



KELLOGG
RURAL LEADERSHIP
PROGRAMME



CAN WE MAKE STONE SOUP FOR RURAL WELLBEING?

Kellogg Rural Leadership Programme

Course 39 2019

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Executive Summary

The fable of Stone Soup tells the tale of a weary stranger arriving at a village. He convinces the villagers to each contribute an ingredient in order to make a meal for everyone to enjoy. The weary stranger elaborately makes use of a simple stone as the key ingredient, to start creating the soup, as a catalyst for the village coming together. As the stranger leaves, the villagers plead for the soup recipe. It is at this point the stranger reveals they have always had the recipe. Simply put, it took each of them making a small contribution which ultimately provided a significant result. The moral of the story is that there is value in collaboration to achieve a better outcome.

The question is - can we make Stone Soup for Rural Wellbeing?

Mental health and wellbeing is a wicked problem for New Zealand. This report serves to explore if there is sufficient interest within the agricultural sector to pursue a working arrangement, commercial interest's aside, in collaborating for the betterment of rural wellbeing.

Twenty three interviews were conducted with employees of organisations that have either a retail store presence, mobile employees visiting farmers and growers, or provide membership or professional services to the rural sector. The discussions identified that the sector is acutely aware of an increasingly poor state of mental wellbeing within our rural communities, and acknowledges this is a growing concern.

Many within the sector are working individually to make a difference by way of providing educational opportunities for their staff and customers, introduction to wellbeing training programmes, providing links to various mental health and wellbeing online resources and inviting different speakers to events and workshops.

By taking a collaborative approach the sector could improve wellbeing within our rural communities. Working in unison to simplify, standardise and share scientifically proven advice and techniques which are effective for self-wellbeing management, would achieve a much better result.

Farmstrong, as a reputable and established rural wellbeing programme, is proposed as the unifying force bringing the sector together for the purpose of promoting wellbeing in our rural communities.

The main recommendation from this study is that the agricultural sector should unite to agree a framework of working together, with Farmstrong, to effect social change.

Actions resulting from the recommendations include connecting to cement commitment, collating and connecting key contacts, and a program of continuous coaching for regional champions.

A paper is going to the Farmstrong Governance Group as a next step.

Aims & Objectives

The project sought to understand how a selection of the sector currently share wellbeing resources and messaging internally with their employees and externally with their customers, shareholders and industry, as well as the desire to collaborate in order to optimise reach and impact. Furthermore, the research tested the appetite for a collaborative and consistent development and sharing of Farmstrong materials, research and community engagement as a collective approach to promoting rural wellbeing.

Ultimately, I want this project to be a catalyst for mobilising the sector in a collaborative effort to simplify and standardise messaging to rural communities and reduce duplication, by adopting the Farmstrong voice. I also want to challenge the sector to truly work together in making a difference for rural wellbeing.

*“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much”
Helen Keller*

Method

The methodologies used for this report involved an exploratory literature review and qualitative interviews, followed by thematic analysis of results.

The literature review served to find what programmes exist specifically for rural wellbeing both here in New Zealand, and abroad. Additionally, it was sought to gain some understanding of the problem of mental health and wellbeing in New Zealand.

Twenty three telephone or face to face interviews were conducted within organisations that have retail stores, mobile employees visiting farmers and growers, or provide membership or professional services to the rural sector. I spoke with employees of these organisations who were in a range of roles, including executive positions.

The interviews sought to find out three things. What wellbeing resources rural service providers and agribusiness organisations are currently providing to their staff and customers, their knowledge of the Farmstrong programme and finally their interest in collaborating for rural wellbeing.

The report findings represent comments from a selection from the sector rather than the entire agricultural sector.

1. Introduction

Everyone has mental health; just as everyone has physical, social and spiritual health. With regard to mental health, nearly half of all New Zealanders are likely to experience a mental illness at some point of their lives, with depression and anxiety being the most common.¹

A positive state of mental health is about feeling a general sense of wellbeing, confidence and self-esteem. Having good mental health is important not just for getting through the day, but so you can form healthy relationships with others, and enjoy and build the life you want.

Farming does not cause mental health or wellbeing issues. However, where there are continuous pressures and unpredictable variables such as the weather, staff, meeting increasing regulatory requirements and concerns around animal welfare, financial pressure, bio security challenges, long hours and social isolation, this can have an impact on a farmer's wellbeing.

By developing a plan within the agribusiness sector we could collectively increase the potential reach of a unified wellbeing message. The result of this could be a significant shift to knowledge barriers and the creation of meaningful change. Farmstrong represents an opportunity for the sector to collaborate productively for rural wellbeing.

The reference to the sector throughout this report refers to agribusiness and professional service providers to the agricultural sector with a significant presence across the country. Presence suggests those with a retail footprint, telephone service centre, membership base or with mobile staff servicing rural New Zealand.

