees. One woman stated, "to see these people so broken and the surroundings they had been working and living within, subsequently then put a drain on me and my mental health. I knew I couldn't be everything to everyone anymore and I had to leave that job."³² Another interviewee said she was continually working on her wellbeing and that "we are sensible enough to know that we need to take breaks. We know to leave the property. To turn devices off and we love the outdoors."³³ Having an awareness of when to get away from everyday life can make such a difference in one's state of mind. Another interviewee stated "I am aware of my health and I am committing to live a low chemical life."³⁴ With having both her father and sister die from cancer both at very young ages, health and wellbeing had become a focus for her and her young family.

Essentially, a lot of the same messages came from asking these personal questions. There were definitely similar themes to dealing with health and wellbeing and it is a continuous journey for everyone as we go through different stages of life. Many of the women highlighted that to be successful in all the ways they sought to be, that recognition of health and wellbeing as a personal priority was essential. From there, the ability to

²⁸ Quote from Interviewee F.

²⁹ Quote from Interviewee F.

³⁰ Quote from Interviewee F.

³¹ Quote from Interviewee C.

³² Quote from Interviewee C.

³³ Quote from Interviewee F.

³⁴ Quote from Interviewee J.

understand triggers, finding a way of resolution, and self-evaluating afterwards became important strategies to continuing to maintain good physical and mental health.

There is a lot of understanding of support systems and awareness around health and wellbeing. The rural support trust supplies immense support around our country in rural communities and with a strong volunteer base this is able to be actioned. They have facilitators trained in mental wellness support. Other avenues such as online health and fitness businesses can provide a service for those that live remotely to engage in healthy fitness routines with the use of technology, like Kate Ivey Fitness, Coach Han and Kayla Itsines, just to name a few.

Communities have changed over different generations, families are predominantly smaller and lives are increasingly busier. Being able to engage with your wellbeing and blocking out external pressures comes from life experience and engaging these outside avenues to assist with this. Quoting Theodore Roosevelt, Brené Brown points out in her book *Dare to Lead* “There is an old saying that I lead by now “People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.””³⁵ I think this is a fantastic way to summarise the importance of health and wellbeing; it doesn’t cost a thing to be kind.

Be disciplined about what you respond and react to. Not everyone or everything deserves your time, energy, and attention. Stay in your light

Lalah Delia

³⁵ Brené Brown, *Dare to Lead: Brave Work. Tough Conversations. Whole Hearts*, 2018.

6. Challenges and Adversity

The challenges of living and working in rural New Zealand have been highlighted through industry research and media coverage; from the widespread impacts of extreme weather events, market fluctuations and Mycoplasma Bovis, to more personal challenges such as farm finances and succession planning, family health and wellbeing, and local community tensions. This section will address how challenges such as these have impacted the rural women interviewed and how, in addressing these challenges, these women have contributed to their personal and professional success.

As an industry, knowing your markets is a huge part of all business. With fluctuations in milk, meat and wool prices, it can be very trying times. With weather events from droughts, flooding and everything in between, it's easy to overlook these sometimes uncommon events. Financial pressures and the stress that comes from this can lead to sleepless nights, not wanting to be out in public and causing a major effect on wellbeing. "Life can be stressful and hard to take on at times, sometimes it's just one day at a time" one woman reflected.³⁶ As we all know life can always seem rosy when looking in from the outside. But as these rural women let me ask about what challenges or adversity they had faced and the ways they had overcome it or worked through things it became clear, as one interviewee pointed out, "it's hard to see the light when you're in the thick of it."³⁷

The stresses of their own health, and health of those around or closest to them are all extra added stress to an already busy life. Mycoplasma Bovis, IVF treatment, cancer, serious illness in children and husbands are some stated examples, created serious consequences and major implications on family life and a business. Other challenges can arise while sitting on committees or boards that didn't necessarily align with your values or morals, to having uproar on a management board in a high level position of governance. Such issues all come with their amount of stress, guilt, sadness, uncertainty and just generally not coping. When one woman stated "doing what was right was not easy, having to go with your gut instinct and deal with the outcome in a small school community"³⁸ she highlighted the importance of having your values and morals align in situations like these. "I'm committed to tackling problems that threaten our mission, vision and values, and I challenge others to call out the culture killers in our organization".³⁹ This is something Brené Brown emphasises within her business and staff, she goes on to say "We celebrate what works, and we change things that don't add value to the organization."⁴⁰ Being brave enough to stand up and have a voice and recognising when change can be needed. All of these challenges can impact greatly on women's personal and professional lives and indeed on their notions of success.

