



# An assessment tool for farmer wellbeing

## NOTES FOR FACILITATORS

FarmSalus is a toolkit that enables rural professionals to hold discussions with farmers about the issues that are important to them and their farm resilience and assist them in making healthy decisions for their farm management and farm business.



### **Acknowledgements**

First and foremost, we would like to thank all of interview participants who took time out from their busy schedules to share their knowledge and passion for the future of the hill country with us. We valued their honest testimonies given during the research interviews that led to the development of the FarmSalus.

The design of FarmSalus has been a team effort and we thank all of the contributors to the Hill Country Futures Partnership Programme (HCF) social research, the HCF project management team at Beef + Lamb New Zealand (B+LNZ) and the wider HCF research team and the team at Nature Positive.

During the development of FarmSalus we have sought feedback from farmers, rural professionals and organisations that specialise in wellbeing and/or rural health issues. We give special thanks to the Agri-Womens Development Trust (AWDT), B+LNZ extension team, LandPro and Rural Support NZ.

Funding for this project was provided by Beef + Lamb New Zealand, Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, RAGT New Zealand and PGG Wrightson Seeds, as part of the “Hill Country Futures” Partnership programme (BLNZT1701).



Authored by Nature Positive in collaboration with Beef + Lamb New Zealand

No part of this publication may be reproduced in whole or part without prior written permission from Beef + Lamb New Zealand Limited. © 2023 Beef + Lamb New Zealand Limited. All rights reserved.

## Contents

Background information	4
What makes FarmSalus unique?	5
Planning to use FarmSalus	6
Explanation of terms used in FarmSalus	7
Guidance for each resource	8



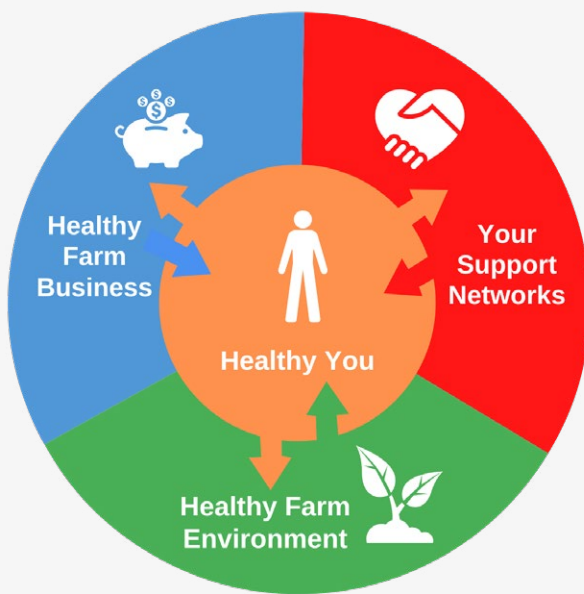
## Background information

### What is FarmSalus?

FarmSalus is a set of resources that help rural professionals connect with farmers and discuss the issues that are important to them and their farming in the context of improving the resilience of their farm system.