¹ www.mentalhealth.org.nz

*“Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we have been waiting for. We are the change that we seek”
Barack Obama*

An internet search and review of literature in relation to wellbeing programmes in New Zealand specific to the rural community revealed that Farmstrong is currently the only one.

There are a number of websites in New Zealand offering resources with information on looking after your mental health, depression, how and where to get help when you need it, all supported by a range of audio visual clips and worksheets. I have referenced some of these in the appendix section of this report.

Looking across the globe it appears that Farmstrong is unique worldwide in the way it takes an upstream and proactive approach to wellbeing for rural communities.

Some specifically rural wellbeing programmes available in Australia include: Sustainable Farming Families, Beyond Blue, the Rural Alive and Well Tasmania Programmes. These have a headline focus on depression and suicide awareness and management as opposed to the proactive promotion of rural wellbeing. The websites for these programmes are listed in the reference section of this report.

To me this signals that generally rural wellbeing programmes with a proactive approach of promoting wellness are not common, more so these programmes exist to provide helpful information, resource and contacts for depression and anxiety.

Thus, there is no evidence I could find that says the rural sector in New Zealand, or abroad, collaborate in support of a proactive wellbeing approach.

This report provides a range of insights as to the appetite within the sector for working together for the promotion of rural wellbeing and how this might be achieved, as well as highlighting associated challenges.

1.1 Farmstrong

Farmstrong is a not-for-profit nationwide wellbeing programme for the rural community. It encourages farmers and growers to look after themselves in order to look after their farm or orchard businesses and their teams, family and the wider community.

The programme shares farmer to farmer tips, skills and resources supported and informed by wellbeing science to help increase wellbeing so that farmers and growers can cope better with the ups and downs of farming and get the most out of life.

The goals of the Farmstrong programme are:

- Motivate farmers to get involved
- Provide them with the practical tools and resources they need to take action
- Make Farmstrong a trusted rural wellness brand, authentically reflecting the experience and insights of farmers
- Mobilise a well-informed Farmstrong community/movement that grows steadily over time

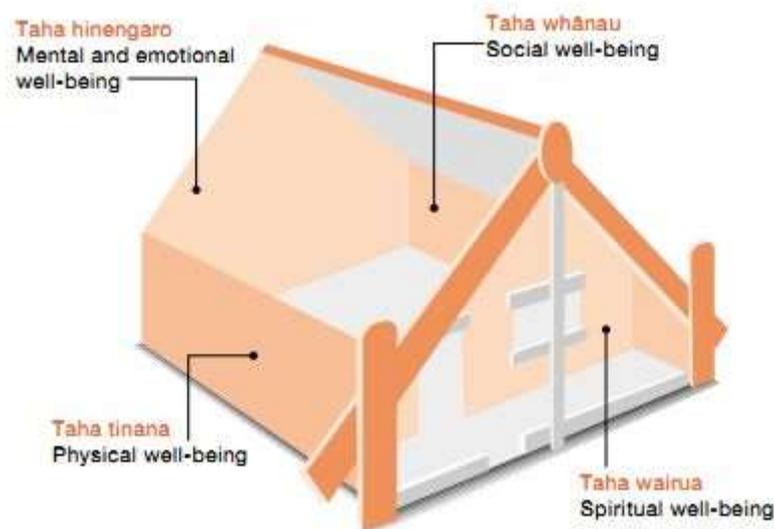
The Farmstrong programme is well established having been in operation for four years with financial investment from The Mental Health Foundation, ACC and FMG (Farmers Mutual Group), supported by an increasing number of donations from various fundraising efforts of rural communities and organisations operating in these communities. FMG, as a founding partner of the programme, is mindful of not having its association with Farmstrong in any way connected to a commercial benefit.

1.2 Hauora – A model for wellbeing

Hauora, meaning health, is a Māori philosophy unique to New Zealand. It encompasses four elements of health and wellbeing; physical, mental, social and spiritual. Each of the four elements of hauora is interrelated. This concept is recognised by the World Health Organisation.

The Whare Tapawha Model, created by Dr Mason Durie in 1994, depicts four walls of a whare, which is the Māori word for house. Each of the whare walls represents an element of hauora. The model highlights that all four elements are needed to provide strength and balance in order to provide stability to the structure.

Figure 1 – Whare Tapawha Model



Source <http://health.tki.org.nz/Teaching-in-HPE/Health-and-PE-in-the-NZC/Health-and-PE-in-the-NZC-1999/Underlying-concepts/Well-being-hauora>

The Whare Tapawha Model clearly shows that no single element operating alone will provide stability with regard to wellbeing. The model implies that an understanding and a commitment to managing each of the elements in unison would ultimately benefit ones wellbeing as a whole.

1.3 Current state of mental wellbeing in New Zealand

The 2019 Government Inquiry into Mental Health and Addiction says “Mental health and addiction challenges are common in New Zealand, and anyone can experience them. Prevalence studies indicate that 50–80% of New Zealanders will experience mental distress or addiction challenges or both in their lifetime. Around one in five people will experience mental health and addiction challenges in any given year. There are some indications that prevalence appears to be increasing ... In addition, New Zealand’s rates of suicide remain stubbornly high and have been trending upward in recent years.”

