

A STUDY OF WHAT MOTIVATES FARMERS TO ENGAGE IN EXTENSION OPPORTUNITIES



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INTRODUCTION

In the 30 years that I've been farming I have always enjoyed going to field days and taking advantage of the many extension opportunities that we as sheep and beef farmers have. Over the years I have prided myself on staying current with the latest industry innovations, and have been very keen to learn when something new is in the offing.

I have been involved in our local farm discussion group, acting as its unofficial chairman for at least 10 years. I have also followed the South Canterbury Monitor Farm Program from its inception. This culminated in being on the Monitor Farm Committee when the Anderson brothers from Fairlie agreed to be the Monitor Farmers. Two years into the four-year program, I helped co-chair the committee.

During my time on this committee we would brainstorm about upcoming community group days and public field days. We would talk at length, trying to thrash out a program that would be both suitably rewarding for the farmers who regularly attended and appealing enough to create interest from those who haven't.

The difficulty was compounded in that while we may have had a topic that was relevant to the day, it was often hard to find a speaker who was able to enlighten us and connect with the intended audience. The speakers who relate well to farmers are generally well known and we tend to overuse these people because there are so few of them.

My frustration during these committee meetings stemmed from the fact that even though we had a very good facilitator, I felt that we as a group of well-meaning farmers didn't know how to run a consistently good extension program. We knew roughly what farmers wanted, but not how to get there. It was during these meetings, and in fact during the whole Monitor Farm program that we relied heavily on our facilitator's input. This is how most of the Monitor Farm programs are run. I am concerned that while the facilitator holds most of the organisational knowledge, the farmers on the committee may not be developing these skills themselves. Being on the committee of a programme such as this is a wonderful opportunity for personal development for all farmers involved. If our

facilitator were to move on, I am not confident that the processes are in place to ensure that this organisational knowledge will be passed on.

It was also during this period that I began to think about farmers and how they decided what field days to go to? How do they decide when to engage and when not to engage? Upon making the decision, how do they measure its subsequent value?

In exploring these issues for my project, I decided to look at it from three different angles. First, I interviewed Nigel Riley, Marketing Manager for CRT and Lizzie Parker, Group Marketing Manager for PGG Wrightsons. This was to gain an overview on how they market their product to the farming community, how they understand their target market and how easy or difficult it is to engage in that market.

Gary Walton, an extension officer for Meat and Wool (now Beef and Lamb), was also consulted for his views on farmer engagement.

The second part of my investigation involved creating a survey (appendix 1) which I could take to the farming community, asking farmers questions which, when correlated, would hopefully shed some light as to their motivations. This survey is the bulk of the project. I consulted Philip Sapsford from Research First, who encouraged me to define my objective, as my focus had been far too broad. He then introduced me to Ian Tarbotton, an extension strategist for Dairy NZ. Ian showed me the survey process and how to create one from scratch. He challenged me to identify the purpose of my project. He then helped me define the themes that were involved.

The third part of my investigation involves looking at how farmers vote. This is covered in the last formal questions of my survey. Farmers historically have been reluctant to vote on industry issues; as a result they have been criticised by their leaders for being apathetic. This touches on a farmer's willingness to engage with issues outside of his boundary, and I am hoping to explore this further.

I also interviewed Nicky Hyslop from McFarlane Rural Business and Bruce Beckingsale, a former MAF Advisory Officer. Their views on what makes a successful field-day are covered briefly before my conclusions.

APPROACH

The formal survey revolved around 16 sheep and beef farmers randomly chosen from a database and who were unknown to me. When composing the questions, I consulted five local farmers. Their answers to the trial survey aren't included in the statistics, because the wording of the questions changed as the survey developed. I have, however, used some of their comments, when relevant, in my conclusions.

The formal survey was designed to be a questionnaire presented over the phone and was intended to take about 40 minutes. At the end of the survey I asked two questions based on current industry issues that initially were not relevant to the survey but were of interest to me. Surprisingly, these two questions led to discussions that took from 15 minutes to an hour and the information gleaned from these had an unexpected impact on my conclusions.

As I present the survey in my report, I will report the participants' answers and then offer my interpretation.

FINDINGS

The first part of this investigation involved interviewing several marketing managers from the rural servicing industry. For the purpose of this report I have chosen to quote only two, Nigel Riley, Marketing Manager for CRT, and Lizzie Parker, Group Marketing Manager for PGG Wrightsons. They described marketing to farmers as 'a difficult and complex beast.' Both seemed to have a very good understanding of their market. Lizzie Parker was in the process of correlating information from an intensive survey recently completed. Nigel Riley was involved in the development of the CRT village concept at the Lincoln/Mystery Creek Field Days. On the surface, the CRT village concept appears to have been very successful. Nigel Riley explained how he would lie awake at night, wondering how they could have done it better, and is looking to continually refine the concept.

Nigel Riley asked me to explain how I bought my animal health products. I am a CRT shareholder, and I put most of my farm spending through the CRT card. Because CRT has only recently established a store in Fairlie, I also have a very strong relationship with the PGG Wrightsons store and their staff, and I also have a good relationship with a PGG Wrightsons stock agent. However, I buy my animal health products through Ravensdown, a relatively late entrant into the animal health market. The main reason for this is because a good friend of mine works in the animal

health division. He continually keeps me up to date and has been good at servicing my animal health requirements.

Nigel Riley asked me how, as a salesman for CRT, could he make a pitch to win my business? Because of my established relationships, it would be difficult to persuade me to change allegiance. Price plays a huge role in winning business, but when everybody is selling the same product on similar margins, it really comes down to service and relationship.

Lizzie Parker said that farmers who were aggressively engaged in their business, were easier to deal with than farmers who were less committed. She felt that a key to winning more business was to be more competitive in marketing and information transfer, targeting farmers who are willing to engage. An example of this was Ravensdown who, four days after drought was declared in South Canterbury posted a flyer called 'Ravensdown drought recovery strategies using fertiliser.' It presented a quick overview on drought management and preparing for the recovery. It contained little new information but helped reaffirm old knowledge. At the same time, they announced a six-month deferred payment for Urea for anybody living in a declared drought zone. This was a wonderful example of how a company can be issue-based and relevant, rather than formula-driven.

Businesses trying to engage with farmers have to deal with different ages and stages of their clients and their farming careers. The relationships that exist are complex and are continually evolving. The climate that everyone operates in can change dramatically. The vagaries of the weather, exchange rate, political whims, and market fashions determine farmer's profitability and decision making. By default, this affects the businesses that are trying to engage with them.

Both Lizzie Parker and Nigel Riley summed up marketing to farmers by saying that there was no silver bullet, but that a dynamic multifaceted approach is required and needs to be constantly reviewed.

Gary Walton, an extension officer for Beef and Lamb, has been heavily involved in the Monitor Farm program. He felt that one of the ways to increase the level of farmer engagement with extension opportunities, was 'to make them take more responsibility for their own learning.' He felt that in the past, some of the facilitators in the Monitor Farm program tended to drive the agenda expressing what they knew, but lacked the skills to draw the knowledge and the direction out of the community group. He believes that the greater the ownership by farmers, the greater the participation.

An example of this philosophy is perhaps best represented by the discussion group I belong to. This discussion group was formed in the late 1980s, in the Fairlie basin area. It had a peak membership of 22 farmers in the mid-nineties. By 2007, we were down to 12 farmers as retirements, dairy expansion and other departures, had their effect on our membership. Because of this, the cost of employing a farm consultant doubled. Current members began to complain that they weren't getting value for money from the current facilitator. Over the years, we'd had up to six different consultants run our group, the latest one being perhaps the longest serving. As a leader in the group, I believed we were getting good value, but the real problem was that we had become stale, and a change was needed. We therefore terminated the relationship with our facilitator, and elected to run the discussion group without one. In other words, we have taken control of our own learning. On hearing this, a neighbouring discussion group removed their facilitator, and joined us.

So far this new format has worked well. We invite the relevant professionals for the property being visited to come e.g. the accountant, bank manager, fertiliser rep etc. This ensures a degree of professionalism and accuracy throughout the day. The financial details for the property being visited are not discussed in depth, as was previously the case, but the focus is now in a more practical direction.

As a group of farmers, we enjoy each other's company and have a depth of knowledge about each other and the properties that can only be acquired by spending a lot of time together. There are downsides to the format we have chosen. We are not meeting as regularly as before and the lack of financial reporting is, in my opinion, a negative. However, the discussion group has taken on a new lease of life, and is currently in very good heart.