Sometimes saying the word "succession" can send absolute shivers down one's spine. The uncertainty and not knowing the reality is actually a very scary way to live. As one woman stated, "we don't know what succession looks like. It is frustrating knowing what to tackle next when we don't know what is in the future."⁴¹ The succession of those wanting to carrying on family farms, "trying to create understanding to siblings and their partners and the affect it has directly on our progression."⁴² This leads onto and can cause loss of "relationships with family, sleep and your goals become numb."⁴³ The sacrifice of having successful careers off farm to then head home and not having a clear concise plan to work

³⁶ Quote from Interviewee H.

³⁷ Quote from Interviewee G.

³⁸ Quote from Interviewee B.

³⁹ Quote from Interviewee B.

⁴⁰ Brené Brown, *Dare to Lead: Brave Work. Tough Conversations. Whole Hearts*, 2018.

⁴¹ Quote from Interviewee J.

⁴² Quote from Interviewee I.

⁴³ Quote from Interviewee J.

towards is heart breaking for some. The challenge of farming, especially with issues such as succession planning can, in some instances, create rifts in families that sometimes cannot be healed.

There are also the recent pressures that Covid-19 put on businesses in 2020, and are still continuing. One woman mentioned the pressure it put on her staff and them being able to perform their workload from home and not knowing about the constraints it put onto long standing staff, from a health and safety perspective. This became all the more confronting when subsequently a team member resigned, leaving the interviewee feeling like they could have done better to prevent that from happening. She noted that reflecting on this challenge has driven her to provide more support with workloads and deadlines for team members, creating a better culture to prevent these stresses in the work place.

Another interview raised the pressures of having a reasonably new business and not having an outlet for their product during Covid-19. With the harsh reality of having to be creative and innovative under that kind of financial pressure. Nobody could foresee the affect that Covid-19 was going to have until we were in it. There has not been another event like this in our lifetime and with the growth of businesses we were totally blindsided by this. However, a number of women reflected positively on the gains people have made and can look back on now. This has been majorly insightful and the resilience that comes from times of adversity is definitely to be admired.

One woman spoke of culling their herd during the Mycoplasma Bovis outbreak. The heartache of seeing their business dissolve and then having to cull their herd which was their main source of income was devastating to her and her family. To then having to fight to get their compensation with starting a young family and trying to rebuild their future when their farming business which provided them not only income but a home came with a lot of adverse effects.

The ongoing and emerging challenges of rural life clearly have a significant effect on the women interviewed, however it is through addressing these challenges through problem-solving and resilience that women are able to identify success and opportunities for positive change. Creating resilience isn't easy, it comes from being courageous and owning you story, as Brene Brown is strongly known for promoting. "We can't expect people to be brave and risk failure if they're not prepped for hard landings."⁴⁴ It's a simple saying that had great affect. We need to create resilience by talking about problems or troubles and not dwelling over failing, but it's the learnings we can take from this to take the shame away. Having failures or hard times is nothing to be ashamed about, nobody would learn or try anything new if they had never failed before.



⁴⁴ Brené Brown, *Dare to Lead: Brave Work. Tough Conversations. Whole Hearts*, 2018.

7. Primary Industry Perceptions and Pressures

An interesting piece I found about the New Zealand economy as they referred to our primary industries to be our largest export earner, “the foundation of New Zealand’s economy is exporting agricultural commodities ... Dairy is the lead export commodity”⁴⁵ This became very obvious with the amount of people in the sector who were deemed as essential service workers during Covid-19 in 2020. The flow on affect that it created was a major help toward the country’s economy and aided to keep the wheel turning.

We also know the amount of pressure international markets put onto our legislation and industry regulation. Being a farmer myself this can often be felt as overwhelming and to have so many new rules and legislation changing regularly, it is hard to keep up to date. As Rural Women New Zealand state, “The voices of rural women must be included in the consultation and policy development to ensure positive outcomes for rural communities”⁴⁶ Rural women New Zealand have recognised this among their membership and wider industry. They understand the implications that can come from decisions made on behalf of our people and includes a rural impact analysis tool to “identify and mitigate any potential adverse impacts of the intersectionality of gender and rural living”.⁴⁷ They understand that it is part of the success in our rural communities to be the voice for rural women when it comes to new and amended policies.