The Inquiry released alarming statistics with regard to mental health, including that the number of people accessing mental health and addiction services has grown 73% in the past 10 years. The number of prescriptions for mental health related medications has also increased by 50% in the last 10 years and continues to grow about 5% each year. The annual cost of the burden of serious mental illness, including addiction, in New Zealand is estimated at \$12 billion or 5% of gross domestic product.²

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern wrote an opinion piece³ which was published to coincide with her attendance at the National Agricultural Fieldays at Mystery Creek in June 2019.

She said that when working up the so called Wellbeing Budget, and the billion dollar mental health package, top of mind for her was how frontline mental health services would work for rural communities.

² <https://mentalhealth.inquiry.govt.nz/inquiry-report/he-ara-oranga>

³ <https://i.stuff.co.nz/business/113391405/fieldays-a-time-for-government-to-see-innovation-and-listen-to-rural-sector-says-pm>

She mentions speaking with a group of rural women who had singled out mental healthcare as the key issue for their community, and that this was not an unfamiliar story.

“That’s why one of the biggest parts of that package is putting mental health services into GP and medical centres so that it is accessible, with an extra \$20 million into tele health so phone line services and digital appointments are amped up because we know people are isolated from those services”.

1.4 The Wellbeing Budget

In May 2019 the Government of New Zealand released its Wellbeing Budget. The Wellbeing Budget means that alongside GDP, the Government will measure five key priorities they believe will make improvements to the lives of New Zealanders. One of the five key priorities was identified as mental health which, has been apportioned a budget of \$1.9 billion.

Mental Health Foundation Chief Executive, Shaun Robinson, says the Wellbeing Budget is a good start toward transformational change. “Funding the establishment of a new Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission provides leadership to hold the government accountable for ongoing investment and progress”. He goes on to say, “We are excited to see that new resources will be made available to our teachers to promote mental resilience in primary and intermediate schools ... this building of wellbeing skills in children will have lifelong benefits preventing mental health problems”.

The Prime Minister, and her Government, has adopted an approach to wellbeing which we have not previously seen in this country. To ensure its success the current and subsequent Governments will need a dedicated approach to supporting robust management and review processes to maintain momentum. Introduction of the new Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission will be pivotal to driving social change.

1.5 Defining wellbeing and collaboration

The World Health Organisation (WHO) states that mental health is a state of wellbeing. “Mental health is defined as a state of wellbeing in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community”.⁴

The positive dimension of mental health is stressed in the WHO definition of health as contained in its constitution. “Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”.

Key facts:

- Mental health is more than the absence of mental disorders
- Mental health is an integral part of health; there is no health without mental health

As a starting point it has to be asked - is collaboration a goal worthy of pursuing?

Jasawalla and Sashittal (2008) said, “Collaboration is the coming together of diverse interests and people to achieve a common purpose via interactions, information sharing and coordination of activities”.

The Cambridge Business English Dictionary⁵ defines collaboration as, “the act of working together with other people or organizations to create or achieve something”.

⁴ www.who.int

⁵ Cambridge Business English Dictionary © Cambridge University Press, 2019

It could be argued that collaboration between commercially competitive organisations in the sector constitutes too much of a challenge. However, it is necessary if we are to move forward in a meaningful way to achieve mutual benefit, resource development and education of our rural communities. We need to move beyond an 'us and them' mind set.

1.6 Cooperating is not the same as collaborating.

Rebecca Hyde, Nuffield scholar of 2017, said in an interview with Farmers Weekly in 2018, "When groups only cooperate they tend to retain their particular alliance to their sector or interest – as soon as you hear references like 'this suits us' you know it's cooperating not collaborating".

Often used interchangeably, there is sameness between cooperation and collaboration. Simply put cooperation is where organisations work together with a purpose of achieving the same goal, even though their methodologies may differ. Though the end goal with cooperation is the same, often the interests are specific to the individual organisation. There is no shared identity because everyone is working to achieve their own goal for their own benefit. Cooperation has a focus on self-sustaining and self-organising. When cooperating with a group you can chose to leave at any time.

Collaboration, however, is a coordinated activity where organisations continuously try to develop and improve the solutions to a problem identified and shared between them. Collaboration is when organisations come together to work as one on a collective interest, instead of for their own benefit.

When working collaboratively organisations work in unison and use that common identity to achieve the shared goal. Collaboration, if done with good intention, can help in shifting mind sets and in developing a groundswell for change.

2. Findings and Discussion

This report has a focus on collaboration within the sector as one means by which to improve rural wellbeing. This report does not attempt to find a solution for, or to understand, the suicide and depression rates within our rural communities.

2.1 Is collaboration within the sector desirable?

The project research interview asked, “Would your organisation collaborate with other rural service providers, with regard to rural wellbeing?” Each of the organisations interviewed returned an emphatic “yes”. One in particular remarked that; “It would be a great thing to have all the competitors working together to send a bloody strong message to the sector”.