Gary Walton was positive about this example and felt that the challenge for the group would be around the accuracy of information being shared. If we are aware of this, he felt the discussion group should succeed.

THE SURVEY

The first five questions of the survey covers the demographics. Introductory questions relate to the person's circumstances, their age, where they live, etc. While this information may or may not be useful, it certainly worked well in helping the farmer to relax into the interview process by answering questions that to them required little thought.

Question 1: Which age group do you belong in?

In preparing the survey I had grouped the different ages in their specific decade i.e. 20-29, 30-39, 40-49 etc. In almost every interview the farmer would respond with his current age, before I could get the rest of the question out. To me this was a good sign and indicated that they were ready to go.

The median age of the sixteen farmers formally surveyed was 47.5, with an age range from 33 through to 62.

In this sample, age did not appear to be a factor in whether or not farmers were prepared to engage in further learning opportunities. In fact, one farmer in his early sixties is currently preparing to manage a complete dairy conversion and his enthusiasm to get started was obvious. The extra learning required seemed only to motivate him.

Question 2: How many years have you been farming?

The range was from 10 years through to 44 years, with the median time being 28 years.

Question 3: How many years have you been on your current farm?

The median here was 20 years with a range from 3-42 years. Two participants in this survey were farming properties that had been in their families for more than 100 years with seven more stating that they were third generation on that particular farm.

Question 4: How many stock-units do you winter?

The median was 2959 S.U. The range was 800 S.U. through to 7000 S.U.

Question 5: Are you the key decision-maker on the farm?

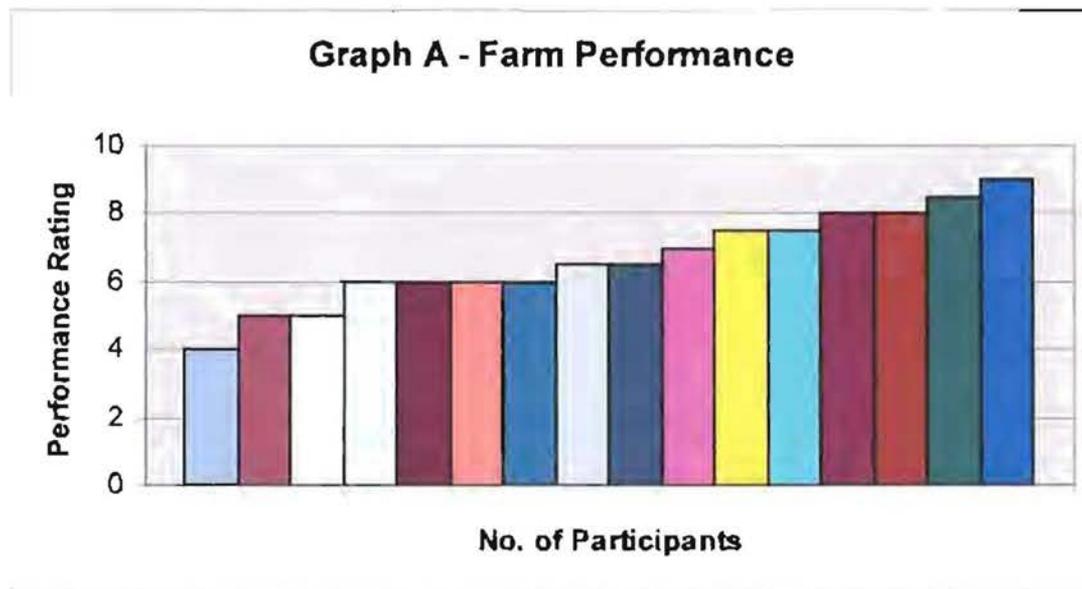
All participants answered yes.

Question 6: How many Labour Units are on your farm?

The range was 0.7 through to 2.5 L.U. with a median of 1.4 labour units. My reason for asking this question was to see if there is any link between employing labour and being more available to pursue off-farm activities. This link was hard to find, with all participants later stating that time is the single biggest factor in determining whether or not they can pursue off-farm endeavours. Employing labour creates work in itself.

The other point to emerge from this question is how important family members are. When trying to work out how many Labour Units it took to run their farm, many farmers articulated the amount of work unpaid family members put in. Generally it was their father, an uncle, or their wife and children. While this has been historically acknowledged, the fact that families play a huge role in running the farm was consistent in all the interviews.

Question 7: Where would you place your farm's current performance on a line from 1 to 10 (with 1 being poor and 10 being excellent)?



This question represents the survey changing gear with the farmer now having to think more critically about the answer that he gives. Most farmers' initial response to this question was with an expletive! The median rating was 6.5 with a range of 4-9 (Refer to Graph A).

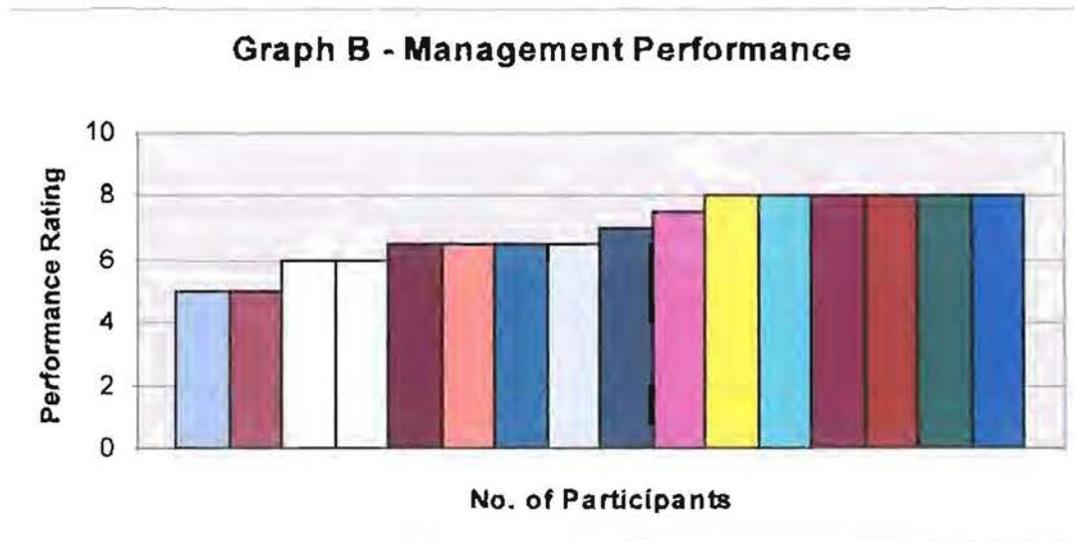
Two points should be noted from the response:

Firstly, no one asked me to define 'performance.' They have made the assumption that performance covers the aspects of a farm's production that they deem as important, which may or may not include financial

results. All farmers have their own thoughts as to what are the most important measurements of successful production: lambing percentage, kilograms of meat per hectare, the size of the weaning draft, etc. It is probably a blend of several of these indicators that form the overall picture. While all of these indicators are relevant, they are still subjective measures of success.

Secondly, only one farmer described his farm performance as being below average. This particular farmer has had to find work off farm in order to survive. He still measures his farm performance to when he was a full time operator.

Question 8: Where would you place your current management performance on a line from 1 to 10 (1 being poor and 10 being excellent)?



I've differentiated management performance from farm performance in these two questions, since some properties could be in a development phase, or a farm may have been recently purchased, in which case farm performance may lag behind management. The results from this question prove interesting given that only three of the farmers interviewed have been on their property for less than ten years. The range in management performance was from 5-8, with the median being 7.

It would seem that firstly, the farmers interviewed view their properties as lagging behind their management. Secondly, no one believes they are a below average operator.

Question 9: Are you comfortable with both your farm performance and your management performance?

56 % answered no.

Question 10: Do you have a plan in place to lift both farm and management performance?

75% say, yes they have a plan. While 56% are unhappy with their performance, a number of the 44% who are happy, are still aiming to improve further.

Question 11: Do other farmers actively seek your advice?