One woman mentioned that she was on a radio panel regularly and having an opinion in an open forum can be tough because of backlash and scrutiny over her opinions. She went on to say that she has learned to “Worry less about other people’s opinions and don’t look at the crap within the media”⁴⁸ She says that she quickly learnt to have thick skin and to try not take on the negativity. Another key point demonstrated from my interviewee was not looking at it was a strategy she developed after some time of getting upset. To reference Brené Brown “What’s the greater risk? Letting go of what people think – or letting go of how I feel, what I believe, and who I am?”⁴⁹ Staying true to your values, morals and not taking on other people’s thoughts is vital in having clarity in decision making within Industry.

Another woman spoke of how she hated the negativity that social media brought to the farming industry. She discussed how, with not a lot of understanding of life in the farming industry, anyone is able to have a say on a certain post or picture put up with a negative angle from the media. But with not a lot of understanding they actually didn’t want to have an understanding of some of the farming practices we have and the logic and practicality behind these either. She went on to say, “we are conscious of telling people what it is that we do and the privacy around our business. We don’t want people to have an opinion on our banking perceptions within a small community.”⁵⁰ She also explained that there are a lot of willing farmers out there who are open to talking about these issues we face within our industry but there is only so much hatred you can take and she mentioned about how removed our urban societies are from our rural communities now. Once upon a time the majority of people living in a city or towns would have had a contact to a farm one way or another but with the introduction of larger farms and many corporate owned farms this was a far less common part of our New Zealand heritage now. In a press release from the Agriculture Minister, Damien O’Connor, he mentioned “There’s overall recognition of the

⁴⁵ New Zealand Country Commercial Guide, 2019.

⁴⁶ Rural Women New Zealand, Manifesto, <https://ruralwomennz.nz/manifesto/>

⁴⁷ Rural Women New Zealand, *Briefing to the Incoming Minister – Minister for Women*, November 2020.

⁴⁸ Quote from Interviewee F.

⁴⁹ Brené Brown, *Dare to Lead: Brave Work. Tough Conversations. Whole Hearts*, 2018.

⁵⁰ Quote from Interviewee I.

importance of the primary sector to the New Zealand economy, but more remains to be done to address sector impacts on fresh water and the environment.⁵¹

Another key point made to me was the opinions of others in what you do. One interviewee said “it depends whose view is it and how high in regard do you hold their opinion.”⁵² She also mentioned “filtering the good from the bad and not taking everything personally.”⁵³ She shared the viewpoint that current generations are “trying to be everything to everyone” and “that the farmers voice does count and the risk that comes with not speaking out.”⁵⁴ Another interviewee mentioned the classic scenario of “no one wanted to help bake the cake, but now the work was done they wanted to eat it.”⁵⁵ She mentioned that within our industry the pressures that are put on and the work and collaboration that happens can be hard to implement. With hard work comes reward and she spoke of a lobby group they created in their area to create change and there was very little amount of support in the beginning. After the project was initiated and then seen through to completion it seemed everyone wanted to then come on board to reap the rewards of a few people’s grit and determination.

The challenges brought about by some perceptions of primary industries have helped develop a strong sense of pride in personal and professional achievements for women in rural communities. Their commitment to governance positions that align with their viewpoints and wave of thought is pivotal to being able to create change. Plenty of Industry boards are measured by their success to implement change, drive diversity and create collaboration at times. Women have a strong place in these decisions and having acceptance of this and how they feel comfortable in portraying themselves. “You just know when you have found your fit”⁵⁶ and if it is fulfilling to you. When things go well its often easy, when things get tough it can be hard to find that purpose.

“Again, it’s only when diverse perspectives are included, respected, and valued that we can start to get a full picture of the world, who we serve, what they need, and how to successfully meet people where they are”⁵⁷ Brené Brown sums it up perfectly, diversity in thought is needed to be able to see things from a different point of view. Change can be led by the government and overseas markets, it can be adapted and implemented by lobbyist. But the real change has to occur on the ground with the impact our farmers can drive and make “stable people can create change, the farmers voice counts”⁵⁸



⁵¹ Damien O’Connor, Agriculture Minister, Press Release, “What Rural-Urban Divide?”, 26 February 2018.

⁵² Quote from Interviewee G.

⁵³ Quote from Interviewee G.

⁵⁴ Quote from Interviewee F.

⁵⁵ Quote from Interviewee F.

⁵⁶ Quote from Interviewee H

⁵⁷ Brené Brown, *Dare to Lead: Brave Work. Tough Conversations. Whole Hearts*, 2018.

⁵⁸ Quote from Interviewee F

8. Conclusions

Finding and engaging with a different range of rural women from all over New Zealand was an absolute privilege. Getting to their definition of success and seeing their similar themes occurring was not only rewarding but an integral part of my success for this report. It was obvious to see the key points when analysing their responses.

