

Balance: successfully managing concurrent on- and off-farm roles

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Executive Summary

New Zealand's increasing property prices, corporatisation of farming, improved communication and transportation infrastructure, coupled with continuously improving farm practice and rapid disruptive technological innovation, creates both increased need and opportunity for rural families to engage in on- and off-farm work concurrently. Modern work enabled by the aforementioned advancements, particularly the rate of digital technology change, is becoming increasingly accessible around the clock, which results in a progressively blurred line between work life and home life, with the concept of a work life balance under significant challenge. This challenge is exacerbated when farming households are engaged in pluriactivity. Pluriactivity is the situation when family members invest time off-farm, which is not a temporary situation responding to changed circumstance or shock, but rather a permanent and accepted feature of farming societies globally, that is driven by a range of diverse factors, including household, farm and spatial drivers.

The methodology employed for this research was a combination of semi-structured interviews and a detailed literature review. All interview participants were involved in both on- and off-farm work concurrently, and had professional or highly skilled off-farm employment. With the exception of one respondent, interviewees were farming sheep or beef, or grazing dairy stock, and all participants took an active/hands-on role in the farm business.

The literature research showed a strong theme that “work life balance is bunk”, and that those engaged in on- and off-farm work concurrently should rather seek “work life harmony”. Harmony was preferred on the basis that it does not create the same inherent sense of trade-offs or the over-prioritising of work in comparison to ‘life’. Harmony was seen as a better construct to break down the element of “life” into categories of family, community and self. Taking a more granular approach to life allowed individuals to bring together a number of elements in a bespoke manner to achieve success. Respondents conveyed that work life harmony had a temporal component, i.e. the importance of work and life (self, community and family) would change over time.

The research identified that to achieve work life harmony there are three key success factors and one key change in mental state that can facilitate success, they are as follows:

1. Communication and the importance of family

A success factor identified in the research was that of placing importance on relationships with loved ones when working both on- and off-farm concurrently. A consistent, although reluctant, interview response was “happy wife is a happy life” and that you can't participate in pluriactivity alone. Family team work was supported by a focus on communication, with application of a ‘business communication’ rather than ‘family communication’ for managing multiple work interests being key

to success. Family communication involved conversations about the farm business being a planned and deliberate action, rather than an *"over the fence"* or *"over breakfast"* conversation. The need for *"doing the business"* was contrasted by a requirement to know when to "box off" the various work components, so as to prevent either the family farming business or the off-farm work becoming an encroachment on the important business of family.

2. Visioning: know the end for a number of games

The importance of having a documented vision was another success factor to emerge from the research, and was a key contributor to the achievement of better work life harmony. Further, documenting the vision resulted in individuals having a clearer focus on what was important and what the end point looked like, while providing the ability to monitor progress towards time-bound, regularly reviewed goals.

It was also clearly identified that for a vision to result in increased work life harmony the goals needed to be as strategic and all-encompassing as possible, with visioning not limited to the farm business, corporate career or family goals individually, but broader in considering either the "Five F's: family, fitness, farm, finance, fun" or Freidman's 'Four Circles' of work, family, community and self. The focus of any vision needs to be strategic with a range of operational planning documents, such as 1 year and 5-year farm plans and personal development plans sitting beneath a holistic and all-encompassing vision that establishes the basis, or 'the why', upon which to make important decisions.

3. Simplified systems, technology and creativity

A final success factor that came through consistently was deliberate simplification of on-farm systems, through either altering stocking rates, changing stock class or outsourcing tasks. In all situations the aim was to make the on-farm work easier given significant time pressures, and the additional income coming from the off-farm activity reducing the absolute need to be achieving maximum farm efficiency. While all respondents were very busy and often managed systems to reduce the number of mundane tasks, the research and literature suggested that they should not be eliminated altogether, particularly when engaged in pluriactivity, with simple monotonous tasks often being the time "eureka" moments occur, so the value of *"tractor time"* for creative or entrepreneurial thinking should not be under-estimated.

Building upon these three success factors, a key change in mental state was identified with a focus on "being" rather than "doing" key for those successful in pluriactivity. To embrace these states of being there is a requirement to take on the following:

- Be deliberate: prioritise family as a non-negotiable time commitment
 - make this component equivalent to your most important appointment in the other spheres of your life.

- Be pragmatic
 - simplify your farm system to make it work for your individual situation
- Be holistic and strategic: develop a vision, include four circle granularity
- Be an individual
- Be present: avoid multi-tasking
 - aim for integration but restrict multi-tasking to where it does not affect the primary task.
- Be realistic, be mindful
 - understand that you cannot achieve all of your life goals at once, there will be a requirement for some priorities to be fulfilled sequentially rather than concurrently
- Be a 'geek'
 - embrace technology as appropriate to make your life more harmonious

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1. Introduction

New Zealand's increasing property prices, corporatisation of farming, and improved communication and transportation infrastructure, coupled with continuously improving farm practice and rapid technological innovation, creates both increased need and opportunity for rural families to engage in on- and off-farm work concurrently. Modern work enabled by the aforementioned advancements, particularly the rate of digital technology change, is becoming increasingly accessible around the clock, which results in a progressively blurred line between work life and home life, with the concept of a work life balance under significant challenge.

The motive for this research came from my own personal circumstance. I am currently engaged in 'off-farm employment', as a young executive for AgResearch. The current role fits within a broader goal of moving up the corporate ladder to within 10 years being a senior executive within New Zealand's primary industries. This type of corporate aspiration is not uncommon, and would be a shared story across both the primary industries and business generally.

At the time of writing this paper, my wife and I committed to taking on a 240 ha grazing property, through lease and ownership. This change in personal circumstance, coupled with a set of ambitious life goals, have prompted me to forecast what the future might look like from both a work and non-work perspective.

In projecting forward, it was impossible to ignore the nature of modern work, with its borderless offices and disposition to being all-encompassing with regard to life, particularly those hungry for success. Accordingly, I wondered what the future will look like if the farm business it to be successful in concurrence to family, and not foregoing the corporate aspirations.

This paper at its heart seeks to draw on the experience of others directly within the primary industries, but also to reflect on the academics of executive development, to create a set of lessons that can be applied to my own personal goals of a happy and fulfilled life that includes an active community presence, a happy family, a job that both engages and financially rewards me, and properties I enjoy and which create a legacy for my family.

Further, it is anticipated that the paper will hold interest to others who are grappling with techniques to manage work life balance, particularly those who are engaged in both on- and off-farm work.

2. Research aim

The principal question this research seeks to answer is:

How can work life balance be achieved by rural professionals who are actively involved in on-and off-farm work concurrently?

This research question was built on a hypothesis that those who engage in both on- and off-farm work struggle to do anything more than tread water on the home front. As a young executive, I already find myself short of time, and the future of being actively involved in a farming business raised questions about the feasibility of such a situation and the likely impact on time spent with family and friends.

It is hoped that this project can provide guidance to what best practice might look like for those who engage in pluriactivity (multiple job holding by rural people), or for rural people who are looking to balance competing work life priorities.

3. Literature review

3.1. Pluriactivity

Farming households often rely on members of the family to work off-farm. Depending on the circumstances, a farming family can include individuals working entirely on-farm, entirely off-farm or a combination of both. When at least one family member allocates investment through either time or capital into an off-farm interest then the household is said to be pluriactive. Pluriactivity is the technical term for a farmer not being fully invested in the farming business. It is important to note that the investment can be labour and/or capital (Bessent, 2006; Bouchakour & Bedrani, 2015).

Once seen as a “temporary response to the Great Depression”, off-farm employment to balance on-farm work is now a “regular feature of almost all farming societies” (Fuller, 1991; Bartlett, 1986; Bessant, 2000; Fernandez-Cornejo, 2007). Both the individual engaged in pluriactivity and the communities that support the activity view off-farm employment as a permanent part of rural life, rather than a temporary or transitional activity (Ahearn & El-Osta, 1993). In the United States half of farm workers work off-farm to smooth income flows (Mishra & Goodwin, 1997; Mishra & Sandretto, 2002), and in Canada non-farm income increased from 67.9% in 1990 to 73 % in 1999 (Bessant, 2006). Further, 50 - 60% of Australian rural families employ pluriactivity to maintain their lifestyles (Alston, 2004). While research on this topic is not as prevalent in developing countries, Fakayode *et al.* (2011) report that in Nigeria almost two thirds of farmers are engaged in activities outside of farming, while Bouchakour and Bedrani (2015) found that across regions of Algeria pluriactivity ranges from 25% to 86%.

3.1.1. Pluriactivity in New Zealand

Multiple job holding is a significant feature of the contemporary New Zealand labour market, with at least one in ten of those actively involved in the workforce holding down more than one job at a time (McClintock *et al.*, 2004). This tendency for multiple job holding over the longer term is most prevalent within the health and agricultural sectors, as opposed to the hospitality sector where the multiple holding appears to be more transitional.