Amongst levied organisations and co-operatives, the point was raised that they exist in part to provide tools, knowledge and information to their members. Thus they are answerable to their members and ultimately their vote.

In the case of levied organisations it was suggested there may be a requirement to check in with members’ interest before introducing a focussed approach to wellbeing for the wider sector, particularly if there was a financial investment proposed.

In general discussion it was revealed that currently many of the sector organisations are engaged with uncoordinated activities that target similar outcomes. It further disclosed that there is a desire for a shared commitment to improve rural wellbeing, and an appetite to collaborate in relation to education and simplification of the messaging.

2.2 Collective impact

The project research points to a commonality of view that in unity there is strength – often referred to as collective impact.

Collective impact is when a sector agrees to collaborate for a common agenda to solve or shift a specific problem.

As a framework, collective impact for structured collaboration was first discussed by Kania and Kramer (2011).

They developed the Collective Impact concept in which they outline the five core elements in developing successful collective impact:

1. Common Agenda
2. Shared Measurement System
3. Mutually Reinforcing Activities
4. Communication
5. Backbone Organisation

None of these elements stand alone to affect impact, just as the framework does not operate within a lineal path. Descriptors of these elements in more detail are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2 – Elements of Collective Impact

Developing a Common Vision for Change

All dedicated partners have a common agenda, understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving it through agreed upon actions. (Kania & Kramer, 2011)



Agreed Upon Methodology for Measuring Success

The ability to measure success in a collective impact initiative is essential. Collecting data and measuring results consistently across all organizations ensure efforts are aligned and partners are accountable to each other.



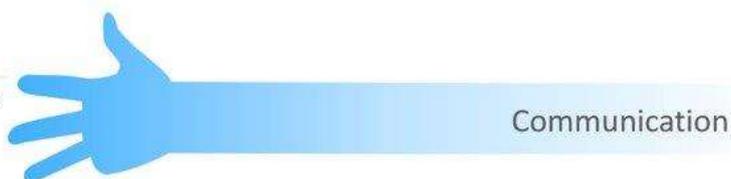
The Action Plan

Diversity is the key! It is not the uniformity of partner contributions that make a difference, it is the coordination of their differentiated activities working towards a common goal that creates impact.



Build Trust with Continuous Communication

To build trust, strengthen relationships and ensure project integrity, strong communication norms must be in place that is understood and endorsed by all partners.



Backbone Support Organizations

Chosen organization(s) provide the infrastructure and dedicated staff to support the initiative for all partners.



Source <http://www.impactmatters.ca/collective-impact-101-collective-impact-series-part-1-of-6/>

The 23 sector organisation interviews continued by asking what collaboration within the sector could do to achieve a collective impact on rural wellbeing? All interviewees responded positively with remarks including "... it can only be a good thing" and "... it would have a huge impact". One organisation remarked that they felt pan sector collaboration would be powerful and something that they would want to be involved in. A number of responses noted that these organisations see themselves as leaders across the sector, wider than just their area of specialisation, and that a united voice for wellbeing would be of benefit. None of the organisations interviewed said that collaboration for rural wellbeing would be of no benefit.

The response to this question from the sector confirms there is much potential value and interest in collaboration that is not currently being realised. When looking at why this is so, it can be surmised that the sector are doing their best individually to affect

change and that this work has been conducted without one entity focussed on the potential of collaborating for the sector. This raises a new and exciting proposition asking “Together, what could be possible?”

3. Wellbeing within the Sector

When asked what wellbeing meant to the sector, the response was that it includes a balance across mental health, emotional wellbeing, financial fitness, family dynamics, farming best practise and relationships within the community and with suppliers. This is referred to as a holistic approach.

There was discussion around wellbeing including elements of being able to recognise and manage stress both at work and at home. Wellbeing carried an expectation of reaching further than just their staff, and stretched to include all of the people the sector connects with. Specifically with regard to farmers, it was said that wellbeing needed to ensure farmers had the “headspace” to make good decisions alongside the cognitive ability to be able to relate with each other.

3.1 Wellbeing focus within sector organisations

The sector shared what it is that they currently do within the wellbeing space specifically for their staff. Pleasingly, every organisation has a wellbeing framework of sorts in place, and all offer a free Employee Assistance Program (EAP). EAP is a confidential, short term counselling service available for staff at no cost to the employee engaging with the service. All commented on the correlation between their staff, their customer and shareholder wellbeing as pivotal to their organisations success. This is what some of the interviewees said.

“Our people are so important and sending them home safe and well every day is genuinely our driver. It is so important to what we are trying to achieve, more than making money ... they have an equal part to play in our success”.

“... we were reminding each other that we are part of a bigger picture, that we can support each other at work and at home and that we as an organisation and as individuals have a role to play in our communities”.

“Making sure our people have the opportunity to contribute in ways which are meaningful for them ... we want our people being in a good mental and physical space to enjoy what they’re doing while at work and outside of work”.