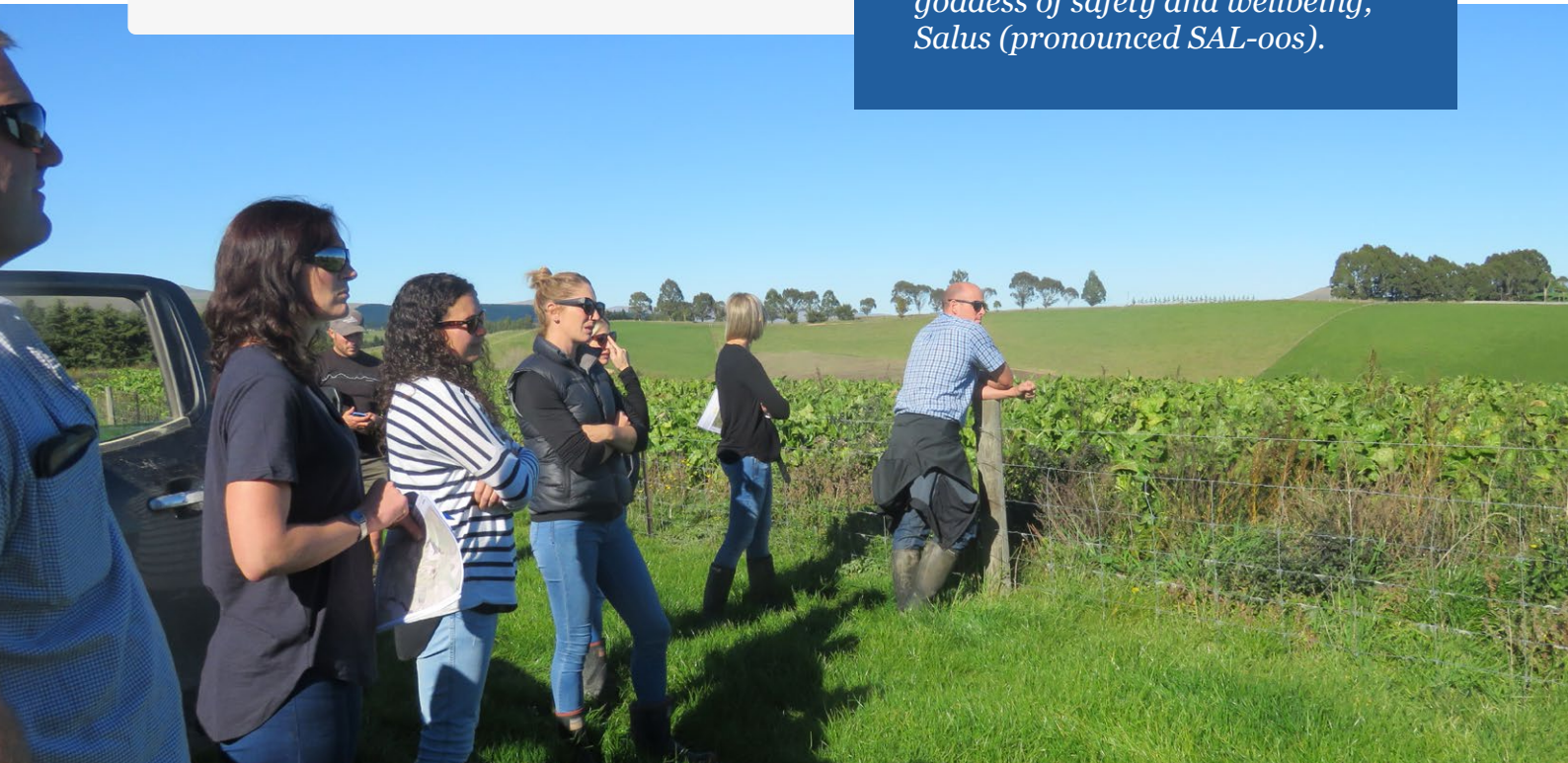
It is a set of resources which can be used in one-on-one conversations, training workshops or group meetings to:

- Raise awareness of what makes a resilient farm system
- Prompt reflection about the farmers' individual situation
- Encourage farmers to think about how their health and wellbeing is tracking and how it is impacting their farm business, their farm practices, and their community
- Encourage farmers to take a single step to improve their own wellbeing and, in turn, the resilience of their farm



**FarmSalus places the farmer at the centre of the farm system. Because if a farmer is healthy, they will have the energy and motivation to improve other parts of the farm system.**

*Fun fact: The name FarmSalus was inspired by the Roman goddess of safety and wellbeing, Salus (pronounced SAL-oos).*





## What makes FarmSalus unique?

### **A collaborative approach recognising the needs of the end-users**

It will be impossible to create a positive future for hill country farming without healthy farmers. The FarmSalus approach views farmer wellbeing as the key to a successful, resilient farm; emphasising that if we help and support our farmers, we are building resilience across their farm system, the wider environment, and the whole industry.

---

### **FarmSalus focuses on the needs of each participant**

The FarmSalus approach starts by asking the farmer what is most important to them. What's on their mind? This guides the following conversations. Unlike a field day, webinar or fact sheet on a specific topic, the information delivered is guided by the farmer's own needs.

---

### **FarmSalus emphasises the importance of good conversations**

Social interactions are important for our health and wellbeing, so FarmSalus will help create an opportunity for real conversation about the topics that are most important to each individual farmer.

---

### **FarmSalus builds trust between farmers and their advisors**

FarmSalus is designed to start meaningful conversation and discussion about farmer wellbeing rather than be a tick-box exercise to collect data. Using the FarmSalus resources can help rural professionals make meaningful connections with farmers and build trust in the process.

---

### **FarmSalus applies across all farming contexts**

The farmer-centric approach of FarmSalus means that it is equally relevant in all farming contexts regardless of the farm type, farm size, land type, stage of farming or farm management team.

---

### **FarmSalus encourages careful consideration of farming issues**

Attitudes towards issues in farming and farmers' health are seldom simple and responses tend to exist across a spectrum. The FarmSalus evaluation uses sliding scales rather than tick-box surveys to avoid over-simplification and encourage a thorough consideration of the issues.