Drivers of pluriactivity in the rural sector vary, with financial gains being the most significant. Additional reasons identified by McClintock *et al.* (2004) were those of individuals wanting to follow a certain profession or occupation, an inclination to enhance their lifestyle, and a desire to get off the farm to interact with others. Respondents who had another job for lifestyle reasons either wanted to broaden their interests by having a non-farming occupation, or had purchased the farm as part of a lifestyle decision, and hence the farm may have come after the other occupation.

Off-farm income for families in the agricultural sector has become an important source of finance to flatten out the negative effects of the cyclical commodity process and weather events. While the interaction of on- and off-farm income is complex, additional jobs and therefore, the smoothing of income flow, is mainly used by New Zealand families to maintain the household's lifestyle or to pay for extras to enhance their lifestyle, rather than for means of subsistence (McClintock *et al.*, 2004).

3.1.2. Opportunity cost as the decision maker

Opportunity cost is an important consideration when assessing the motivations for individuals to engage in on- and off-farm work concurrently. Opportunity cost is the economic concept of measuring the cost of an action or decision with respect to what is given up, or the opportunity forgone by the making of the decision (Investopedia, 2016). In a farming context, the opportunity cost of labour for the farmer (or spouse) is often measured in terms of the wage that they can obtain working off-farm versus what it might cost to employ an alternative labour unit (Fernandez-Cornejo, 2007). This concept provides a useful perspective with which to consider financial drivers, but also with which to consider aspects such as education and location which, all for differing reasons, play a part in the desire for pluriactivity.

3.1.3. Factors affecting pluriactivity

Engaging in off-farm employment is often a self-insurance mechanism for farm households to stabilise their income (Van Leeuwen & Dekkers, 2013). The reasons for engaging in this lifestyle are numerous but can be divided into household, farm and spatial characteristics.

Household

Household, or within the home determinants, which increase the likelihood of pluriactivity include being younger (age), being more educated, and having a larger household size, with larger families which run a farming business demonstrating higher levels of pluriactivity.

Several studies suggest that a higher level of education positively influences the choice to partake in off-farm employment (Chaplain *et al.*, 2014; Alasia *et al.*, 2009). Higher education extends the

number of jobs in which a person is qualified and therefore, increases the options for and probability of off-farm employment. Furthermore, the marginal returns from education are higher off-farm than they are on-farm, so this type of work is incentivised financially. On the flipside, a higher education correlates to an enhanced ability to manage a farming business, which results in better returns and a reduced need for off-farm employment (Mishra & Goodwin, 1997).

Farm

The size of the farm is an important determinant in the need for off-farm work (Alasia *et al.* 2009, Van Leeuwen & Dekkers, 2013). Individuals with relatively small farm enterprises, and those with less labour demands, are more likely to engage in off-farm work. Fernandez-Cornejo (2007) found that in the United States, owners of smaller properties who worked off-farm ranked highest across a range of metrics, including the number of farmers working off-farm, the income received off-farm and the number of hours worked off-farm, while medium or large scale farmers were less often engaged in off-farm employment.

Farm type is a further influential factor in the likelihood of off-farm employment, with international research indicating that this relates to the intensity of labour (Evans & Ilbery, 1993; Boisvert & Chang, 2009). Farming types such as horticulture and intensive livestock require a relatively high work load and are therefore, less likely to allow the farmer to engage in off-farm employment.

Spatial location

Close proximity to service centres and cities increases pluriactivity. Van Leeuwen & Dekkers (2013) Dutch study found that the farmers benefiting most from off-farm employment are those closest in proximity to off-farm work opportunities. Larger cities offer a diversity and density of job opportunities particularly in service industries. In this study it was observed that in areas with increased accessibility to cities or service hubs, farmers tended to be younger and were often involved in dairy farming, in which labour intensity is concentrated at early morning and evening, as opposed to the traditional off-farm working hours.

3.1.4. The impact of pluriactivity on farm business efficiency

Research indicates that farm efficiency decreases as off-farm activities increase (Fernandez-Cornejo, 2007). Smaller farms, which average the highest off-farm incomes, obtain the lowest farm efficiencies, as the operators who spend more time off-farm have less time to manage the farm and therefore have reduced farming business efficiency (Kumbhakar *et al.*, 1989; Fernandez-Cornejo, 1992; Goodwin & Mishra, 2004). Smith (2002) is stronger in this view, suggesting that off-farm work limits smart farming, meaning that the more productive farmers will be less likely to enter off-farm work, which reflects the higher opportunity cost of the farmers on-farm labour. However, as outlined in **Section 3.1.3**, individuals with higher education are likely to be these more productive farmers, and possess other skills which may swing the opportunity cost in favour of working off-farm, particularly if the drivers are strictly financial.

In order to optimise efficiency, individuals involved in pluriactivity must make a conscious decision to simplify their systems, which is seen in the literature as technological uptake. Technology encompasses both devices/machinery as well as applied science, the former of which is covered in

Section 3.3. Griffin *et al.* (2004) found that American arable soybean farmers who work off-farm have significantly increased adoption of both herbicide-tolerant soybeans and conservation tillage, both of which are considered time saving management decisions, compared to farmers who don't work off-farm. The same study reported that, unlike the uptake of herbicide-tolerant soybeans or conservation tillage, the implementation of yield monitors (and precision agriculture in general) was lower amongst those engaged in pluriactivity, on the basis that the utilisation of this technology is highly intensive from a human capital perspective, and not compatible with individuals who are time poor.

3.1.5. Impacts on quality of life

New Zealand research suggests that working multiple jobs has a negative effect on established friendships which are difficult to sustain, and that friendships with workmates and professional colleagues tend to be preferenced (McClintock *et al.*, 2004). Pluriactivity has also been shown to hinder the following activities:

- health and fitness;
- housework;
- community activities, including participation in an organised sport;
- caring for and supporting family members; and
- entertainment and leisure.

Cumulatively, this results in a general sense of tiredness, increased stress, and little opportunity for time off. However, these negatives were offset by positive features such as work enjoyment, academic or mental stimulation and the ability to maintain a lifestyle by way of the financial freedom afforded by increased income.

A major cause of the negative impacts of pluriactivity is reduced non-work time. Research into the hours spent working compared to time spent on other facets of life indicates that multiple job holders in New Zealand may be at risk of a poor balance, as the majority of workers engaged in two jobs are working more than 50 hours a week (McClintock *et al.*, 2004). Challenging this, Callister (2004) points out that it is not atypical for highly skilled professionals to work long hours. However, these individuals generally have high incomes and, with their roles, a great degree of control over their schedules and place of work. This results in a better work life balance than what might be achieved by people who work fewer hours in lesser skilled roles where remuneration and flexibility is lower.

3.2. Work life balance

Work life balance is often represented by the classic weighing balance upon which sit work and life (health, leisure, family and spirituality) (**Figure 1**).

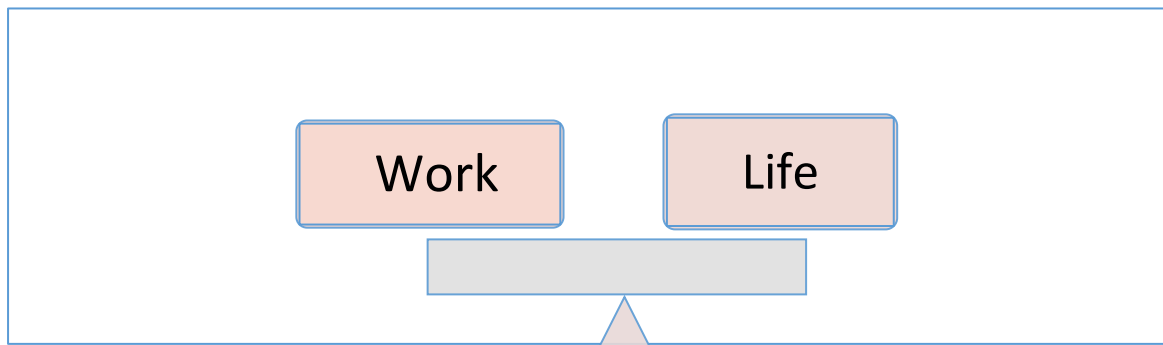


Figure 1: Work life balance

The balance of work and life is a complex concept that changes through the generations, from the 'everything is black and white' Baby Boomers, to the 'live to work' Generation X, to the disruptive world of Millennials (Johnson, 2015). The following three pieces of contemporary business literature view work and life from different angles. The simple and traditional work life balance concept is utilised to make decisions about work and 'the rest' in one article. The other articles propose a set of more holistic constructs, with work being a component of a broader picture rather than a burden to balance. What is common amongst these articles is that they provide valuable insight into managing all aspects of life that require our time.

3.2.1. Groysberg and Abrahams (2014)

Research by Groysberg and Abrahams, which involved five years of interviews with 4,000 global executives and a survey of another 82 Harvard Executive School graduates, provides valuable insights into the pursuit of optimal work life balance. This body of work reported that leaders make deliberate choices regarding the opportunities they pursue or decline, and that they do engage meaningfully with work, family, and community. The key message from this research was that in order to maximise work life balance there is a need for deliberateness in:

- Vigilantly managing one's own human capital and understanding that all time is not equal, with the example that *"The 10 minutes I give my kids at night is one million times greater than spending that 10 minutes at work"*.
- Defining what success means to you, while understanding that your definition will evolve over time.