62% answered yes. I enjoyed discussing with farmers their response to this question. Some farmers who answered no, felt that other farmers used to ask them for advice. Due to a lack of profitability in the sheep and beef industry and the negativity that this has created, perhaps there is not the same level of dialogue that used to take place. This question inadvertently began to reveal one of the alternative themes to emerge from this survey. Sheep and beef farmers are struggling for confidence. Given their lack of profitability, they believe that this reflects poorly on them as businessmen. Therefore, they are reluctant to put themselves forward for further leadership roles. This lack of confidence may be affecting their engagement with further learning opportunities. They may feel that some of the initiatives they have embraced in the past seem only to have grown the debt. They tend to take this personally and see it as a poor reflection on themselves, rather than the state of the industry.

A good example of this is 'Steve' (not his real name, but one of the participants in this survey), who was very aggressive in his pursuit of Agribusiness knowledge. He was active in his discussion group and was Chairman of the local Monitor Farm committee, etc. He was seen as an up-and-coming farmer and was being groomed for further leadership roles. Steve, who was in his early forties, decided that the time was right to grow his business. He was currently running a good 5000 S.U. operation and had virtually no debt. He purchased a neighbouring property that was run down and set about putting in place all that he had learned. Five years later and with his debt spiralling out of control Steve had to on sell this

farm for a loss. He is now back to farming his original 5000 S.U. but now he has a large mortgage.

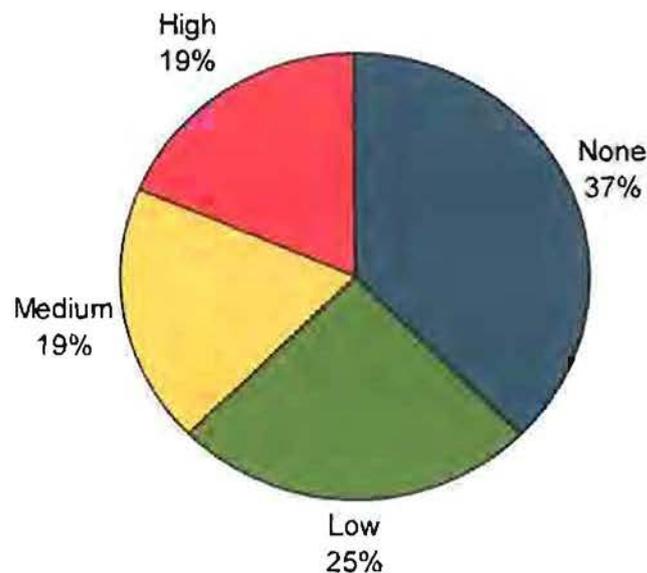
Reflecting on this story with Steve you couldn't help but notice that his timing was terrible, coupled with a full on drought he also had to endure four of the worst years for product prices in his farming career. He paid good money for his stock when he went in and couldn't give them away when he got out.

Steve acknowledges that there were forces at work beyond his control that compounded what was originally a marginal decision. The fact that he made a call that could have resulted in him losing the family farm has left him feeling foolish and completely inadequate. He very rarely attends field days now, and completely shuns any leadership opportunities that come his way, believing that his lack of success has undermined any mandate to lead he might have once had.

Ironically, I believe that Steve is now better qualified to lead than he ever was previously. There was a humility to the way he told his story and an honesty in the way he answered the questions in the survey, especially the last two around industry restructuring, that I found thought-provoking and refreshing. I hope that he finds his feet again.

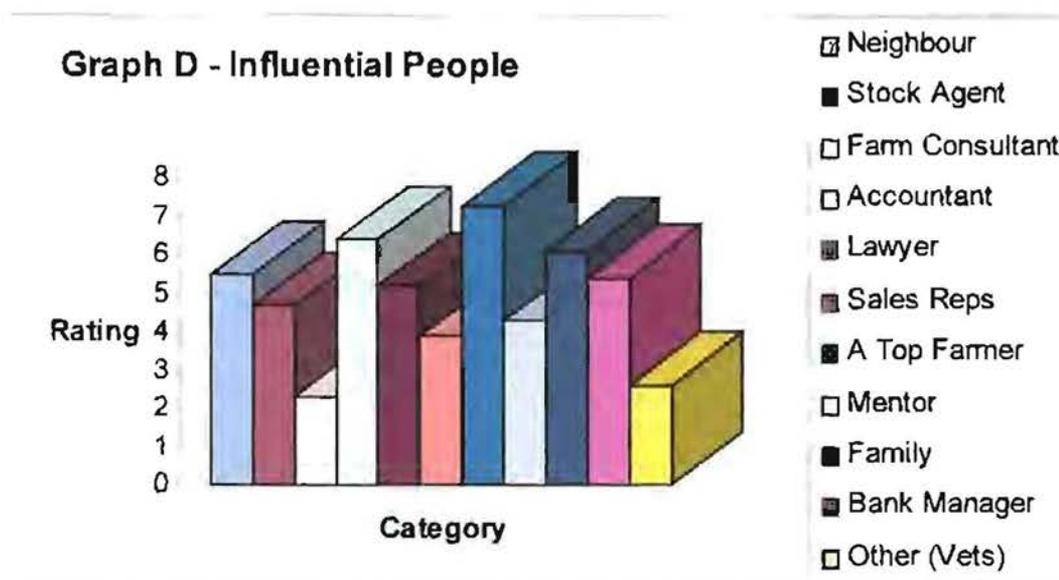
Question 12: In your opinion, which category best describes your debt situation: none/ low debt/ medium debt/ high debt?

Graph C - Level of Debt



I emphasised that this question was voluntary, but everybody chose to answer it. The first five farmers interviewed all said that they had no debt, and I began to think that the only thing I was going to get out of this was an inferiority complex, given the state of my own. However, the purpose of this question was to see if there was any link between a farmer's debt and his willingness to engage with off-farm extension. In other words, would a farmer with high debt be more motivated to stay up-to-date and relevant with new industry initiatives than a farmer with no debt? The results were varied, with no strong links to be found. One older gentleman explained that having no debt had allowed him to pursue interests in politics and community initiatives. As a result his learning was now focused off farm.

Question 13: When making a critical decision on your farm or looking to make a change in your farming policy, who are the people you would talk to? Where would you rate the following people on a line from 1-10 (1 being the least important and 10 being the most important)?



Bearing in mind that I'm using the statistical data from sixteen farmers formally surveyed, I have added up the total score for each category and divided by sixteen to give an average rating out of ten. The highest rating was for 'A Top Farmer' at 7.25 and the lowest was for 'Farm Consultant' on 2.3. A 'Mentor' was right on average at 4.3 and of the eight farmers who have used one, they tended to score their mentors very highly -

between 7 and 10. These same people also scored 'A Top Farmer' very highly. Under the 'Other' category, the twelfth farmer interviewed said he rated his veterinarian highly, and I realised that not having 'vet' on the official list, was an oversight. The last four farmers surveyed also rated their vet above average.

Sales reps rated low at 3.9. Farmers repeatedly expressed their frustration with the high turnover of sales reps in the service industry. It seemed that no sooner had they established a relationship with their rep, there would be change. Several farmers felt that this high turnover severely tested their loyalty to a company. The three farmers that gave their sales reps and stock agents higher marks had been dealing with the same people for years.

At 5.5 the rating for 'Neighbours' was the fourth highest. Its interesting to me, that neighbours should score so highly in relation to other sources of information. This result highlights the importance of the bush telegraph, and the role that it still plays in rural New Zealand. However, it also calls into question the accuracy of the information being transferred.

Bearing in mind that the theme of this question is 'When making a critical decision on your farm, who are you going to talk to?' The fact that 'Farm Consultants' at 2.3, rated the lowest, below 'Sales Reps' and 'other' is, I think, astounding. Of the seven farmers who said they used a consultant only two rated theirs above average. Farm consultants are the only professionals on this list whose major role is information transfer to farmers. Given their exposure to a wide range of farms and farmers, they should recognise best practice and be able to provide a perspective that is easily lost in the day-to-day running of a farm. Generally speaking they are current with the latest research and should provide a good sounding board. They also bring expertise in financial budgeting. Why, then, is the rating for this group so low?

The statistical data used here is from 16 farmers formally interviewed, and while the five farmers informally interviewed gave a similar result it's hard to know whether my results accurately reflect rural New Zealand, given that this is just a small snapshot of the total population. However, when interpreted through my 30 years of farming and relating to farmers, I suspect it may not be too far off. The fact is, farmers are far more comfortable conversing amongst themselves, than they are dealing with professionals. There are probably a number of reasons for this.