Some of the sector is headlining wellbeing for their staff better than others. In some cases the messaging internally to their staff and externally to their customers, shareholders and suppliers differs in language and frequency of messaging. A number of the sector has their internal messaging coincidentally aligned. This is typically being driven from a role within a human resources function. One of the interviewees said that the focus of their organisation is external amongst their customers and key stakeholders more so than internally amongst their staff.

A standout response from one of the organisations speaks to how they maintain a holistic approach to staff wellbeing, “We look at the whole person ... if you have problems in your personal life or problems physically, or mentally that are challenging for you then this is going to have an impact on the person that comes to work”. They actively manage physical, mental, and financial health in partnership with their staff including the provision of regular seminars for the purpose of growing knowledge, understanding and awareness across these areas. The educational opportunities extend to their immediate family where partners are actively encouraged to get involved.

3.2 Wellbeing resourcing within organisations

Looking cross sector the question asked was if they have, or plan to have, a dedicated resource within their organisation specifically with a wellbeing mandate. The response across the sector varied, and at times was mixed; highlighting that clarity within the sector organisations may not be present.

Some levies based organisations review and reassess the requirement and funding of a wellbeing support resource on an annual basis, taking into account other projects perceived importance and funding availability. One of the organisations does not currently have a dedicated resource with regard to wellbeing. In some cases the same person was responsible for both internal and external wellbeing ... “we hired a person into this role to engage externally in terms of getting more productivity and individual responsibility going.” In another case a fixed term employee was currently charged with wellbeing. Just two of the sector reported that they have a fulltime dedicated resource which is supported with administration assistance.

3.3 Executive approach to wellbeing of their staff

There were six interviews conducted with people who held executive positions within their organisation. Each of them said they actively encouraged a work/life balance amongst their staff to support wellbeing.

“We are cognisant of the power of the spoken and written word used when communicating work/life balance and wellbeing messages to our staff, and seek to use language which is positive and believable.”

“We asked staff to work on a significantly demanding project, to support their extra efforts we facilitated and enabled yoga and aerobic sessions they could take part in, we provided quality healthy food options and generally tried to make it better than just hard work.”

Some of the executives offered that their leadership team frequently called staff together for the purpose of sharing food. In good kiwi fashion this was customarily a BBQ breakfast or lunch, often that they had themselves cooked for the staff. It is widely accepted that food can trigger the release of dopamine (often called the feel-good hormone), and there is some science to back up the benefit of social eating.

Because of this, it is not surprising the success and feel good factor these organisations reported in ‘breaking bread’ with their staff.

3.4 Sector staff understanding of wellbeing within their organisation

Staff within the same sector organisations for the most part felt they were well supported from a wellbeing perspective and that their executives mostly lead by example. Some sector employees felt cynical about executive wellbeing messaging and challenged the way in which these were delivered and acted upon. One respondent said, “... I would like to see more evidence of this (wellbeing values) being lived in reality rather than just spoken about to feel like a tick the box exercise.”

Others commented that internal and external messaging is not in exact congruence, although there is some overlap. It appears in these examples that separate teams within the organisation are charged with internal and external messaging and do not currently work in unity.

3.5 Sector approach to wellbeing for customers and shareholders

When asked what messages and language the sector uses when speaking about wellbeing externally with their customers and shareholders most were aware of, and used, the Mental Health Foundation’s Five Ways to Wellbeing as a resource.

The Good Yarn Workshop series was a familiar resource for both staff awareness and in providing them basic skills to take out into the field. Others worked purposefully to ensure they used language with their customers to instil a sense of togetherness. One in particular said they want their customers to know that, “they are not on their own out there and we’re here to help”.

Community events with a specific wellbeing focus most often working alongside other rural professionals and organisations, were common. In particular the use of

workshops as a tool to bring people together and share knowledge, provide introductions to subject matter experts and enable community networking was a feature.

“We know that one of the causes of stress and tension is the responsibilities and accountabilities associated with the increasing burden of legislative requirement. We are seeking to make that as easy as possible ... which will help by easing the burden and ultimately contribute to better mental wellbeing.”

In half of the organisations interviewed, where staff identified a potential challenge to a farmer’s mental wellbeing they know how to manage this immediately, or at the least how to follow up promptly. Across sector the preferred initial approach is a referral to the Rural Support Trust.

The Rural Support Trust is a confidential and free service operated by rural people who understand the pressures associated with rural living. Most of the fourteen trusts nationwide have facilitators trained in mental wellness support, and are trained Good Yarn Workshop facilitators. They offer support during times of natural and biosecurity disaster working in partnership with Government, Civil Defence and the sector to offer a coordinated response. Furthermore, they are experienced and connected within their local areas to be able to refer to the appropriate professional or service if additional support is required.