- Understanding that your success in balancing all aspects of your life will be bespoke. In one case success might be being at home at least four nights a week. For another, it's about having emotional energy to be present both at work and at home.
- Making the time, a quote provided was *"I just prioritise dinner with my family as if it was a 6 PM meeting with my most important client"*.

A common recommendation in this study was that of caution regarding the use of technology that allows you to be in two places at once. One illustrative response was *"When I'm at home, I really am at home, I force myself to not check my e-mail, take calls, et cetera. I want to give my kids 100% of my attention. But this also works the other way around, because when I'm at work I really want to focus on work. I believe that mixing these spheres too much leads to confusion and mistakes"*.

An important consideration for those who aspire to off-farm leadership, but are inherently busy as a result of working multiple jobs, is that always being "plugged in" reduces performance. One leader observed that *"certain cognitive processes happen when you step away from the frenetic responding to emails"*. This notion is confirmed in science history, with "eureka moments" of Newton and Einstein occurring while thinking of other things, as by allowing the mind to wander, creative insights increase (Groysberg & Abrahams, 2014; Kaplan, 2012).

A partner or spouse plays a very important role in facilitating and supporting their significant other to both reach their goals and achieve work life balance, which is messaging consistent with work regarding family business decision making (Bowie, 2015). This study identified that couples held common goals, and that their relationship offered both partners opportunities for uninterrupted work, adventurous travel, intensive parenting, and political or community impact—activities that they might not have had otherwise, had they been single. Executive leaders surveyed emphasised the importance of complementary relationships, in which a partner or spouse exhibits cognitive or behavioural skills that balance out a leader's own tendencies. Emotional intelligence, task focus, big-picture thinking and detail orientation were all examples identified. The support that partners provided by demonstrating belief in decisions, encouraging risk taking or the seizing of opportunities, and being a soundboard or honest critic, were identified as being some of the significant values that partners brought to the leaders surveyed.

3.2.2. Freidman (2004)

Freidman argues that a commitment to better work life balance isn't the solution to a busy life; to Freidman *"balance is bunk"*. The concept is considered redundant because it assumes trade-offs need to be made between the four pillars of our lives: work or school, home or family, community (friends, neighbours, religious or social groups), and self (mind, body, spirit, health and well-being), and provides little ground for win-win.

Freidman believes a more realistic and gratifying goal is to achieve better integration between work and the rest of life through the pursuit of "four-way wins", and has a related online platform

(www.myfourcircles.com) to consider the relative importance and interdependence of life's pillars. An example of myfourcircles is provided in **Figure 2** below, which depicts the author's perception of 'home' being central to life. Community is not considered to interact with work and self, and in fact work and community might be considered to be antagonistic. The overlap between work and self indicates the benefit that mental stimulation achieved by work has on personal pursuits. Furthermore, a number of personal activities have a financial cost which creates a linkage being earnings and lifestyle/quality of life.



Figure 2: Author's September 2016 myfourcircles

In addition to providing the 'My Four Circles' as a platform to improve performance, Freidman advocates three "beings" to consider when weighing up the various domains of life. These include being real, being whole and being innovative. The final mechanism for improvement proposed is termed 'Crowdsourcing'. Freidman suggests gathering a group of your most creative friends, describing a problem you're facing, asking for ideas about potential solutions, and recording what you hear. This helps to practice seeing new ways of doing things.

<i>Being Whole</i>	<i>Being Real</i>	<i>Being innovative</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify expectations. • Help others. • Build supportive networks. • Apply all your resources. • Manage boundaries intelligently. • Weave disparate strands. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know what matters. • Embody values consistently. • Align actions with values. • Convey values with stories. • Envision your legacy. • Hold yourself accountable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on results. • Resolve conflicts among domains. • Challenge the status quo. • See new ways of doing things. • Embrace change courageously. • Create cultures of innovation around you.

Figure 3: The three states of being

3.2.3. Sinoway (2012)

Sinoway provides a framework on which to make decisions about what goals to pursue when, in order to maintain control of all facets of life. It describes the challenge of balancing life's priorities as being like:

"The challenge to walking on a balance beam while trying to juggle an egg, a crystal glass, a knife, and any number of other fragile or hazardous objects. As you progress in your career and life, more responsibilities and opportunities are tossed at you. And so at some point, to maintain your balance, you'll have to drop something. The key is to decide consciously what to relinquish instead of unwittingly letting go of the most important item."

The work of Sinoway (2012) aligns with that of Freidman (2014), similarly expanding the basic work life balance concept to identify seven dimensions (family; social and community; spiritual; physical; material; avocational; and career) to consider in life decision making. The addition Sinoway makes conceptually is to provide a series of questions for each life dimension, these are:

- Who do I want to be in this part of my life?
- How much do I want to experience this dimension?
- Given that I have a finite amount of time, energy, and resources, how important is this dimension relative to the others?
- Where do my options fall on the needs–wants spectrum?
- What are the investment and opportunity costs?
- Are the potential benefits worth the costs?
- Can I make a trade?
- Can I pursue my most important goals sequentially?

Further, Sinoway comments on the need for having a vision or mission in mind. He notes that *“executives are aware that for a company to make good strategic or tactical decisions it needs a mission in mind. The same holds true for individuals. Think of a jigsaw puzzle: it’s much easier to put the pieces together if you look at the front of the box”*.

3.3. Disruptive technology and changing work and home environments

While the rate of technological advancement is astonishing, modern workplace tools, including email, smart phones and lightweight personal computers, *“have made it more feasible for employees to keep contact with work”*, with it being the modern norm for employees to respond to email after hours or during the weekend (Boswell & Olson-Buchanan, 2007). However, the degree of change is expected to grow through increasing digital disruption, a concept which refers to *“changes enabled by digital technologies that occur at a pace and magnitude that disrupt established ways of value creation, social interactions, doing business and more generally, our thinking”* (Reimer, 2013), at a rate *“faster than perhaps any force in history”* (Small, 2016).

These bold predictions are substantiated by the history of disruption since the turn of the millennium. Today’s biggest, fastest growing and highest value companies are increasingly digital. Alibaba, founded in 1999, is the world’s most valuable retailer but has no inventory; Facebook, founded in 2014 and worth \$US212b, is the world’s most popular media owner but creates no content; Uber, founded in 2009 and worth \$US62.5b, is the world’s largest taxi company but owns no taxis.

Small (2016) suggests that the rate of disruption to rural communities will be further enhanced by a number of key ‘enabling technologies’ (referred to as ‘general purpose technologies’ by Lipsey *et al.* (2005)). These technologies, which include the following, have the potential to be as enabling as what the internet has been to email (Small, 2016):

- Universal ultra-fast broadband;
- Sensor networks and the internet of things;
- Cloud computing, cloud storage and information processing;
- Artificial intelligence (AI), the singularity, and super intelligent machines; and
- Nanotechnology and material science.

These enabling technologies are likely to see the rise of more revolutionary technologies that will disrupt our lives. A selection of those most likely to disrupt rural communities and pluriactivity are listed below.

- Apps – a wide range of applications will help all aspects of rural life and business. Current communication and networking apps will be increasingly supplemented with farm systems apps, animal data, welfare and traceability records, economic and environmental performance analysis, market information and trading apps, biodiversity apps, biosecurity apps, and weather warning apps (Barcelo-Ordinas *et al.*, 2013; Small, 2016). Through enabling technology, such as sensors and AI, apps will be more powerful and reliable to enable farming from a distance using ultra-fast broadband.

- Smartfarm – technology like Smarthouse, but for the whole farm system (Henry, 2016). Smartfarm will see the integration of digital devices into the farm's day-to-day operations, collecting data through a wide range of on-farm wireless sensors which will connect to cloud-based AI via ultra-fast broadband. The AI will analyse data and provide decision support to the farmer through a software interface (an app) on a mobile device.
- Robots – will gradually improve in efficiency and use and, in the longer term, become cost effective as human labour replacement on-farm. The future could increasingly see farms being remotely monitored and controlled, a trend consistent with mining (remote-controlled vehicles) and transport (driverless vehicles). Applications include milking machines, mechanical weeding, precision pesticide use, precision fertiliser distribution, horticultural harvesting, and human labour replacement, which includes managerial decisions (Small, 2016).
- E-Fences (new fencing animal containment technologies) – geo-fencing will enable animals to be kept in geographically defined locations and moved about remotely, potentially eliminating the need for the fencing of paddocks or physical movement of stock. This could significantly reduce the daily work requirement for a number of farming systems, particularly sheep and beef and dairy heifer grazing (Small, 2016).