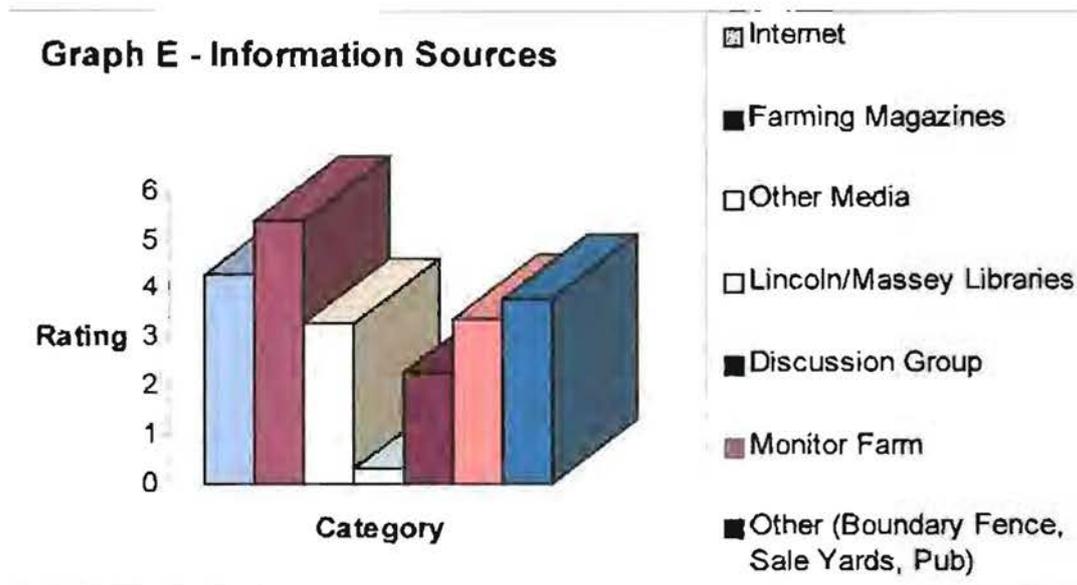
Neil Fleming, when addressing participants at Lincoln early in the Kelloggs course, mentioned that 80% of farmers are tactile learners. This is reflected later in the survey: most of the participants struggled at school. I wonder whether some of the damage done here is reflected in

the initial stages of a farmer's career in the way that he or she relate to academics and professionals. This effect seems to diminish over time as the farmer tends to draw confidence from their life experience as explored further in Question 17.

The other reason that emerges is based around the issue of trust. The three farmers that rate their sales reps highly, enjoy a relationship that has been built up over years, in which trust has been established. Accountants, generally conservative by nature, have access to the heart of the farm business, its finances, and in so doing, build a degree of trust with their clients. This trust is reflected in the fact that accountants score the second highest. 'Family' and 'Neighbours' also scored high.

Those who were rated highly, whatever their category, have built up a degree of trust to the point where some farmers would be prepared to make life-changing decisions based on that advice - whether those people are qualified to give it or not.

Question Fourteen: When making a critical decision on your farm, or looking to make a change in your farming policy, where do you go for your information? Please rate the following on a line from 1-10 (1 being the least important and 10 being the most important).



At 5.4, 'Farming Magazines' are the largest source of information for farmers. Several farmers commented that while not big readers generally, they would always find the time to read their farming magazines. They also commented that some of their favourite articles are based around the

Monitor Farm program, which itself scores 3.4. Having been involved with the running of the South Canterbury Monitor Farm, I often found that the report on the field day in the paper probably only captured about ten percent of what the day was all about. I was also often frustrated with the low farmer turnout at these events given the quality of the speakers and the information presented. We on the organising committee often consoled ourselves that the field days were well supported by the many sales reps from the various companies, and that they in turn would transfer a lot of information as they drove up farm driveways. In Question 13, though, sales reps scored a lowly 3.9 as a source of information. It appears that the amount of content included in the Monitor Farm articles by farming magazines as well as the poor farmer turnout and the lower rating of their reliance on sales reps for advice, means that a lot of information has failed to reach its intended audience.

Farmers are still coming to terms with the internet as a source of information, scoring it 4.3. Five farmers scored the internet very highly, while the rest were trying to come to grips with what their computer could do, or were still on dial-up, or had no connection at all.

The third lowest score is 'Discussion Groups'. Only six farmers belong to a discussion group. Of those, three rated theirs at 8, and three rated theirs below average. Two of three who rate their discussion group an 8 also rate their farm consultant above average. Two of the three who rate their discussion group below average also rate their farm consultant below average.

Only two farmers were aware that the Lincoln/ Massey libraries existed, and having been reintroduced to the Lincoln library myself this last year, I can't believe how under utilised this amazing resource is outside of academia.

The last category of 'Other' included the 'Saleyards,' the 'Boundary Fence' and the 'Pub.' There is no doubt that these three venues witness a huge amount of information transfer/gossip. These venues see farmers, agents and in the case of the pub, other members of the business community, interacting on a regular basis. One farmer scored his boundary fence at 9. These venues contribute to the bush telegraph, which is wide and varied. The accuracy of the information could also be wide and varied.

Question 15: What is your highest tertiary qualification?

Out of 16 farmers interviewed, there was one Agricultural Science Degree (Ag Sci) from Lincoln, two Diplomas of Agriculture (Dip Ags) also from Lincoln. Two with University Entrance (UE), eight with School Certificate (School Cert), and three who failed School Cert. Three farmers had been to Telford, (one with UE, one with School Cert, and one who failed School Cert).

Question 16: Depending on your answer to Question 15, how do you think this has helped/ hindered your farming career?

All three who had been to Telford found it to be very beneficial, giving them the confidence that they had lacked when leaving school. The two farmers with a Dip Ag had divergent views, with one saying that while it was a great year socially, it ended up having little relevance to his farming career. The other farmer felt that his diploma year and preceding two years practical had exposed him to differing farming styles and management techniques that he otherwise might never have experienced. He felt that he was able to glean the best out of these examples for his own farming situation.

Of the 11 farmers who either had School Cert or had failed School Cert, 5 felt this level of education had made no difference to their farming career. In one case that would be hard to argue, as the participant now runs a thriving multimillion dollar contracting business. He employs up to ten employees and still runs the family farm. He felt that while he hasn't been gifted academically, he was blessed with a certain amount of 'street smarts.' The other four farmers expressed a lack of confidence in their early farming careers. These confidence issues included a tendency to be conservative, reluctance to deal with professionals and academics, and a lack of good reading, writing and bookkeeping skills. Has their reluctance to engage with professionals and academics early in their farming careers impacted on their willingness to attend farming extension programmes? Has this initial reluctance to engage affected the opportunities taken right through their career even when confidence has grown? In other words, is not going to extension programmes early in a farmer's career habit-forming? It is possible, then, that low-level education has had more of an influence than those farmers have realised.

Perhaps the most thoughtful appraisal of the worth of his education came from the person with the Ag Sci degree, who said it was hard to separate the effects of his education from the results he has obtained during his farming career. He felt that an enquiring mind was more important than a

formal education, but that the discipline of a formal education on an enquiring mind was a powerful combination.

Question 17: What are your best off-farm achievements outside of academics?

I wanted to explore any benefits off-farm achievements might have contributed to the farmer's career. As could be expected, the answers were varied. Without exception, all farmers were heavily involved with their communities, be it on rugby club committees, school boards of Trustees, Lions Clubs, stud breeding societies, dog trials, fire brigade, church etc.

Six farmers cited their choice of partner as their single greatest achievement. Travel was commonly mentioned, with two farmers coming home from their OEs with enough money to purchase the family farm. One farmer won the Golden Fleece award for fine wool, another became the world champion in blade shearing, one became a commercial pilot, and one of the participants interviewed had become the local Monitor Farmer for four years.

Question 18: How have these achievements affected your farming career?

The world champion blade shearer had achieved three subjects in school cert, and he described himself as leaving school with no confidence. As a consequence of this, he believed that he'd been very conservative in his early working life. When asked about the effect that becoming a world champion had had on him, he said he believed it built a confidence in him over time that had eluded him previously. He subsequently spent a lot of time as a shearing instructor, and enjoyed spending time with the young shearers who, like himself, struggled with their self-esteem. Because of his empathy, he believed he was able to draw the best out of these younger people. The confidence that he has gained has been beneficial to his farming career.