In summary, of the sector organisations interviewed, there was a good understanding of what wellbeing means to them individually. There was a consistent commonality with each other in that people are the most important factor in their success. Furthermore, a framework is valuable for organisations to work with as a basis for their contributions with regard to wellbeing. This includes access to services such as Rural Support Trust, and the Mental Health Foundations Five Ways to Wellbeing resource. The findings indicate a desire for collaboration to affect change.

4. Could Farmstrong be the change maker for collaboration?

Three months after the launch of Farmstrong in 2015 a random survey of 450 farmers returned an awareness of the programme as 31%. The same survey was conducted again in June 2018. This time the survey findings returned a statistically significant increase in awareness to 81% amongst the same number of randomly surveyed farmers.

The June 2018 survey results found that 18% of farmers who engaged with Farmstrong reported an improvement in one or more of nine wellbeing areas which they directly related back to Farmstrong. The wellbeing areas included; ability to cope with the ups and downs of farming, sleep, exercise, work/life balance, time off and connection with family and friends.

Farmstrong commissioned a survey⁶ in early 2018 specifically targeting younger farmers less than 35 years of age to better understand their wellbeing needs. The survey findings reported a high awareness of the Farmstrong programme. 70% of women and 68% of men taking part in the survey had heard of Farmstrong, and 85% of both younger farming women and men knew at least 'a little' about it. Over a quarter of younger men and over a fifth of younger farming women knew 'a moderate' amount or 'a lot' about Farmstrong.

With increasing awareness of Farmstrong, and reports of an improvement in wellbeing areas as a result of engagement with Farmstrong, the programme could be the change maker driving collaboration.

⁶ Younger Farmers on their Wellbeing: Research Summary 2018

4.1 Farmstrong – Wellbeing – Injury Link

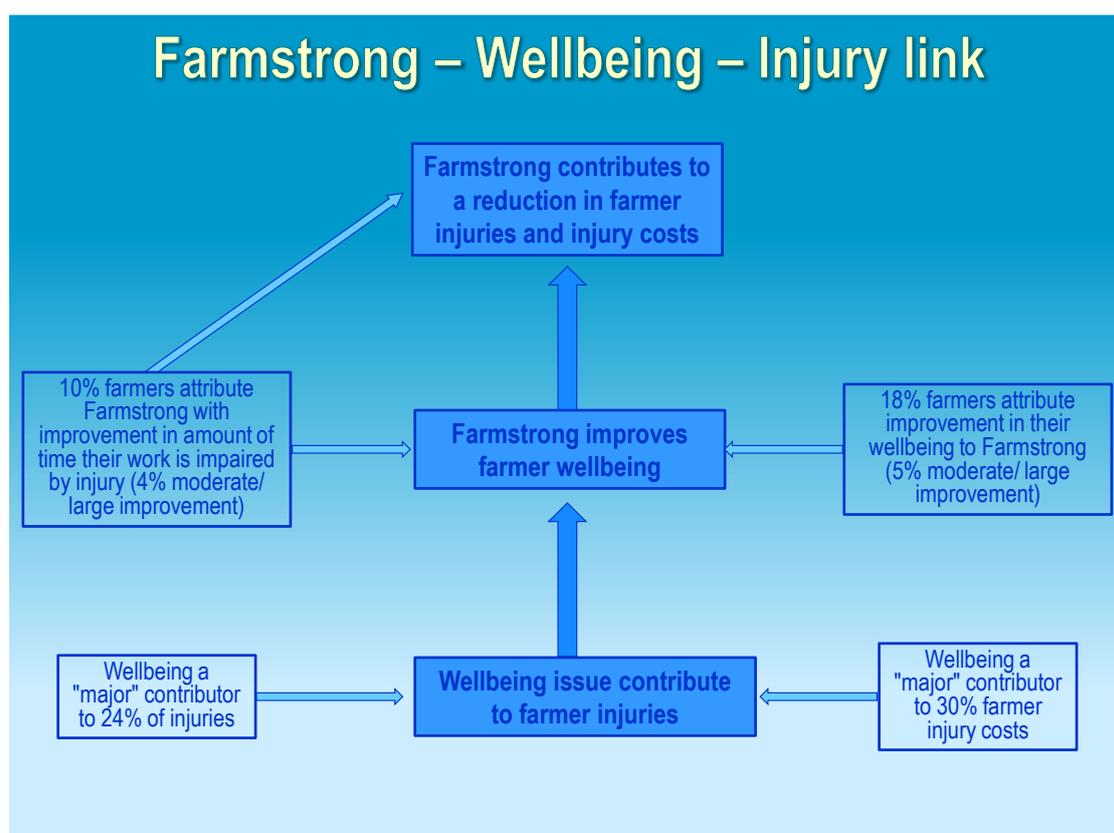
A link between wellbeing and injury has been evidenced from the June 2018 survey where the findings support that Farmstrong is contributing to a reduction in farmer injuries.

Dr Allan Wyllie, who works with public good organisations to assist in the development and enhancement of their programmes and was the lead researcher on projects including ‘Like Minds, Like Mine’ and the National Depression Initiative featuring Sir John Kirwan, was engaged by Farmstrong to conduct the survey research.