4. Methodology

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with five individuals, either face-to-face or over the phone. All participants were involved in both on- and off-farm work. In order to focus the scope of this body of work, the interview sample group was concentrated on dry stock sheep and beef farmers or dairy heifer grazers, with the exception of Respondent 1, who is a horticulturalist. In seeking referrals for interview candidates, it was requested that the respondent has an active operational role in the farm business.

In selecting the interview group, diversity in off-farm employment was sought, although a criterion was that the off-farm employment was either professional or highly skilled work (qualified tradesman), to ensure the opportunity cost for each respondent was relatively consistent, i.e. the earnings off-farm per hour/day would be significantly greater than the cost of any replacement labour.

Interviewees also had to be male and have a family. These criteria were employed to minimise the response variables, and to increase the likeness in work life balance considerations to my personal situation. A description of the research limitations are provided in **Section 7.1**.

Interviews had three focus areas which were family, farm and corporate or off-farm work. The questions below were asked during each interview are included in **Appendix 1**. Interview responses were transcribed and then summarised as individual case studies, with the key differential points for each case identified and included in **Section 5.1**. To assist with defining the key points for each case study, a Wordle (a type of word cloud; www.wordle.com) was created immediately post-interview, which visually profiles the interview participants (**Figures 4 and 5**).

The wordle provided a nexus for thematic analysis which was expanded to cover specific interview responses across the three focus areas. Information from all five case studies was analysed in relation to current business literature, to provide a discussion and set of recommendations for successfully navigating pluriactivity in New Zealand from a North Island dry stock farming perspective.

5. Results

5.1. Case studies: word clouds and respondent summaries

Interviews were undertaken with five respondents who were known to be both farming/growing and working full-time in an off-farm role. All respondents had a long-term partner and children of various ages. A summary of the interviewed respondents is provided in **Table 1** below.

The respondent's entry into pluriactivity was varied. One respondent is a highly successful and awarded farmer whose on-farm success resulted in full time off-farm work. A second respondent comments that he *“had always worked both on- and off-farm after returning from abroad”*. The other three respondents were involved in the off-farm or corporate work first, with only one of those individuals involved in a family succession situation.

Table 1: Summary of interview respondents

	Respondent 1	Respondent 2	Respondent 3	Respondent 4	Respondent 5
Nature of farm business	Kiwifruit 20ha land, 8.5 canopy Ha, additional 7ha under development	Sheep and beef finishing	Mixed drystock and cropping 2000 olives 120 dairy heifers 100 calves reared 30ha contract maize	Drystock 2000 ewes 300 grazers wintered 200 calves over Summer	Drystock 150 ewes 50-80 cattle wintered
Nature of off-farm work	Middle Management - Client Manager	Governance - sits on 5 boards and has high profile role within primary industries	Shift work as a Technical Manager responsible for the national electrical grid	Builder - business owner	Customer Manager (current), soon to be Farm Consultant.
Family life	Married with pre-teen children	Married with adult children	Married with children ranging 3 mo to 10 yr	Long-term partner, two children under 3	Married with teenagers at boarding school
Regular exercise	Yes	No	No- farm-fit	No- build-fit and farm-fit	No
Community involvement	Board of Trustees	Local vet's board, involved with A&P show. Community involvement arguably at a national scale	Coaches son's rugby, but less formal involvement than desired	Given up rugby as too busy	Less than previous due to travel and stage of life (children's weekend sport 2 hours away dominates)
Significant use technology	None	Corporate tools such as Skype, Boardbooks and a synchronised	Farming run for speed (paper notebook). Off farm work, very	Tru-test scale EID, make animal handling and performance	Internet critical to the facilitation of the home office.

		calendar with wife	technical. No crossover technology	significantly easier	EID
Documented vision or strategic plan	Yes: highly integrated between work and farm	Yes: largely farm focused, in need of update due to off-farm focus at present	Yes: underlying operational plan including animal health	No: clear goals but does not have a clearly documented plan or vision statement	No

5.1.1. Case study one



Figure 4: Respondent 1 Wordle

Respondent 1 is a horticulturalist (kiwifruit) who, whilst owning the orchard business, neither directly undertakes nor manages the 'on-farm' work which was an exception to the other respondents. Respondent 1's wife manages the family's day-to-day orchard interests, with the interviewee's role being either:

1. Business Strategy Setting,
2. Significant Projects; or
3. Casual 'free' labour carrying out mowing and general maintenance.

This hands-off role has not been permanent and is the result of economies of scale achieved through a PSA affected acquisition). A lead contractor is employed and is responsible to undertake the substantial on-orchard tasks such as pruning and picking.

An interesting point of difference of Respondent 1 was in regard to work life balance. As opposed to the concession that balance could be improved by other interviewees, he remarked that “*Work life balance is a bit of a cliché. Work is part of life and the big rocks to balance are the 5 F’s: family, fitness, finance, farm and fun*”.

5.1.2. Case study two

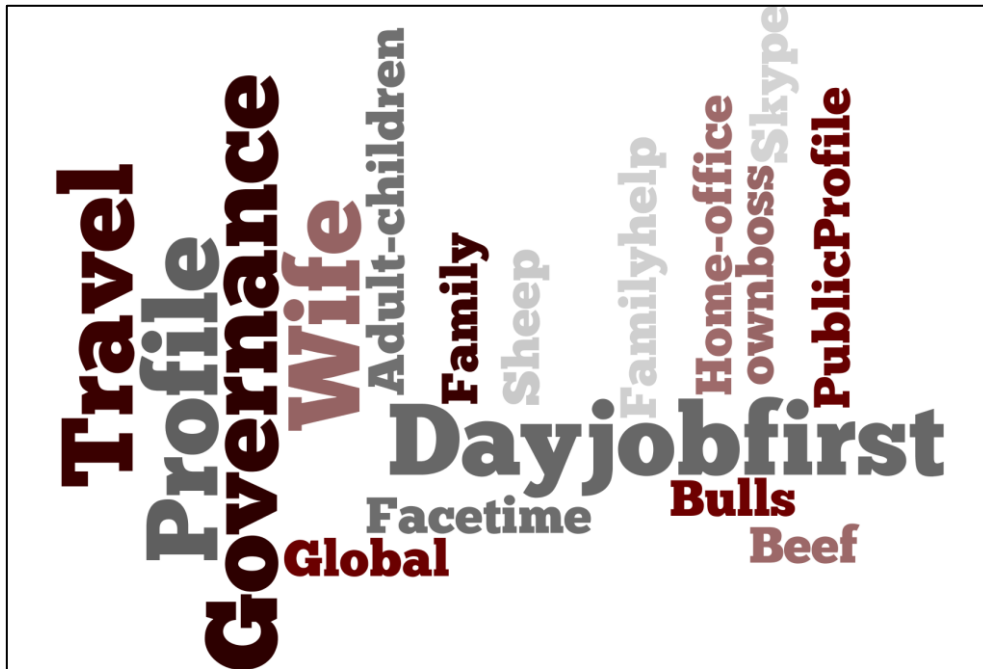


Figure 5: Respondent 2 Wordle

Respondent 2 occupies a high profile off-farm day job in conjunction with a number of primary industry board appointments. Further, all of the off-farm roles require significant air travel both domestically (at least once a week when in NZ and working) and internationally (6 – 8 times aboard per year for a period of up to 2 weeks). Despite this prominence and the commitment to off-farm roles, Respondent 2 considers himself a “farmer first” and, regardless of a hectic schedule, takes pride in doing the on- farm work himself, just as the other dry-stock farmer respondents do. When abroad, Respondent 2’s elderly father uses a side-by-side to get around the farm to move stock.

Respondent 2 was the only interviewee who started on-farm and his success there led him down the path to governance and high profile leadership roles. Even if removed of the role of farmer, Respondent 2 is considered to be both highly successful and exceedingly busy.

5.1.3. Case study three



Figure 6: Respondent 3 Wordle

Respondent 3 was superficially involved in the most atypical situation of all the interviewees both on- and off-farm. Respondent 3's Wordle (**Figure 6**) identifies diversification as a key interview theme, which differentiates his farming business from the other drystock farmers interviewed.

Respondent 3's on-farm business included:

- leasing land to a market gardener;
- a 2000 tree glade of olives;
- a variable area (per annum) of contract maize;
- contract finishing Wagyu steers;
- grazing dairy heifers;
- contract grazing hoggets; and
- rearing Spring calves.

Off-farm, Respondent 3 works shift work (4 days on, 4 days off) but, as evidenced in **Appendix 2**, includes a surprising amount of time on-farm during the 4 work days of the 8 day shift.