The farmer holding a commercial pilot's licence felt that the discipline required in gaining that qualification was beneficial to both his farm and his time management. He believed that it kept him fresh and helped him maintain a healthy perspective towards farming, with its many benefits despite a lack of profitability. Common themes from those involved in community boards, committees, etc, was that it taught them to be more

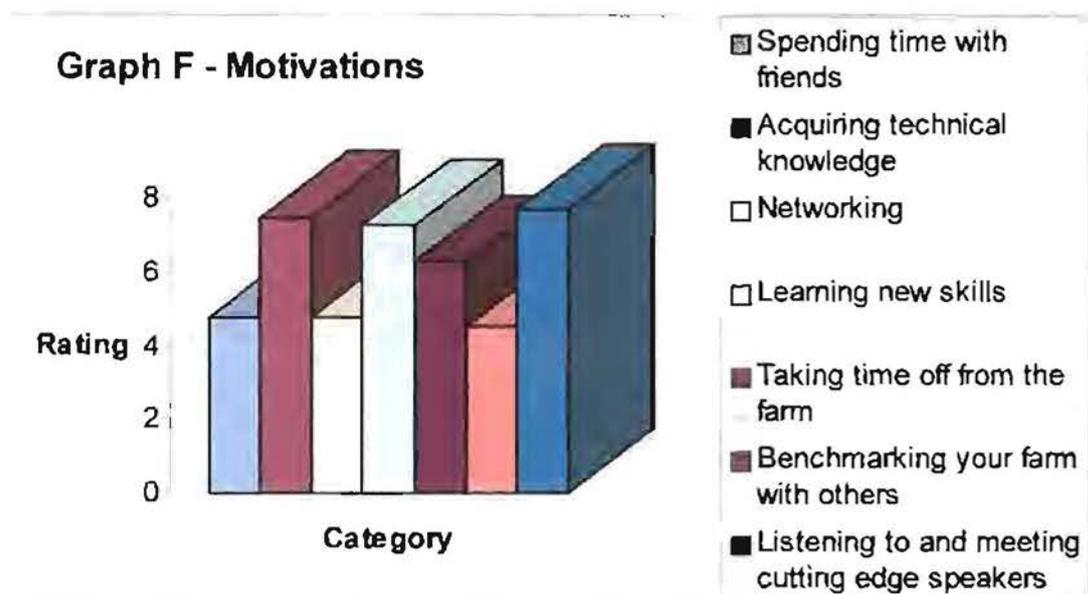
organised on their farms to allow them to be involved off-farm. They felt their time management had improved. They believed that being involved in a cause that they're interested in but has no financial reward brought a level of freshness and wellbeing to their lives. Given the solitary life of a farmer generally, several commented on the need for companionship and viewed the involvement with people within their community as being vitally important to bringing a healthy balance to their lives.

In summarising the response to Question 18, the common phrases used were 'installing confidence,' 'bringing a perspective,' 'interacting with people,' 'improving management,' 'growing leadership,' 'learning to prioritise' and 'forces me off the farm.'

Question 19: How many times in the last 12 months have you attended industry-good field days, Monitor Farms or discussion groups?

- None 4
- 1-3 times 3
- 4-10 times 7
- 10+ 2

Question 20: If you have attended industry good field days, what was your motivation? Please rate the following on a line from 1-10 (1 being the least important and 10 being the most important).



These last two questions have come to the crux of my survey. How many times in the last year have the participants engaged with the extension opportunities that are open to them, and what were their main motivations for doing so?

Of the four farmers who hadn't been to any of the named extension opportunities in the last 12 months, reasons were varied. One was because he had a full-time job running a successful contracting business. Another had had a family bereavement two or three years ago that had completely affected his motivation to farm. He felt that he was 'only now coming up for air.' The third farmer, at 62 years of age, was winding down, having been more active in the past, and was surprised on reflection with the fact that he hadn't been out much. The fourth stated that he simply couldn't find the time anymore. Apart from those four, everyone else was, to some degree, actively pursuing further learning opportunities within the industry.

Question 20 created a lot of discussion, as the farmers themselves considered their own motivations. Of the seven motivations listed, 'Listening to and/ or meeting cutting edge speakers' scored the highest with 7.7, 'acquiring technical knowledge' was the second at 7.5, with 'learning new skills' coming in with a 7.3. These results are not surprising, given the nature of the question.

I felt that when farmers were answering this question, however, they scored these three motivations higher, because they felt they were meant to. In other words, why else would you go to a field day? I had stressed several times that there were no right or wrong answers in this survey. Even as mature adults, we don't want to look silly, and I wonder whether we quickly perceive what the questioner wants to know and then answer accordingly.

Initially several participants scored 'spending time with friends' low to begin with, only to get the end of the list, or indeed, the end of the survey, and request to go back and score it higher. In other words, is it okay to want to hang out with your friends? One participant suggested that if I had used the word 'peers' instead of 'friends,' that they'd have scored this higher the first time. The reaction was the same for 'taking time off from the farm.' Initially they'd score low, and as I was about to write the number down, it would change from a three to a five, and then to a seven. This could indicate a feeling of guilt for admitting to wanting to take time off from the farm. I felt that some wanted validation.

Networking and benchmarking received the most extreme of the responses. One farmer who appeared to be politically active in his off-farm activities, scored networking high, and was comfortable with this

motivation, while others were almost offended, as if they held the concept of networking with contempt. Benchmarking seemed to bring out the competitive instinct in two of the participants. There seemed to be a connection between them scoring this high, and their sporting achievements.

Question 21: If you answered 1 or more times to Question 19:

- a) How do you select which events to go to?
- b) How do you assess how successful the event was?
- c) Can you select an event which had a huge impact on your farming career, and describe why?
- d) Can you select an event which had no impact and describe why?

These four questions provided a huge amount of information as the participants answered in detail.

Firstly, when selecting which events to go to, 'need to have the time' came through loud and clear with seven participants. 'Relevance' was mentioned six times, either to the farm operation or to the time of year. For example, these sheep and beef farmers wouldn't go to a dairy farm discussion group, while a field day on winter feed budgeting in April/May would be considered relevant.

The content in the advertisements for the field day is important for farmers in gauging potential relevance, as well as who is running the field day, and who the speakers are. The participants seemed to have no particular preference for where they find their field day advertisements i.e. it could be from the local newspaper, farming magazines, radio, a flyer in the mail, Internet or word of mouth.

As far as assessing the success of a field day, the participants came across as being very easy to please. Their comments included 'If I can still remember it going home or two or three days later, then it was successful,' 'If I've learnt something new and have been entertained at the same time, then it was worth going,' 'I will always get something good out of it,' 'I've only got to learn one new thing to make it pay,' and 'I like to hear things first hand, not to read about them in the paper.'

Two of the participants said: 'Even if I don't learn anything new, but get to have a decent yarn, then the day will be a success,' and 'The field day would be a success if I've enjoyed it, especially with my friends.' Interestingly this was the point at which they asked me to go back and change their score on 'spending time with friends' in Question 20. I found this response to my questions to be hugely rewarding. It meant they were taking my survey seriously and that in answering the questions they were learning about themselves and responding accordingly.

Asking the participants to describe an event that had a huge impact on their farming career, and why, was enlightening.

One older farmer described how he travelled a long way in the eighties to discover electric fencing at a Gallagher field day. Over the next few years, he saw the immediate benefits of being able to control his pastures cost-effectively, in a way that he'd never been able to do previously. Another farmer told how he saw the Texel breed for the first time at a Mount Linton open day in the mid-nineties. He realised that he was looking at an animal of the future. Subsequently, he went home and completely changed his breeding program.

One interviewee attended a Meat & Wool field day held at Benmore Station in the Mackenzie Country last autumn. He felt it was one of the best days out he'd had in a long time. It was a top-performing property, pushing the boundaries under irrigation. He recalled a good line-up of speakers, plenty of refreshments, views to die for, and the trip itself, travelling with a group of friends in a mini-van.

A Southland farmer interviewed has a son who works for the current Dairy Farm Manager of the Year. As a result, this Southland sheep and beef farmer was invited to go along to the awards ceremony in Invercargill. 'What followed,' he said, 'was one of the most brilliantly organised and inspirational evenings I'd been to in years. You could feel the buzz in the air from the vibrant and enthusiastic young people that had committed themselves to dairying, with the belief that they were going to be well rewarded for their effort.'