Discovering that success is measured and identified as a subjective matter. The overall feeling of how you make and leave impressions on others within themselves and also in your businesses and workplaces. The feeling of community that comes with it and the sense of achievement that you can create change in such simple ways.

Identifying key characteristics to successful rural women such as resilience after adversity, strength in being able to carry on or keep going when life seems to hard. Utilising effective time management and having the ability and confidence to say yes and learning to say no when you know your needs will not be met. Being driven and setting themselves and the team around their goals. Knowing their capabilities, showing tenacity, having empathy and being able to listen. Being able to have vision and look up and out of situations. Having recognition for their input, owning that and also recognition of those around them. Being good communicators and being honest within themselves and showing that to others.

Most important is having and living by good morals and values. When these are being met then you know you can progress and hold yourself accountable. When you have a handle on your wellbeing and health and you can identify and define success.

I also discovered the use and need of support systems can be significant in making these other things obtainable to achieve. Joining in with groups that align with and meet your needs especially as rural women. Groups such as Rural Women NZ or the Dairy Women's Network, Young Farmers if you under 31, are all such incredible organisations to be a part of and learn from. Knowing who and how you need to be supported and recognising that it is ok to ask for help and in turn offering it in contrast.

Having the confidence to create and lead change is also another defining part of understanding your success. Knowing your place within your role and having a plan to implement clear pathways of others perceptions. Believing in the cause and knowing that you can always create and work towards positive change. These are the key take home points to rural women defining their success.

9. Recommendations

The following are some key learning points and recommendations shown from my study.

- A need to recognise that rural women's success comes in different ways;
- Measuring success and taking the time to recognise and reward during this process is a constructive exercise;
- Having support systems in place to streamline the objectives you want to achieve is essential;
- The importance of recognising when you need to address your wellbeing and implement strategies to do this.
- Being able to make good clear decisions to know when things align with you values and morals is a clear priority for successful rural women.
- Being able to rise above others perceptions and keep focussed on your realities is an important message for rural women.

10. References

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11. Appendices

Interviewees: Permission was received from all of my interviewees to be included in the appendices:

1. Sarah Barr – Ag People Limited
2. Nicky Hyslop – Farmer, Director at Ravensdown, Beef and Lamb, Opuha Water
3. Haidee McCabe – Irricon Resource Solutions
4. Jessica Williams – Turnbull Seed
5. Philippa Cameron – “What’s for smoko”, Otematata Station, Author
6. Morgan Campbell – ‘Good Life’ Chicken Farmers
7. Jane Smith – Sheep and Beef Farmer, Red Meat PP Director, Veterinary Council
Layperson
8. Sarah von Dadelszen – Hinerangi Station, FMG Director, Balance Agri- Nutrients
Director.
9. Moragh Sutherland – Indi Bees, Primary school teacher
10. Sonya Henshaw – Ex Rural Banker, Farmer
11. Clare Engelbrecht – Copper Road Station, Farmer

Interview Questions

- 1a What does success look like for you?
- 1b How do you measure success?
- 1c How have you changed your outlook of success over the years?
- 1d How do you celebrate or acknowledge your success?
- 2a What are your career/life highlights so far?
- 2b What roles have you been involved in that have evolved your progression?
- 3a How do you balance having a partner/family/career?
- 3b How has that evolved over time?
- 4a What support systems do you have in place to help you?
- 4b How did you discover you needed these support systems?
- 5a What do you believe are some of the key attributes of successful women?
- 5b How do other people's views affect your version of success?
- 5c How does this impact on your choices or actions?
- 5d Do you think people's view or measure of success has changed over time with different generations?
- 6 What has been most rewarding for you in your life? Example: Family, career, milestones
- 7 How do you take time out from the pressures of life?
- 8a Have you had any major challenges affect you over your journey?
- 8b How have these affected your progression?
- 9 Are there things you have had to sacrifice on your journey?
- 10a Have you had influential people or mentors along your journey?
- 10b Did you seek them or stumble upon this?
- 11a How do you look after yourself taking into account your wellbeing?
- 11b Are there moments that have lead you to address your wellbeing?
- 12 How much of your journey happened by design or did it occur organically?
- 13a Why have you chosen this career journey or how have you ended up on this journey?
- 13b How did you discover these/this?
- 14a Have you had moments or times you can identify that created change?
- 14b How have you actioned this?
- 15 How would you describe your direction for the future?