5.1.4. Case study four

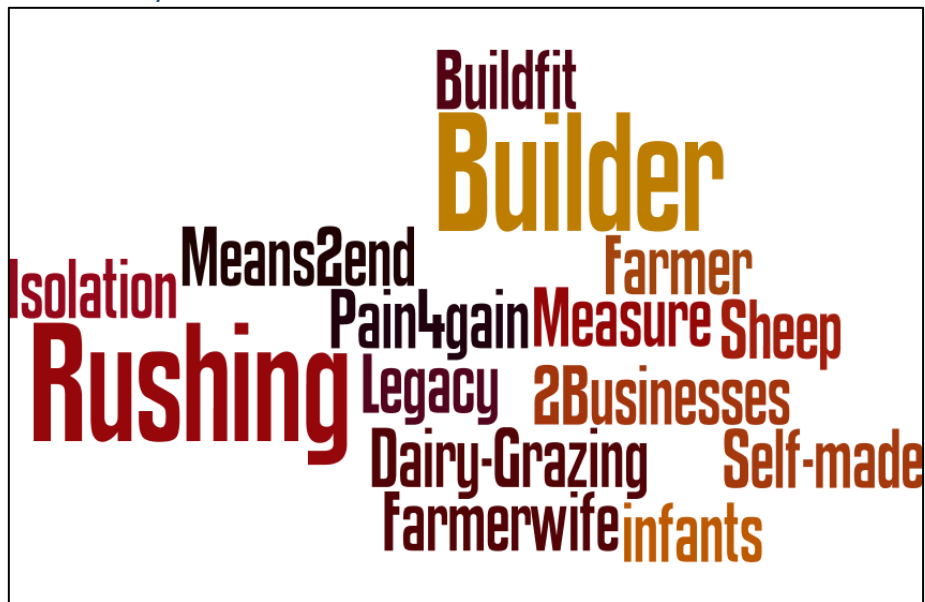


Figure 7: Respondent 4 Wordle

Respondent 4 stood apart from the other respondents in that he was clearly under pressure as indicated by a number of terms and expressions mentioned in the interview and summarised in his Wordle (**Figure 7**). The pressure was the result of managing two significant businesses including the follow while still being in his late twenties, early thirties:

- a building business with 4 full-time staff, up to another 3 casual staff, as well as numerous sub-contractors; and
- a relatively large dry stock enterprise (2000 ewes and ~300 wintered dairy heifers on an area > 400ha).

The tone of response for Respondent 4 was significantly more strained than that of the other drystock farmers, and there was some sense of resentment to the situation. This could have been compounded by uncertainty regarding a future family succession arrangement, and the fact that at the time of interview the region where he farms was coming out of a very wet winter.

5.1.5. Case study five



Figure 8: Respondent 5 Wordle

Respondent 5 runs the smallest on-farm business. *“My wife would say it is a farm, for me it is a large lifestyle block. It’s only 50ha, so it’s not that big”.*

Respondent 5, was the only interviewee who raised that he was looking to change his off-farm employment within the next 3 to 6 months. The reasons cited were *“whole of life”* considerations, which included removing the requirement for a weekly commute (3 hours one-way) for two days of in-office work , as well as additional travel for another day of the work week, on top of two days working from a home office.

Respondent 5 was unique amongst all respondents (**Figure 8**), by referring to the farm as a hobby as much as a business. While he identified business drivers, the farm was seen as being the next step from a 10 acre block.

5.2. Case study thematic analysis.

5.2.1. Farming as the long game

Four of the five respondents mentioned that their on-farm commitment is about the long game. One respondent did not comment on this area.

One respondent noted *“we are leasing for three years, will buy a third of the farm at five years, buy all the farm at ten years and own it in twenty years... the farm has been in the family 115 years and I wanted to continue...at the moment it is about making significant sacrifices in terms of time with my wife and family due to the building of both on-farm and off-farm businesses”*. While another commented that *“we see the orchard as long-term, i.e. 20 years out”*.

In contrast to a common view of the farm/orchard being a consistent constant, attitudes to the off-farm work varied significantly. Some respondents viewed it mainly as a financial requirement *“it’s about the money eh”*, *“it is a means of securing a second income when family is my partners priority”*, and *“being on the tools is a means to an end... no pain no gain... but that there is a clear goal in 5 years to be able to be ‘off the tools’ and acting in more of a director capability off-farm which will give more time for the wife and kids and the farm business”*.

This was somewhat contrasted by *“initially it was about the financial freedom. We could not have survived if I was not working. Now I am making decisions about the off-farm work which aligns to the leadership vision which includes governance in the future. But before that, and within 5 years, and for 5 years, I want to be reporting to a board so that when I get on a board I am better board member.”*

And further contrasted by one respondent who was particularly positive about the benefits of a combination of on-farm and off-farm work, in so much as the combination is energy giving, *“I don’t look at farming as work”* and *“work off-farm provides such a different mental stimulation, it challenges me on a completely different level which I love”*.

5.2.2. Deliberate goals: high on-farm performance, mixed off-farm aspirations

Four of the five respondents interviewed made specific comment that high on-farm performance is important. Respondent 2 often referred to *“doing your day job first”*, and commented that *“the awards and exposure that came with [doing farming well] resulted in other opportunities. I have never applied for a job as such, I am lucky to get asked to do a lot of things”*.

Another noted, in reference to taking on calf rearing, that *“we aim to operate at best practice, so if we take on something new like the calf-rearing, we seek out advice to ensure we get it right and in that case we built a relationship with the local vet... it makes sense, if you don’t ask you don’t get, so seek out mentorship and help”*.

The third respondent had simple goals but an on-farm visual clue was very much an indicator of performance to him, stating *“if my farm flat looks like a dairy farm and is pumping, that turns me on”*. Respondent 1 similarly had a focus on high performance, with the vision of the business to be *“one of the best growers in the Bay of Plenty”*.

5.2.3. Work ethic

When asked “What does a typical day look like?” all respondents, with the exception of the shift worker, stated that they worked long hours that started by waking early (~5:00am) to either exercise, start the commute to work (drive or drive then fly) or to shift stock in the dark, before breakfast. The majority commented on working in the evenings, with one respondent regularly working until midnight in an office context and another regularly ‘feeding out’ in the dark.

“Shift a couple of mobs of stock before getting the boys going on the tools first thing, then ‘cruising’ at 2:30-3:00pm to get home to move more mobs or feed out, which this winter was happening in the dark most of the time as I wasn’t out of work until nearer 5, and with it being wet there was a lot to do.”

“Book work or planning for the next day can then take up a fair bit of time [at night].”

“I don’t need a lot of sleep... I really love to work and I have the ability to do a lot of work. I really enjoy getting through a lot, and that includes both the on- and off-farm work... you need to be a type of person that can handle that and it is a challenge... at times, with the home office I need to be careful that I do not work too often when I am at home.”

One respondent has shifted the balance away from work and, while he conceded that at times there is a requirement to work evenings, in his view constantly continuing work into the evenings is not sustainable. He stated that the evening’s need to be more about the family than the farm/orchard or the off-farm work.

“There is no substitute for hard work... but you do need to find a balance. I used to come home and try and do too much at night... 6-8pm needs to be family time as often as you can.. maybe do a couple of hours after that for a project or personal development or the like... to me excessive hours are not that useful, sure sometimes, but it is better to be consistent.”

One respondent who runs two businesses commented that *“I am always rushing and when under pressure you make some mistakes and I have made some”*. The lack of time came through with *“when I am on site, I am thinking about what needs to be done on the farm, and when I am on the farm I think about what needs to be done on site”*.

5.2.4. System simplification

A common theme from all respondents was that, given their situation of time always being in short supply, there is a need to make the farm system as simple as possible.

In one case both the size of the property and the stock rate were reduced.

"I run 2 - 2.2 bulls per hectare now rather than 3, to take the pressure off from a stocking rate perspective, now that I am not around as much."

"At the time of taking on the off-farm work, we sold 100ha to help with building a new house but also to make things a bit easier."

Another example sees the shift worker operate a system whereby *"all cattle are moved every two days all year round to fit my situation, to allow the farm work to be limited to a one man operation when shift work and winter limit the number of daylight hours...I constantly focus on ways to make the system simple and to fit my unique working arrangements"*.

When commenting on sheep policy which includes late lambing at 150%, one respondent said, *"I do the job easy but it is still reasonable performance"*.

A third example regarding system simplification related to the use of outsourcing, *"I get a local guy to do my fencing including regular repair and maintenance work"*. This was a theme also reported for the horticulturalist,

"with small scale I had to do it all, once we had the scale we were able to bring on a labour unit in the form of a lead contractor who is responsible for all of the significant orchard tasks".

One respondent, who appeared to be under pressure, had a very different attitude to outsourcing work both on-farm and off-farm (building company). He regarded this as *"not wanting to give away work"*, which in the building business means *"doing as much of the joinery or roofing as possible"*, and in the farm business it means using all of the inherited equipment (sprayer, post rammer etc.) to do all of the on-farm tasks including sheep work, pest and weed control along with improvement and repair/maintenance fencing. This situation was planned to change with the arrival of a second child, *"we will get a man to do the sheep work like dagging, docking, crutching and drenching and run the dairy heifers while [partner] looks after child number 2."*

And finally, when asked, all respondents identified that their system choice and its simplicity reflects the reality of also working an off-farm job.

"When we took over three years ago Dad was running bulls, sheep and steers... we are just doing sheep and dairy graziers... easy way to get in and low cost, ideally we would like to get our own cattle but the market to buy in the last year has been horrendous and opted to stay with dairy cattle and it is a cash flow thing....our system is as straightforward as possible, the sheep are some work, but the good thing about the dairy heifers is my partner can take care of them while at work and therefore, allow us to have two incomes at a time when we have young kids."