A big surprise for me was that three of the farmers that I had randomly picked for this survey, living between Nelson and Invercargill, would recount a sheep council seminar held at Lincoln College in 1998. Like me, they ranked it as one of the most profoundly impacting and timely seminars that they'd ever been to. After two very lean years in 1997-1998, both dry, and with low product prices, the sheep industry was in a very negative mindset. The seminar theme was on pregnancy scanning and reproductive waste, and while this was the dawn of a very important innovation in farming, the day was much more than just about scanning.

The chairman of the Northern South Island Sheep Council, Malcolm Taylor from Marlborough, stepped up two or three times throughout the day, and challenged us with an incredibly motivational and inspiring message: 'We are Agri-businessmen. We are to focus on the things that we can control and we are to let go of the things that we can't.' He challenged us to be professional in the way that we conduct ourselves. We should be aspiring to be in the top ten percent of our industry, the top ten percent, he pointed out, were still making a good return on their assets. He encouraged us, maintaining that our chosen profession was a noble one and that eventually excellence would be rewarded. His style of delivery was that of a stern and passionate teacher.

It was a wonderful example of inspirational leadership. Taylor was the right man at the right time with the right message, and he continued to influence Agri-businessmen over the next several years. The atmosphere in the car on the drive home that afternoon was completely different to that on the drive up.

Asking farmers to select an event that had no impact, and describe why, gave an interesting response. The farmers interviewed struggled to think of one. After a little encouragement from me, one or two stories emerged, such as the farmer who, early on in his farming career, stood up to ask what he thought was an important question, only to have the guest speaker laugh at him. He said it was years before he asked another question. A similar situation happened in Ranfurly, at a Lucerne field day, where another farmer was spoken down to by the guest speaker. This farmer left the field day feeling belittled, and wondered why anyone would ask a question in that environment. In these cases it probably wasn't the environment but speakers being insensitive.

One complaint centred around the South Canterbury Monitor Farm when it was being held on John Gregan's farm. The farmer felt that John's performance was so good that the average farmer might have struggled to relate to the property. He found the process of going to Gregan's farm very intimidating, and he would often leave feeling quite dejected. This was not what the Monitor Farm program was trying to achieve.

Four farmers said that they had never been to a bad field day. Indeed, most of the farmers interviewed felt they could salvage something from any field day, and this is probably best reflected back in Question 20, with regard to motivations. Even when the day is not particularly well-organised, the fact that they are taking a day off from their farm and spending time with their friends and peers, leaves them feeling satisfied.

While on the surface some farmers seem to tolerate what I would call very ordinary field day experiences, I wonder whether they're not as tolerant as they think. Given that there are several motivations at work for a farmer to attend a field day, it has become my belief that rather than complain about any issues, they simply vote with their feet. In other words, they don't come back.

Question 22: If you answered 'none' to Question 19,

- a) What are the barriers that stop you from engaging in industry-good events?
- b) What would it take for those barriers to be removed?
- c) Would you be open to having those barriers removed?

This question represents what was always going to be the biggest challenge with my survey. With the topic being around farmers engaging with the extensions available to them, the farmers willing to do the survey are the ones that are most likely to engage in the industry. The very people that I really wanted to talk to, that is, those who don't engage beyond the farm gate, would be less likely to want to be involved in a survey. Out of 17 random phone calls, I only had one decline, and he was therefore, unfortunately, the one that I most needed to interview.

Even though this question was designed for those people not attending field days in the last twelve months, I found that those who had attended, made comments about barriers. Every farmer said that time is the single biggest constraint on any form of off-farm activity. They also mentioned distance to travel and the cost of travel as potential barriers.

Because the survey only had four farmers who hadn't attended field days in the last 12 months, I found myself asking local farmers (outside of the survey) about their reasons for not attending field days. In order to help me fully understand their barriers, I steered the conversation around to the local Monitor Farm and asked why, during the four year programme, they had not come to any of the field days. They all said that they were going to come but had simply been too busy. This response could imply that those of us who do go to field days are not busy. For some farmers there is a level of guilt about leaving the farm during the day. For others, perhaps saying 'too busy' is really indicating more complex reasons, possibly resulting in subtle habits.

My own experience related here is an example of how being busy can affect perspectives:

This last autumn our area was in drought, and the tractor driver that I share with my cousin/neighbour went to Australia for the winter. I decided not to employ anyone else, and that I would do all the work myself. Because of the dry, feeding out was very intensive, as well as getting other farm work done. There were three great field days coming up. The first was the High Country Field Day held at Benmore Station, which I've mentioned earlier in this report, and while I made every effort to get to it, I failed. The second was a Sheep Council Seminar at Lincoln College. Again I tried to get there, and failed. The third was the South Canterbury Monitor Farm Public Field Day at John Gregan's. John was the Monitor Farmer four years ago, and this was a chance to get back there, and see what he'd achieved, leveraging off his time as the Monitor Farm. As chair of the Monitor Farm committee, the idea of going back to John Gregan's was mine, and I helped to organise the day. Needless to say, I really wanted to get there, and failed. I then had the opportunity of attending two other smaller events but didn't put any thought into planning to go to them and therefore didn't.

The point I'm trying to make is, that after the disappointment of missing out on the three events that I really wanted to go to, I didn't even try to attend the other two. I was certainly too busy for the previous events, but was I too busy for the last two? I really don't know, because I didn't even try. Maybe not going had very subtly become habitual. In my mind I was still 'way to busy.'

Question 23: Do you value personal development – both on and off the farm? Yes/ No

- a) What are you currently engaged in for personal development?
- b) What are your plans for future personal development?

All participants said yes, they value personal development (PD). However, only four participants are currently engaged in PD. That's twenty-five percent. One farmer is going on *The Spirit of Adventure* to engage in a chairmanship course. Another has immersed himself in biological farming with an emphasis on learning more about soil. The third is learning to trade foreign currency, enrolling in courses on the subject, and is currently looking for a mentor. The fourth is training to become a fireman.

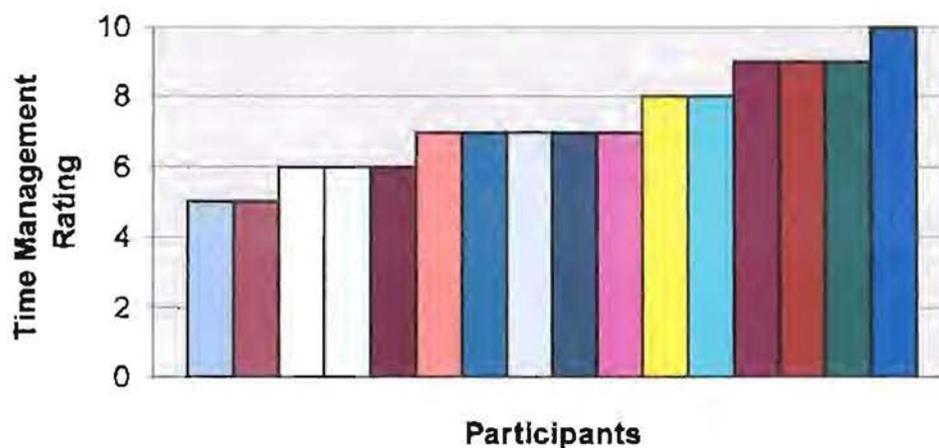
As to the future PD aspirations of the group, their plans are not definite. Six people see travel as their next form of PD.

The older farmer I mentioned earlier in this report, who is about to embark on dairy farming, has found the whole learning experience, changing from a sheep and beef mentality to that of a dairy focus, to be challenging. He sees this as his PD for the next two or three years.

All participants felt that PD was important. However, 75% were not currently pursuing this and for many this was food for thought.

Question 24: How would you rate your time management on a line from 1-10 (1 being poor and 10 being excellent)?

Graph G - Time Management



The results show the median is 7, with a range from 5-10.

The participant who scored 10 is a female farmer whose husband works off-farm. She has a family and is very involved in the community. Five other participants scored themselves between 8 and 9. No doubt there are some very good managers of time in the rural industry. However, my experience is that there are seasons in farming when time management excels and other times during the year when it doesn't. Again in this graph no one sees themselves as being below average.