“The diagram below (Figure 3) shows the chain of evidence from the Farmstrong research to support the conclusion that Farmstrong is contributing to education in farmer injuries and injury costs. Beginning at the bottom, wellbeing issues contribute to farmer injury”.

Dr Wyllie continues, “At the next level, Farmstrong addresses farmer wellbeing issues and contributes to an improvement. The key research evidence to support both these links is shown in the diagram. This evidence is based on farmer perceptions of what is contributing to their injury and their wellbeing; i.e. the farmers are reporting a causal relationship”.

Figure 3 – Farmstrong – Wellbeing – Injury Link



Source Wyllie, A. (2019) *Evaluation of Farmstrong: Interim report, May 2019*. Report prepared for Farmstrong.

4.2 Farmstrong as a Framework

Farmstrong could provide the impetus to achieve collaborative impact in a number of ways:

- Through conducting relevant research and sharing results that are meaningful and of value to the sector
- Through provision of quality educational resources and workshops accessible both on and offline
- By becoming the sector endorsed trusted and established central hub for sector, farmers and growers to access
- By continuing to build on the successful reputation and recognition of Farmstrong

- With provision of a strong leadership structure for governance

Identifying a shared set of values amongst highly visible, professional rural service providers, professional bodies servicing the sector and agribusiness organisations would be the pivot point.

Creating a value proposition for sector involvement would cement the purpose of collaboration. That the sector and Farmstrong have common aims and values is critical. It is important to recognise the challenges of coming together, and equally as vital for these to be acknowledged and overcome.

4.3 Sector knowledge of Farmstrong

Amongst the organisations interviewed, there is variable knowledge of the Farmstrong programme. One interviewee had significant knowledge and understanding of the programme and regularly makes use of its resources. Some of the organisations in the sector have staff members who are volunteers for Rural Support Trust, in which case their individual knowledge of Farmstrong is well developed. The entire sector was able to state, at a high level, that Farmstrong is a programme established to help farmers and rural communities live well and farm well, by the provision of tools and resources.

One respondent: "... recommends Farmstrong as one of the best resources to access. I regularly make use of video clips, Farmstrong collateral and merchandise along with chocolates and mandarins (when holding workshops) to land the messages."

Remarks following a recent event where Farmstrong was a charitable recipient from fundraising efforts, "...we were surprised how many people hadn't heard of Farmstrong".

When asked what engagement with the Farmstrong programme could mean for the sector, there was a strong sentiment around the need to keep it simple with some suggesting there was a growing element of confusion within the sector. Comment included:

“There needs to be a focus on making it simpler for the poor old farm owners out there.”

“We should do it together. Let’s do it together and share knowledge and keep it simple to talk to and simple to understand.”

5. Exploring barriers to collaboration

The discussion expanded to where the sector expressed a shared frustration with the absence of cohesive and current information around who is doing what, and who they are engaging to assist. Following are some of the remarks from those interviewed.

“We don’t know who is doing what at the moment but if there was a strong collaboration this would help.”

“Everyone just runs off and does their own thing, it’s almost as if we are (each) trying to get the upper hand in doing a better job than the next organisation. That makes me sad now I’ve said it out loud.”

At the other end of the spectrum, in one region representatives from some of the sector regularly come together with the purpose of sharing knowledge and staying connected.

A feeling of discord and distrust with respect to some wellbeing practitioners was uncovered, where the general advice was that Farmstrong would need to ensure those involved had an aligned intent. Three respondents remarks are below.

“Farmstrong would need to make sure that people are doing it (becoming involved) for the right reasons and not for personal or financial gain. No ulterior motives.”

“There are some organisations that are straight out in the wellbeing space as money making ventures which really pisses me off.”

“There are a lot of people working individually taking a one on one approach, this is for when things have gotten really bad. The sector should come together ahead of things getting really bad to help build resilient communities.”

5.1 Collaboration and commercial conflict

The interviewees were asked, in their opinion, would their organisation collaborate with the sector, commercial conflicts aside, for the betterment of rural wellbeing?

All but one responded with a resounding “yes”. With regard to any potential commercial conflict, most organisations said that for the cause of rural wellbeing these conflicts could be addressed and set aside.

One of the interviewees, who is in an executive leadership position within their organisation, said “We’ve got no problem with commercial conflict (if it means) making people safer. In fact it would be a great thing to have us (competitors) all working together to allow a stronger voice.”

The one interviewee who felt unable to conclusively say “yes” to this question explained, that as a levy paid organisation, there may be some tension in committing to working together. They added “ultimately we need our farmers to see what we are working on for them, for their (individual part of the sector) benefit.”

One of the respondents said they would be “a million per cent” behind sector collaboration adding ...”Farmstrong are going to be the driving force behind wellness for the rural sector and are going to be a big component of how we look after our rural communities. We need to make sure they (Farmstrong) prosper and we should all get behind it.”