5.2.5. The application of corporate disciplines on-farm

The nature of the off-farm work of the five interviewees was diverse, and there was significant variation in the way in which on-farm and off-farm work interacted. A commonality for two of the

respondents, whose professional jobs were substantively disconnected from the farming business, was that they borrowed 'off-farm systems' and 'ways of business' from their corporate career and applied them on-farm.

One respondent commented that *"not long after purchasing the property I was at a managers conference for [the corporate role], which was focused on business planning over the five to ten year time horizon. This prompted a watershed moment on the drive home that the farm business needed a documented vision and plan... we did not realise the size of the opportunity and we needed to have a plan and a vision, and for this to guide the decisions we made... so it was a case of sitting down with a pen and piece of paper... with the result a goal of being one of the best orchards in the Bay of Plenty, being leaders within the industry and to not turn down opportunities as they come up... beneath the business vision is a personal vision of being a leader within the horticultural sector"*.

Another respondent who also had strategic farm and business planning in place, had taken a number of more operational work skills from his off-farm role and incorporated them into the management of the farm business. He stated *"I need to be highly organised and task orientated... this is guided by the setting of SMART [Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-Bound] goals."* This respondent also noted that *"sometimes the wife would say that the balance towards task achievement is a little skewed, but this is a personality trait rather than any product of the multi-tasking [between farming and off-farm work]"*.

A further technique that this respondent outlined, which has been progressively developed, was basic organisation and time management. When talking about the need to manage time ruthlessly, *"it could be a necessity of having young kids... but it was not always the case and as a younger man doing both, I was not as organised. With added things like premier rugby coaching, I was not in a good space from a balance perspective"*.

Another respondent made the recommendation to *"hold regular meetings"*, stating *"we have a monthly and a weekly. The weekly is more a designated check-in, like a stand up meeting at work, while the monthly meeting is formal. We minute it and have an agenda that we document. Providing this rigour means you can box off the time, deal to it and then document the decision so you stick to it or can justify to yourself later why it was made the way it was"*.

When asked whether there were any benefits gained from working off-farm, the respondent who is a builder replied *"no none, I have a whole lot less time"*. However, after reflecting he added *"as a builder in a rural area doing a range of work, I meet a lot of farmers and yarn to them a lot. You learn a lot about how they do things from this"*. Although not a discipline or skill adopted from an off-farm role, this is a benefit the farm business gains from outside work.

In contrast to corporate skills being applied on-farm, when asked a question about his degree of strategic planning, one respondent who had a previous career as a farm consultant replied, *"have you seen a builder's house?"*. This response referred to the fact that whilst an expert in developing plans for other farmers, these plans are not applied on his own farm. When asked why, it was a case

of not getting to them and a belief that *“it is clear in my mind as to what I am doing and where I am going”*.

5.2.6. The benefits of on – farm work to other aspects of life

Three respondents commented that the on-farm business provides benefits to their off-farm role. The most obvious was that *“being a good farmer and getting profile lead to all the off-farm roles”*.

The horticulturalist noted that in his current job, which is in the postharvest horticulture sector, there is increased credibility obtained from having *“skin in the game”* both *“when interacting with other growers”* but also *“in market, when I can say that I grow therefore I know”*. This last comment was made in jest, but the sentiment that having an active involvement in the sector adds benefit to the corporate role was real.

The smallest scale farmer, whose on- and off-farm business is connected through a specific animal breed noted that, *“I get some mileage that I am also running the cattle and know a little bit about how they perform...however, naturally there is a need to use common sense when taking your learnings from 50ha and applying it to 1000ha”*.

In contrast, for two interviewees the two work dimensions remained quite separate, with the shift worker commenting, *“I don’t walk out the door at the end of the shift, I skip because the work does not follow me home. Previous roles did”*. Additionally, the builder said, *“most people in town would not know we do both. From the ute and the building business they would know us as builders not farmers”*.

5.2.7. Family first: “happy wife = happy life”

A strong viewpoint held by all of the respondents was that family needs to be a priority. Two respondents mentioned variations of “happy wife, happy life”, and one followed it with *“this is not a cliché... if you [individually or as a couple] are to be aspirational then you need to work really well as a team ... and be on the same page”*. Another said *“they won’t be standing up at your funeral and saying, Phil, that extra hour he did at work....”*.

The respondent who travels significantly pointed out that *“there are a number of issues where this (travelling abroad and having a number of away-from-home interests) does not work...you see blokes running off with ‘birds’ offshore...Nuffield is a classic which can start a few issues, you just need to be on the same page [with your wife and family]”*. For the same respondent, from Christmas to the end of January is family time, and at this time family absolutely comes first. During this period *“there is a focus on not doing work, which is important to me as I love to work. I have the ability to do a lot of work and really enjoy it”*.

A respondent who, through teenage children, spends most weekends away with high school rugby, complained that this reduced his time for other things, but that he would not have traded it. The

decision the small scale farmer made to increase from a lifestyle block (10 acres) to a small farm (50ha) was heavily influenced by family: *“as the boys got older this place would be a more attractive place for the boys to come home to...the property we have is a lot nicer”*.

Respondent 3 sticks with shift work in the most part for the amount of time that it affords him to spend with his family on the farm, *“I am really lucky, I get to spend 4 or 5 days a week at home with the kids while still getting very well paid... I love the lifestyle and love the ability to be able to involve family in it...there is a need to balance and juggle things but it is not impossible”*. He went further to make the point that at times there is a need to not push the off-farm too hard as it can upset the apple cart of balance.

“The status quo at this point is too good for the family balance... at present I get rewarded well financially, with family, and by farming, It works. If I was to look to progress in a corporate sense it could put some of the balance at risk... [my job is] very good at rewarding service, there is a lot of on-the-job training so there is a real focus on staff retention. I get reward from increasingly being the go-to-guy and for the freedoms we have at work, which for instance allow me to create the monthly farm plans while on shift work.. I do that while the other lads watch the sky TV which is there for our down times.”

5.2.8. Local community placed on the back burner

A common theme in all interviews was that local community involvement suffered as a result of pluriactivity.

One respondent commented:

“I don’t say “no” to anything, but there is a perception that with all the travel I do that I am never at home, so I tend to not get asked, so maybe I don’t do as much locally, but I don’t think I have missed out, and I help with the A&P show committee and the local vet business.”

Another said:

“I had to give up rugby this last year, I didn’t have time.. it is a shame as rugby and the like is so good from a comradery perspective... you know, hanging out with your mates.. in small towns that means community and it’s important.”

While a third commented:

“Doing both things has not allowed me to continue the premier rugby coaching, which I enjoyed. In my current situation I am not able to commit to Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, although I still coach my son’s team.”

The sporting sacrifice was slightly different for a respondent with high school aged children, noting that *“with my current job and all the travel with that, and the commitments on the weekends to the boys sports, we don’t do as much community as we would like. We have not played tennis in an*

age....lost time to do mountain biking... we do see some community on the sporting sidelines who are in the same situation with boys up in Hamilton for boarding school”.

When considering this matter further, the respondent suggested *“you should ask what stage people's kids are at”*. It is a valid query and a point of caution that age and stage of children will have a significant influence on the lifestyle of parents, particularly those who have a number of interests. While not a specific interview question, information regarding children's age and stage came out in all of the interviews and is summarised in **Table 1** above.

Finally, comments from a respondent who serves on the local Board of Trustees were *“a lot of the visioning and leadership stuff is all about me.. and it is important to be involved in local community. After the girls are finished school and I am finished with the Board of Trustees, I will look to do Search and Rescue volunteering...”* and *“being involved with the school is important.. opens your eyes to your community, kids coming to school with no lunch and not having had breakfast”*. This experience had created a desire to do more in the community however, there was a need to do this without sacrificing another important aspect of life or detracting from the firm desire to be a sector leader.

5.2.9. Routine and the challenges without it: exercise and travel

Of all the respondents interviewed, only one carries out a regular exercise regime in addition to any physical work on-farm. Two respondents noted that they are able to maintain a degree of fitness through either the on- or off-farm work (**Figures 6 and 7**; “Build-fit and Farm-Fit”). In the builder's case rugby had regrettably been given up recently due to the time commitment, Another respondent commented that *“a lot more could be done”*, and *“I go for the odd walk around the farm, although not enough, and with the kids sport there's not a lot of time for [physical activities]”*. Additionally, an interviewee said *“I do more exercise when I am in hotels and abroad, I will get down to the gym at 5:00am for 40 minutes or so. Not so much when in New Zealand, I should do more”*.

Both the non-exercisers are committed to significant travel which, in combination with an associated variable routine, means that *“an intention to leave the bike in the shed and walk to move the cattle”* does not eventuate because it is not part of their routine, and time may not allow it when juggling a number of life elements.