Question 25: Do you vote in national elections? Yes/ No

a) Do you vote in local body elections? Yes/ No

b) Do you vote in industry-good elections? Yes/ No

- Fifteen out of sixteen farmers said they vote in national elections (94%)
- Fourteen out of sixteen farmers said they vote in local body elections (88%)
- Fourteen out of sixteen farmers said they voted in industry-good elections (88%)
- Only one farmer said no, that he never voted (6%)

These results are not totally consistent with the voting statistics that were available to me. I was told that the rule of thumb was 80% of the public vote in national elections, 40% in local body elections, and 20% in farming industry-good elections. My interpretation of the official voting statistics showed that in national elections an average of 80% voter turnout was achieved over the last 20 years, as per rule of thumb. A high of 91% was achieved in 1981 and a low of 77% in 2002.

Local body elections sit at around 50% voter turnout. I was hoping to extract more information out of the local body election statistics. I asked for the breakdown in provincial areas on how many rural votes are returned in these elections as opposed to their urban counterparts. No such breakdown of this data was readily available. In asking for this information I was hoping to see if there was a gap between rural and urban voters. Analysing the data that was available would indicate that while within some voting areas there may be gaps, overall the differences seem to be negligible.

Industry good votes, though, are at the crux of Question 25 and it is here that my survey and the official statistics differ. My survey results say that 88% of farmers will engage in industry votes but this is simply not the case, with the rule of thumb at 20% being much closer to the truth.

Eric Laurenson, as Chairman of Mid Micron Wool, sent out over 600 mailers to mid micron farmers announcing their AGM, only five or six people responded. John Scurr, chairman of Deer Industry New Zealand,

complained during his deer industry briefing to our Kelloggs class that if they could get a 25% turnout to their levy and industry-good votes then they would be doing well. The amount of energy that went into the meat and wool referendum in 2009 was, in my estimation, huge compared to previous efforts, only to have a 42% voter turnout.

The dairy industry is starting to raise the bar in this area. By employing social scientists and other specialists both Fonterra and Dairy NZ are starting to do 'targeted engagement', being very specific about what information goes where and to whom. Given that the dairy industry is data rich, they are able to make use of this data and drive their farmers forward in a way that other industries can only envy.

There are other reasons behind better farmer engagement in dairying; for example, dairy farmers only have one main income stream to focus on. Sheep and beef farmers can have anywhere between three and six income streams if they are also running deer, crop and dairy grazing. Dairying seems to get a lot more media attention than sheep and beef, most of it negative. This can contribute to what may be described as a sense of brotherhood, so that when dairy farmers finally get to have their say, voting is one way of expressing themselves.

Despite some of the negative press, I believe that there is a feel-good factor in dairying that is income-related, and it this profitability that engenders a belief that its participants are going to be well rewarded. This could lead to a sense of pride, and a greater level of participation within the industry.

If farmers are not turning out to vote in their chosen fields, then clearly something is not right. Just to say that that is the way it has always been, is not good enough. If industry leaders aren't prepared to investigate this further, then low-voter turnouts will continue to be the result. The resources that dairying pour into this area show the way.

The last point I'd like make on this subject came from two of the survey participants, stating that while they take pride in voting for industry-good initiatives, they've been guilty in the past of missing the odd vote, if the vote was held before the 20th of the month. With incoming mail going into the bill tray, any votes held after the 20th of the month are more likely to be participated in.

Question 26: If you vote, do you believe that your vote matters?

Fifteen out of 16 farmers said yes, they believe their vote matters. The one farmer who does not vote, did not elaborate as to why. With regard to industry votes, he felt he'd voted in the past, only to see nothing change. On a national and local body level, he was unable to shed any light as to his motivations. This was extremely frustrating, as I was hoping this question might shed light on why people are reluctant to vote or participate in industry-good initiatives.

This concluded the formal part of my survey. Questions 27 and 28 were tacked on at the end, not so much for my research but for my interest. The benefit of this time was that clicking out of 'survey mode' where I had to be careful not to influence the participants' answers with my own bias meant that we could enter into a two-way discussion. I was able to encourage the farmers to express themselves fully. They seemed to relish this opportunity, and enjoyed the fact that not only was I listening to them, I was writing their comments down. The response to these questions has given me more insight than anticipated. This has helped to round out some of my conclusions.

Question 27: If you're a sheep farmer, do you believe that committing your entire lamb/wool supply to one company will make any difference to the profitability of the industry? Yes/ No

The split was fifty/fifty. Eight farmers for, and eight against.

Question 28: Are you willing to supply stock to meat processing companies on forward contracts? Yes/ No

- a) If yes, then why?
- b) If no, then why not?

Again, the split is fifty/fifty.

Those who answered 'yes' made comments along the lines of 'the old model is unsustainable,' 'the companies need confidence of supply,' 'the companies need to know what's coming in, and when, in order to make good decisions.' Two farmers commented on loyalty, and how loyalty will eventually be rewarded, and two more commented on the fact that a

Fonterra type structure is more likely to reward sheep and beef farmers, than the fragmented model we currently have.

Those who answered 'no', on the other hand, like to have choice. They believe that competition is important. One farmer started shopping around, having been very loyal in the past, after a contract went bad, and he lost a lot of money. Another commented on the fact that all contracts are always based around a minimum price. A common theme from the 'no's,' and one that also surfaces during the survey, is a lack of trust. The 'no's' simply do not trust the meat and wool companies to pay a fair price, unless they are forced to by internal competition.

It was when discussing these questions with one particular farmer that the penny dropped with regard to trust. He said 'My mistrust of the meat industry is generational, I'm third generation and it looks like I'm going to be passing it on to my kids.' I then went back to my survey notes and saw that farmers had been using the word 'trust', (generally with a mis- or a don't in front of it), and I hadn't picked up on it before.

Dr Stephen Dakin, a Human Resource consultant, gave a presentation on 'Trust' on Day Two of the Kelloggs course. Of all the speakers we had he was the one that I enjoyed the most. However I saw his presentation as dealing with personal and business relationships, and while I could see the lack of trust holding the sheep and beef industries back, I am only now beginning to more fully recognise the dysfunctional side effects that accompanies a lack of trust.

Put simply, if a farmer doesn't trust you he won't want to engage with you. The degree to which he does engage with you is also a measure of his trust. This revelation had a lot of influence with how I interpreted Question 13, 'When making a critical decision on your farm or looking to make a change in your farming policy, who are the people you would talk to?'

Jeff Grant, the Chairman for Wool Partners Co-operative Ltd, was quoted in the media recently saying 'that the only difference between the meat industry and the wool industry is that the meat industry will stab you in the front, while the wool industry will stab you in the back.' This quote came as Mr Grant and the wool partners team prepare to launch a prospectus which, if successful, will see a new farmers wool co-op emerge, and in so doing, a completely new way for farmers to market their wool.

The fact that no one has taken Mr Grant to task for this comment shows how the two industries are perceived. There is indeed a sense of mistrust that permeates our sheep and beef industry.

However, this topic is for another day and not the subject of this report.

A consultant's view on running a Field Day

Given that a lot of this survey is based around field days, I decided to ask Nicky Hyslop, a farm consultant for McFarlane Rural Business and Bruce Beckingsale, a former MAF Advisory Officer, to briefly comment on how to organise a good field day. Nicky Hyslop said that you had to be well organised, have good, timely topics, with speakers that are able to convey the message, in a way that the audience can receive it. They have to be run on time to allow for some constructive dialogue and debate to take place, this way people often share their opinions and knowledge without realising it. Considered by Beef and Lamb to be a good facilitator, Nicky Hyslop said she has learnt to throw questions to the floor and then wait in silence for a response. Being an experienced facilitator means that she no longer needs to fill in the gaps and as a result, she is able to draw knowledge out of the wider group.

Bruce Beckingsale felt that a lot of modern field days lack focus. He felt this problem stems back to the demise of the MAF field advisory service, when a lot of the field day knowledge was dispersed and subsequently lost. Bruce, who is now in charge of organising the Balance Environmental Awards field day for Otago, feels that you need to be very clear on your objective, the who, what, when, and how. The facilitator, speakers, presenters and attendees need also to be clear as to the objective. Bruce felt that on a farm field day, parts of the farm should be used to demonstrate what the speakers are saying, and that there is no place for theory in a farm demonstration day. Theory is to be saved for the hall or lecture room.

I would add to this list, based on my own research, that the social time at the end of day is not to be underestimated either.