*“It is amazing what you can accomplish if you do not care who gets the credit”
Harry Truman*

5.2 A challenge to the product of collaborative effort

While the research findings seem to be overwhelmingly positive, and to have uncovered some sector momentum toward a commitment to further exploration of an industry wide collaborative effort, a consequential challenge has been uncovered.

The results suggest that effective collaboration could stir up a wave of activity for the Rural Support Trust, which rural medical practitioners might not be able to service due to their already being over capacity.

The Mental Health Foundation⁷ says on its website that one in five New Zealanders will experience mental illness this year. Figures specifically relating to rural New Zealand are not available.

Where Farmstrong differs within the mental health promotion sphere, is that the programme offers proactive prevention techniques and early intervention advice. This means adopting a Farmstrong approach might provide some relief to the increasing pressures placed on primary providers, with education and promotion achieved by a collaborative sector voice and commitment.

⁷ www.mentalhealth.org.nz

Organisations motivated primarily by profit generating activities may face a challenge with a sector wide collaboration effort. This would be an issue for the individual organisations to work through internally, and in discussion with the Farmstrong Governance Group.

One interviewee working within the health promotion space remarked that it would be “highly unusual” for corporate organisations to work together, and that they could not recall an example of corporate collaboration within the health promotion space. They also said it could be possible.

The entire sector has a role to play in making change happen. By breaking down commercial barriers, and enhancing relationships through collaboration, together we can develop a platform from which to affect meaningful change and have an impact on our rural communities.

Finally, collaborative leadership may be weakened as sector leaders leave organisations or become less active over time with competing business priorities. Here the strength and diversity of united leadership within individual organisations would be a critical factor. Leadership in its traditional sense would have to be tested. Sharing leadership at different levels across sector Boards, Executives, staff and within rural communities would mitigate this risk, and contribute to longevity of engagement.

Conclusions

Following the project research and review it was understood how a selection of the sector engaged with wellbeing resources and the way they messaged this to their staff and customers.

Of the organisations interviewed, it seems that there is motivation for an industry collaboration effort for promoting rural wellbeing, and an understanding that this would provide a more significant reach and impact for our rural communities.

Farmstrong, in collaboration with engaged and likeminded contributors to the sector could together start to affect change by way of:

- Greater expansions of message reach by each organisation sharing with each their base of customers and shareholders
- Reduction of duplication and confusion in language and message
- Provision of readily available relatable educational resources, which are regularly tested, updated and added to
- Engaging and maintaining an active network of sector contributors
- Creation of a majority voice into government, the wider sector and funding sources
- Becoming the centralised hub to keep the sector connected and informed in various ways, including regular training and refreshing knowledge of sector champions

Collaboration within the sector, making stone soup, is a long term way to affect change rather than a shortcut to social change right now.

Recommendations

In order to drive a sector wide collaboration effort for rural wellbeing, it is recommended that we:

Connect to make a commitment

- Each of the organisations contributing to this project, and other interested parties, are contacted for the purpose of cementing their engagement with Farmstrong, and clarification of what that would look like for them.

Collate key contacts

- Create the database of roles within these organisations as key contacts. This should include contacts within Boards of Directors, Executive and Senior Leadership Teams, and identified regional 'champions'.

Come together

- Key decision makers from each organisation gather for the purpose of learning about the Farmstrong programme, with inputs from the Mental Health Foundation, ACC, and the Farmstrong management team. The outcome would be an agreed engagement manifesto and framework for collaboration, including a common agenda with regard to working together with a shared vision and commitment.

Coach the champions

- Regional champions from each organisation would then meet for the purpose of gaining collective clarity with regard to the engagement agreement and framework, becoming familiar with the resources available and undertaking some training to take back to their colleagues and communities.

Next Steps

The Farmstrong Governance Group will consider a paper outlining a framework for sector collaboration based on the above recommendations.

“Mehemea ka moemoea ahau, ko ahau anake.

Mehemea ka moemoea tatou,

Ka taea tatou.”

“If I dream alone, alone I dream.

If we dream together, together we dream.

Together, great things are possible.”

Te Pua Herangi

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Appendix

For more information on Farmstrong check out www.farmstrong.co.nz

Other websites offering online resource which may be valuable to you include:

www.depression.org.nz

Includes an online self-help programme for mild to moderate depression

www.mentalhealth.org.nz

Easy to find, read and understand resources and links to support services

www.skylight.org.nz

Includes information sheets and links to support services and group counselling available in some areas

Hey, if you or someone you know needs urgent help, call 111 now.

You can call any of these numbers any time if you need help.

Rural Support Trust: 0800 787 254

Rural Women New Zealand: 0800 256 467

Suicide Prevention Helpline: 0508 828 865

Depression helpline: 0800 111 757

Lifeline: 0800 543 354

Victim Support: 0800 842 846

CAN WE MAKE STONE SOUP FOR RURAL WELLBEING?

Kellogg Rural Leadership Programme

Course 39 2019

Michelle Stevens