Conversely, both the respondent who mentioned being farm-fit, stating, *“I do not need to train, I do farm work”*, and the fitness-focused respondent, have very set routines. One has four day shift work, while the other has a very distinct divide between work and home life, as well as predictability in terms of travel. Therefore, if respondents have a known schedule and/or have minimal travel for work, then they are more likely to exercise.

5.2.10. Technology: making the world smaller

The literature suggests that location and proximity to service centres is a factor in the uptake of pluriactivity. All respondents surveyed were located in the North Island. Two respondents are located less than 20 minutes from a city with a population greater than 150,000 people, while the other three are located within 30 minutes of a service town of approximately 5000 people, and 45-70 minutes from a regional airport. Both of the respondents located within 20 minutes of a city cited location as a strong facilitator of dual work, whilst two of the geographically more isolated respondents worked from a home office.

Those working from a home office cited the key enabling technology as being quick reliable internet, with one provided with network access to the work server. In one case, prior to improved internet, investment was made in *“satellite internet which, while not great, provided connectivity”*, and in the absence of cell phone reception, an internet phone is set up to bridge that technological shortcoming.

For Respondent 2, a number of off-the-shelf personal technologies were employed to reduce technological distance and simplify multi-tasking.

“Boardbooks keep all my board commitments neat and tidy.”

“Facetime or Skype is used regularly to connect into board meetings when I am abroad”

“A synced calendar between my wife and I on our phones means we can keep track of each other's movements... do not underestimate how important that is!”

When respondents were questioned about technology, they all raised internet and email and the ability for these to be picked up everywhere was important, although none of the respondents identified emails as being a substantial negative or positive. Key technologies that were seen as advantageous by multiple respondents were online budgeting and accounting systems like XERO and Cash Manager.

A second common technology referred to when asked about how technology has assisted with work life balance was that of EIDs and the ‘Tru-Test’ suite of technologies, to both improve performance and make systems more efficient. One respondent made the following comment regarding these:

“The animal weighing technology provided a means to develop a fact-based relationship with owners of the cattle being grazed.”

“When we got the technology it was new and had a heap of teething problems as it was new [to market], it is all good now, but if you had asked me 12 months ago I might have said it was rubbish.”

“Work is less than 20 minutes from home, and with the nature of long hours, this is essential to making the two aspects [farm and off farm career] work together”.

6. Discussion

The aim of this paper was to examine pluriactivity and, through literature review and interviews, derive a set of best practices to allow successful on- and off-farm careers in concurrence.

All respondents interviewed were middle-aged, North Island-based, married (or long-term partner), Pakeha males with children of various ages. With the exception of one respondent, all were dry stock sheep or cattle farmers. Despite the demographic uniformity of respondents, the responses regarding balancing various aspects of life to achieve success was, as anticipated by the literature (Groysberg & Abrahams, 2014), very different. Therefore, rather than this paper providing an absolute solution, it offers a set of tools for individuals to consider when balancing competing priorities. The lack of diversity in the cohort of interviewees is an acknowledged limitation in the application of this research.

6.1. Balance is bunk: aim for harmony

By definition, balance is *“a state of equilibrium or equipoise; equal distribution of weight”*. When thinking of practical examples of the use of the word, good balance can be seen as not falling when on a high ropes course (i.e. avoidance of a negative outcome). Together this suggests that to achieve balance between work and life, equal weighting has to be given to each (i.e. 50/50) in order to maintain a positive overall equilibrium. Further, balance indicates that work is not a part of life, and vice versa. The interview responses provide evidence that equal weighting is unrealistic, and the weighting an individual would place on both work and life in order to attain satisfaction is entirely personal. This depends on priorities, which are different for everyone. Some respondents really love their work and are happy to spend long hours doing it, while others work as a means to an end, for example one respondent is very busy now with the aim of taking a governance position to have reduced off-farm time commitments. This is in keeping with the view that success in balancing all aspects of life is bespoke (Groysberg & Abrahams, 2014).

Freidman states that ‘work life balance’ is bunk, or at best a cliched non-reality, with the concept creating an immediate sense of trade offs (Freidman, 2004). While some trade offs are necessary, as illustrated by the respondent who is looking for a new job in order to reduce off-farm work hours and increase time spent with his family, in general what respondents described could be paralleled to the example of juggling many objects provided by Sinoway (2012).

As an alternative to work life balance, I would suggest individuals aim for ‘work life harmony’. To me achieving harmony, defined as *“the combination of simultaneously sounded musical notes to produce a pleasing effect”*, is more appropriate. Creating harmony conveys a greater sense of the bringing together of a number of unique life elements, such as work, the farm, children, health and well-being, at the same time to produce a pleasing effect (life), where the individual parts can alter significantly whilst still maintaining the pleasant outcome. Finally as a construct, harmony represents

that it takes significant practice, where for most working adults a satisfactory sense of balance is taken for granted.

6.2. Communication and the importance of family

The importance of your relationship with loved ones to being successful was a key theme identified by interview respondents in regards to navigating pluriactivity, but also in the executive leadership and family farm business management literature (Bowie, 2015; Groysberg & Abrahams, 2014).

A consistent but reluctant (due to a sense it was a cliched colloquialism or pub talk) interview response was “happy wife is a happy life”, with the additional message that you can’t do pluriactivity alone. All interview respondents were quick to attribute both on- and off-farm success to their partnership and the support network created by it. This considered, it was apparent that due to being time poor there was a constant need for family communication and quality time spent with family to be an area of continuous improvement.

A key learning, with respect to a focus on communication and the disciplines around it in a family business context, was the need to err more towards a ‘business communication’ typology rather than a ‘family communication’ typology, because at the end of the day a family business is just that: a business. Bowie (2015) uses an adept quote, that you should not *“leave your communication to an ‘over the fence’ discussion, make it a planned process. Great examples include:*

- *planned diarised meetings every fortnight;*
- *weekly meetings with an agenda and rotating chair; and*
- *weekly and monthly emails to family members covering key issues.*

An agenda is one of the simplest and most useful tools that offers structure to meetings and conversations. The simple task of setting an agenda gives focus and allows people to come prepared”.

The use of an agenda was employed by one of the respondents who remarked on its effectiveness as a mechanism for *“boxing it off”*, or not allowing the family business to become an encroachment on the business of family.

6.3. Visioning: know the end for a number of games

The importance of having a documented vision was a key point to emerge from both the literature and the respondent interviews, with this being an essential contributor to achieving better work life harmony. Furthermore, it was clear that documenting the vision resulted in individuals having a clear focus on what was important and what the end point looked like, while providing the ability to monitor progress towards this. The quote *“Think of a jigsaw puzzle: it’s much easier to put the pieces together if you look at the front of the box”* (Groysberg & Abrahams, 2014) eloquently captures the value of vision documentation as a frame of reference.

However, what also strongly emerged was that documenting the vision is not enough. There is a need for visioning to be time-bound and reviewed regularly because life happens, and things change.

This said, it should not be a document that is reviewed at every scheduled meeting, but rather as required.

Further, to maximise the success of a vision in achieving work life harmony, there is a need to be as strategic and all-encompassing as possible. Vision creation should not be limited to separate farm business, corporate career and family goals, but should be across a range of areas. Whether considering the “*Five F’s: family, fitness, farm, finance, fun*” or Freidman’s ‘four circles’ of work, family, community and self, the key is that the vision is pitched at a strategic level, and that beneath it sit a range of operational planning documents, such as 1 year and 5 year farm plans and personal development plans. One technique suggested by a respondent was to balance planning documents containing SMART goals with family goals such as buying a bach or taking a family holiday, to keep yourself focused.

Visioning is critically important in that it provides the ‘why’ for a family farming business. As Simon Sinek says in his hugely popular TED talk, “*people don’t buy what you do they buy why you do it*”. The documented vision, the ‘why’, can be used as a focus when needing to make an important decision, make a significant sacrifice, or when you are generally swamped and need to work out what to prioritise next.

By creating a vision which includes a greater level of granularity around ‘life’ elements, a basis is formed from which to prioritise (or not) those areas of your life that, when you are under time pressure, do not call as loudly as others, because generally it is the squeaky wheels that get oiled. This situation is exaggerated by pluriactivity as the number of squeaky wheels doubles.

What the vision allows you to do is have the basis upon which to decide the areas of deliberate sacrifice and the duration of sacrifice, bearing in mind that “*you cannot pursue all your goals simultaneously or satisfy all your desires at once*” (Sinoway, 2012). Further, the vision will ensure that the patient non squeaky wheeled wife and ever-loving kids don’t lose patience.

6.4. Simplified systems, technology and creativity

A consistent theme amongst farmers involved in pluriactivity was deliberate simplification of on-farm systems, whether through altering stocking rates, changing stock class or outsourcing tasks. In all situations the aim was to make the on-farm work easier given significant time pressures, and the additional income coming from the off-farm activity reducing the absolute need to be achieving maximum farm efficiency.