Both Nicky Hyslop and Bruce Beckingsale expressed concern as to the continuity of the hard-earned knowledge around field days, fearing that with a lack of young farm consultants coming through, important knowledge could be lost. This I believe, is a function that Beef and Lamb must fulfil, as 'keepers of the knowledge' because continually reinventing the wheel is inefficient, and a waste of resources.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of my study was to examine what motivates farmers to engage in extension opportunities.

The answers are complex. There are four main points that stood out to me from the survey and some issues from the discussion with the participants that I will comment on.

The first involves the confidence of the young farmer. As a farmer's career unfolds from his formative years through to retirement, his needs evolve. The early years of a young farmer's life are when he is likely to establish habits, develop opinions and learn to think critically. My survey showed that those who had participated in further education were more confident with their relationships towards academics and professionals. Confidence to engage at this level could help farmers to more critically analyse information. Conversely, those who have no confidence in their education could be more vulnerable to prejudice and inaccurate information. The survey showed that this group of people tended to develop confidence over time. Lack of confidence, and the reluctance to interact with professionals and academics early on could affect attitudes and willingness to engage in extension. As a result maybe unwillingness to engage becomes habitual. This could affect not just learning but also wider industry participation.

The second point to emerge from the survey is how established, middle-aged farmers are also experiencing loss of confidence. This is in part due to a lack of profitability in the sheep and beef sector. Farmers are frustrated that for all their development initiatives they are still running a business that is going backwards. They seem to be taking this personally, when in fact it is an industry issue. Sheep and beef farmers are measuring themselves against the dairy industry and feel they are being made to look foolish.

The third point to stand out for me is the issue of trust. The survey revealed two areas of trust. The first area was when making a critical decision on the farm, who was the farmer most likely to talk to for advice. This revealed that a relationship where there is trust could be more important than qualifications. A trusted neighbour could just as likely influence a farmer than a professional. This preference could have ongoing consequences especially if the farmer is young and developing attitudes towards extension opportunities.

The other area of trust was around the wider sheep and beef industry and how lack of trust has created two sides – a 'them and us' mentality. This

hinders the level of engagement within the industry, especially around information transfer and industry voting.

The fourth is the issue of time. Everybody mentioned it as being the single most important determinant as to whether or not they engage with anything beyond the farm gate.

Other reasons farmers seem to be reluctant to engage is an issue that needs more scrutiny. Farming leaders and commentators alike have been too simplistic when diagnosing farmer's lack of vote participation as apathetic. I know a lot of farmers and very few of them would I describe as apathetic. Many lack confidence when expressing themselves publicly. Many also feel unqualified to vote because they struggle with the issues and feel they should leave the decision-making to people who are better informed. Others simply hate paperwork.

Historically, farmers are poor at voting on industry initiatives and levy votes. Dairy NZ and Fonterra are currently pouring a lot of resources into the area of farmer engagement and this is starting to bear fruit. The dairy industry is leading the way with 'targeted engagement' and now they have a group of well-informed farmers who are accessing information that is accurate and on time. This could positively affect industry participation.

Meanwhile, Beef and Lamb New Zealand has, for the first time ever, acquired a database with the names of their levy payers. Up until now this organisation hasn't even known who its own stakeholders are. The sheep and beef industries are literally ten years behind the dairy industry.

RECOMMENDATIONS

If farmers aren't responding to the extensions available to them or to industry voting, accepting the status quo is hardly the best option. While farmers have been accused of apathy in the past, this survey suggests there are other factors involved. This is good news because some of these other factors will be easier to address than apathy.

We need to recognise that a lot of the young people entering the industry will have struggled through school. While they may be lacking confidence academically, they are intelligent, and probably as tactile learners need a hands on approach. We need to modify the message to meet this skill set. Beef and Lamb, Young Farmers, Agriculture ITO and other rural education providers have a roll to play here.

People running field days and extension programmes need to be very clear as to who their audience is and what their objectives are. They need to employ the latest social science tools that target engagement, be prepared to try something different and then monitor the results.

We need to see 'Targeted Extension' in our industry, reinforcing the more traditional sources of information transfer. Top farmers need to be identified by Beef and Lamb extension officers and provided with relevant, accurate, cutting-edge information on a regular basis. This would diffuse via the bush telegraph, to the rest of the farming community. The results of this survey suggest that information will filter down from top farmers who have developed a high level of trust and respect among their peers.

There needs to be an understanding from organisers of industry-good events that the vagaries that affect farmers, i.e. the weather, political, financial, and marketing climates, by default affect them and they need to plan accordingly. For example this could mean having an alternative wet weather venue organised, or schedule to have drench demonstrations well before drenches are bought. There also needs to be an understanding that when the sun shines the hay will have to be made. Field days will always come second. Organisers should not be discouraged when this happens as it may not reflect lack of interest nor be a reflection on their planning.

People looking to engage with the rural sector need to have as much respect for a farmer's time as they have for their own. This also applies to industry-related representatives engaging with farmers on the farm.

Finally, trust needs to be valued. When a farmer engages with a business a relationship is formed. Both the farmer and the business need to recognise the importance of the trust that they have established.

FARMERS NAME: _____

DATE: _____

1. Which age group do you belong in?

20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+

2. How many years have you been farming?

<2	2-5	6-10	10+

3. How many years have you been on your current farm?

<2	2-5	6-10	10+

4. How many stock units do you winter?

	No.
Sheep	
Beef	
Dairy grazing	

5. Are you the key decision maker on the farm? YES / NO

6. How many Labour units are on your farm? _____

7. Where would you place your farm's current performance on a line from 1-10 (1 being poor and 10 being excellent)

8. Where would you place your current management performance on a line from 1-10 (1 being poor and 10 being excellent)

9. Are you comfortable with both farm performance and management performance? YES / NO
10. Do you have a plan in place to lift both farm and management performance? YES / NO
11. Do other farmers actively seek your advice? YES / NO
12. This question is entirely voluntary. In your opinion, which box best describes your debt situation?

None	Low-debt	Medium	High-debt

13. When making a critical decision on your farm, or looking to make a change in your farming policy, who are the people you would talk to? Where would you rate the following people on a line from 1-10 (1 being the least important and 10 being the most important)

Neighbour
 Stock agent
 Farm consultant
 Accountant
 Lawyer
 Sales rep.
 A top farmer
 Mentor
 Family
 Bank Manager
 Other (please specify)

14. When making a critical decision on your farm, or looking to make a change in your farming policy, where do you go for your information? Please rate the following on a line from 1-10 (1 being the least important and 10 being the most important)

Internet
 Farming magazines
 Other media
 Lincoln/ Massey Library
 Public Library
 Discussion group
 Monitor farm
 Other (please specify)

15. What is your highest tertiary qualification?

16. Depending on your answer to q.15, how do you think this has helped/ hindered your farming career?

17. What are your best off-farm achievements outside of academics?

18. How have these achievements affected your farming career?

19. How many times in the last 12 months have you attended industry good field days, monitor farms or discussion groups?

None	1-3 times	4-10 times	10+

20. If you have attended industry good field days, what was your motivation. Please rate the following on a line from 1-10 (1 being the least important and 10 being the most important)

Spending time with friends

Acquiring technical knowledge

Networking

Learning new skills

Taking time off from the farm

Benchmarking your farm with someone else's

Listening to and or meeting cutting edge speakers

Other

21. If you answered 1+ times to question 19:

a) How do you select which events to go to?

b) How do you assess how successful the event was?

c) Can you select an event, which had a huge impact on your farming career, and describe why?

d) Can you select an event, which had no impact and describe why?

22. If you answered None to question 19:

a) What are the barriers that stop you from engaging in industry good events?

b) What would it take for those barriers to be removed?

c) Would you be open to having those barriers removed?

23. Do you value personal development - both on and off the farm? YES / NO

a) What are you currently engaged in for personal development?

b) What are your plans for future personal development?

24. Please rate your time management from 1-10 (1 being poor and 10 being excellent)

25. Do you vote in national elections? YES / NO

a) Do you vote in local body elections? YES / NO

b) Do you vote in industry good elections? YES / NO

26. If you vote, do you believe that your vote matters? YES / NO

27. If you're a sheep farmer, do you believe that committing your entire lamb/ wool supply to one company will make any difference to the profitability of the industry? YES / NO

28. Are you willing to supply stock to meat processing companies on forward contracts? YES / NO

a) If yes, then why?

c) If no, then why not?

Extra Notes:

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