In terms of the uptake of current technologies, EID readers and Tru-Test scale units were the principal on-farm technologies identified by interviewees. At the farm/home margins, cloud-based finance and budgeting software, synchronised calendars and travel apps (AirNZ) were used to varying degrees. It was somewhat surprising that a number of respondents had in place a strategic plan and vision, which are notoriously difficult to create, but didn’t use personal technology for time management and integration (synced calendars and task lists) which is relatively easy to achieve.

The opportunity that future disruptive technologies, including Artificial Intelligence, E-Fences and robotics, will provide to agriculture in general as well as farmers engaged in pluriactivity over the next five to ten years will be immense. As I will soon be a new starter to pluriactivity, I will make a deliberate effort to prioritise investigation of these technologies with a mind to early adoption. The experience of those interviewed suggested that reward be gained both from doing the farming well and showing leadership in innovation. Personally, as an individual with significant ambition in off-farm work, the time-saving potential of these technologies will encourage early adoption to enable more efficient farming and to allow more time investment in either higher paying off-farm work or other non-financial priorities.

Further in regard to use of time, Kaplan (2012) makes a strong argument about the value of not always augmenting mundane tasks with a second task or multi-tasking, as this opportunity to just do a simple monotonous task is often when 'Eureka' moments occur, a concept consistent with what a well known and awarded Waikato farmer, Mike Barton, describes as the value of "tractor time" for creative or entrepreneurial thinking.

7. Conclusion

Life is not easy, and pluriactivity which involves working on- and off-farm has the potential to add complexity to the lives of those who engage in it. It can be concluded from this research that 'work life balance' is a redundant term upon which to consider the place of work within life. As an alternative, the term 'work life harmony' is used as a construct with which a number of different but related elements come together for a pleasing outcome. This paper provides a number of tips and tools, summarised in a list below that will assist in achieving work life harmony whilst engaging in pluriactivity.

- Be deliberate : prioritise family as a non-negotiable time commitment
 - make this component equivalent to your most important appointment in the other spheres of your life
- Be holistic and strategic : develop a vision, which includes granularity to life's various aspects, and include priorities around:
 - family
 - health and well-being (including fun and fitness)
 - work (off-farm)
 - farm (work)
 - community
 - faith (where applicable)
- Be an individual
 - understand that the way you and your family achieve success will be unique to you and your family, there is no cookie cutter for a successful life, particularly if you are involved in pluriactivity
- Be present : avoid multi-tasking
 - live and work in the now as much as possible
 - aim for integration but restrict multi-tasking to times when the additional activity does not negatively affect the principal one
- Be realistic, be mindful
 - understand that you cannot achieve all of your life goals at once
 - there will be a requirement for some priorities to be fulfilled sequentially rather than concurrently
- Be pragmatic
 - simplify your farm system to make it work for your individual situation
- Be a 'geek'
 - embrace technology as appropriate to make your life more harmonious

7.1. Limitations

There are a number of limitations to this research which should be considered when assessing the findings. Firstly the sample size of respondents was small (n=5), and a homogeneous demographic (Pakeha, married, generation X or Y males, drystock farmers or horticulturalists with children who live in the North Island) was used. This narrow sample, whilst permissible for a Kellogg project, is limiting. The research would have benefited from including:

- A focus group including young farmers to investigate their attitudes to work;
- The wives and partners of the respondents surveyed;
- Maori farmers engaging in pluriactivity;
- Female farmers engaged in pluriactivity ;
- Dairy farmers engaging in pluriactivity;
- A geographically isolated farmer (>1 hour to any service centre) engaged in pluriactivity
- HR leaders in the New Zealand primary sector organisations to understand their approach to talent management for staff with other interests, and their level of preparedness for millennials
- Examples from outside of agriculture where two jobs are worked

The literature review could have benefited from further review of feminist literature and a broader review of business management literature in order to broaden the basis upon which the findings of this report are made.

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Appendix 1: Interview questions

GENERAL

Principal Question: *How did you come to have a corporate role and be involved in farming?*

- Supplementary Questions (as required):
- Were you farming before your corporate role, or vice versa?
 - How long in the first prior to the second?
 - And how long in the second or subsequent roles
- What was the drivers for starting to work in both farming and corporate:
 - Lifestyle
 - financial (off farm cash flow)
 - Complementarity vocations?
 - Challenge

CORPORATE (OFF-FARM) ROLE

Principal Question: *Tell me about your Corporate or off-farm role now and tell me about your off farm career.*

Supplementary Questions (as required):

- How many days a week do you spend in the role: both the business expectation of this, and the day-to-day reality of hours worked?
 - If they differ, is this a problem and are there strategies in place to manage them
- At what level do you work: governance, executive, senior manager, middle manager, senior technical, technical, support?
- Tell me about a typical day
 - What is your employer's expectation in terms of working hours: can work be done when it fits your schedule?
 - Is the expectation of your employer that your complete work in the office, or is there flexibility in the location that work is carried out?
 - Is significant travel required in your role?
 - Is there a seasonality aspect to your role, i.e. are there busy times in your role that correlate to busy times in your farming business?
 - Can you organise appointments/meetings to suit your schedule?
 - Do you have support staff at your workplace that can "step in" if you are not there?
- Where do you see your off-farm or corporate career going, both in the short and long term (Ask WHY)

- How ambitious are you in your “corporate role”: are you aiming for increasing seniority, or are you content with the current position you hold?

The ambition may not be limited to your current role but could include

FARM BUSINESS

Principal Question: *Describe the nature of your farm business?*

Supplementary Questions (as required):

- What is your involvement, i.e. do you own/manage a farm? Is there a day to day involvement or is it more general?
 - Do you have a practical role on the farm?
 - What jobs?
 - What percentage of your time?
 - What time of the day do you carry out these tasks (before/after working hours, during working hours, weekends, some days farm only and no corporate)?
 - What about staff?
 - Is anyone else involved in working the farm: spouse/partner, employee, share milker, family member, business partner?
 - Do you manage the admin/financial side of the farming venture?
 - Is anyone else involved in admin/financial work for the farm: spouse/partner, employee, sharemilker, family member, business partner?
 - Is it always clear what everyone’s roles are?
 - Do you use consultants? If so, in what capacity?
 - Have you a documented vision and strategic plan for your farming business?
 - If yes, how did you go about creating the plan, did you use others to help you
 - If No, then could ask about whether there is a thought to develop one or are there clear well understood unwritten goals for the family or farm business
 - Is there an aspect of this strategic plan being linked to a family succession arrangement?
 - Does the off farm vocation factor in this process?
 - Long term or a means to an end?
 - Strategically is there a separation?
 - How has your farming role benefited from your corporate role? How and why?
 - Has your farming role negatively impacted your corporate role? How and Why?
 - Has your corporate/ off farm role benefited your farming role? How and why.
- Look to go deeper than the money, what skills have made you a better farmer.
- In terms of work output/quantity or quality has there been a proportional change as a result of the dual roles, i.e. has output relative to time at work gone up or down?
 - Are the decisions/work streams of your corporate role influenced in any way by your farming experience
 - Do you feel that you can better relate to, and create a rapport with, clients/colleagues because of your current practical farming experience?

- Do you feel that your farming business is a positive release from your corporate career or vice versa (think to the volatile nature of markets)
-
- Has your corporate off-farm role negatively impacted your farming role? How and why?
- If the farming business is low (e.g. low dairy price), do you feel that your corporate role relieves the pressure of such occurrences? i.e. you are mentally better off because of it?
- Other activities? Are you actively involved in any rural business groups e.g. Federated Farmers?
 - If so, is your involvement enhanced by the fact that you work both on and off farm?

BALANCE

Principal Question: *What does work life Balance mean to you?*

Supplementary Questions (as required):

In juggling a number of roles are you able to establish a routine?

- a. How much sleep do you get?
- b. Are you able to regularly exercise?
- c. Does your schedule allow for involvement in activities such as the school, sports club?
2. What has the impact been on your relationships with family/friends, as a result of wearing multi hats?
 - a. What would your partner/ Family say about the balance that you have achieved? Would you have a different view to theirs?
3. Do you feel that your corporate and farming roles provide you with a good life balance? Why?
4. What role has technology played in assisting you with keeping you connected to your office/ non-work environment, without being physically present?
 - a. If so what technology did you use and how has it helped you?
 - b. Is there technology available, but not currently used by you, that you think would enhance your efficiency/productivity in your current role?

Appendix 2: Respondent 3 shift work

Below is a summary of how shift work can provide additional time for Pluriactivity

Day	On Farm	Off- Farm
1	1 Hour Max	12 Hour Day Shift
2	1 Hour Max	12 Hour Day Shift
3	Approx. Half a Day	12 Hour Night Shift
4	Approx. 2 hour's work	12 Hour Night Shift
5	Approx. Half a Day	Off
6	Full Day Available	Off
7	Full Day Available	Off
8	Full Day Available	Off

Shift work is 12 of 16 weeks, for 3 of the remaining weeks "8 hour per day office hours" apply although flexibility is available, so respondent 3 works 6am to 2pm to allow enough time in the week to take care of the farm work and the final week of the 16 week rotation is in Wellington for training which requires the most farm system adjustment.