---

## Planning to use FarmSalus

There are several different FarmSalus resources. They can be used together or individually to suit the situation and time that you have available. Here are some suggested ways to “mix and match” the resources to suit your situation:

### If participants are new to the concepts:

If participants are new to the concepts of wellbeing and resilience, you may wish to keep the workshop broad and high level by focusing on the importance of these concepts and how they are connected.

For example, you could spend more time on *Taking Stock* and choose only one or two of the *FarmSalus Evaluation sheets* that you think participants will identify most with.

### If you are short on time:

You could choose one or two of the *FarmSalus Evaluation sheets* that are most relevant to your participants and add them into the programme for an existing workshop.

For example, in a workshop focused on farm profitability, it could be relevant to spend anywhere from 10-30 minutes discussing the concepts of the healthy farm business.

### If participants comfortable with the concepts:

If participants are already comfortable with wellbeing and resilience concepts, you could take the opportunity to dive deeper into the thinking process and the real-life outcomes FarmSalus has to offer.

For example, you could prioritise the *FarmSalus Evaluation sheets* and *Best Foot Forward* resources and take more opportunities to discuss with the group as they complete them.

### If you have lots of time, or multiple sessions:

With lots of time (i.e., a whole day session), or split over multiple sessions, you could take participants through the full FarmSalus journey.

You can split the day or sessions up by the different themes. For example, an introductory session, and then one session for each of the *FarmSalus Evaluation Sheets*, paired with the *Best Foot Forward* resource.





## Explanation of terms used in FarmSalus

### What do we mean by wellbeing?

Farmer wellbeing is a critical part of a resilient farm system, but it is one that is often overlooked. Wellbeing can mean different things to different people, but most simply put, a person's wellbeing is their ability to "be and stay well". Wellbeing is influenced by many different aspects of your life. Wellbeing includes your physical and mental health - but it extends further to also include aspects like social connection, your financial situation, feelings of happiness and how much control you feel you have over outcomes in your life. For this reason, wellbeing is often used interchangeably with life-satisfaction.

### What is resilience?

We often hear about resilience, but what does that actually mean? In the context of farming, resilience can be thought of as how a farm and/or farmer will cope with and recover from an unexpected event or change.

### Why talk about farm resilience?

Dealing with change has always been (and always will be) a part of farming. Building resilience is a way of future proofing the farm system so when the unexpected happens, there is capacity to adapt.

### What is a farm system?

Within the farm system there is an incredible amount to juggle - farm finances, family life, stock

health, staff, contractors, suppliers, the list goes on. Each farm is different and has different needs, challenges and opportunities. We use the term 'whole farm system' as a way to describe all of the different parts of a working farm. To make talking about a resilient farm system easier, FarmSalus presents the farm system as four interconnected parts: the farm business, the farm environment, the farmers' own health, and their support networks.

### The key message:

#### **Keeping your farm system in balance increases the resilience of you and your farm.**

The key message of the FarmSalus approach is that when all of the parts of the farm system are strong and working well together, the whole farm (including the farmer) builds resilience. However, if too much or too little focus is given to one part of the farm system, other parts will be compromised. For example, if a farmer is focused on production and profit but the stress of making that profit keeps them awake at night then their own personal health and wellbeing is suffering. Or if they are investing heavily in environmental work, but through this, their finances are being exhausted, then their farm business is being pulled down - possibly their wellbeing is too. And of course, the reverse can be true - if the business is going well the farmer can feel good about this and perhaps also have time and capital to invest on other parts of the farm.

## Guidance for each resource:

### Handout 1: You, your farm system and keeping it all going

The purpose of this handout is to allow participants to:

- Introduce the core concepts of FarmSalus – Resilience and wellbeing
- Explain how wellbeing is important to creating a resilient farm system.

It's a good idea to have a discussion about resilience and wellbeing before providing the handout to see how familiar the participants are with these concepts.

Some additional questions to ask participants are (responses could be discussed as a group or in pairs):

- What does resilience mean to you?
- Why is resilience important?
- What is wellbeing?
- What does good/poor wellbeing look like or mean to you?
- How could wellbeing impact how resilient you and your farm system are?

---

### Handout 2: Taking Stock

This resource is designed to help farmers consider how much thought they already put into different parts of their farm system.

The purpose of *Taking Stock* is to allow participants to:

- Get comfortable with their surroundings and each other before diving into deeper conversations
- Begin reflecting on their relationship with the different dimensions of a resilient farm system

Ask participants to spend a few minutes to fill in each bucket to represent how much time they usually spend thinking about each dimension of the farm system.

Some additional questions to ask participants are:

- That's a quick exercise – what are your first thoughts after doing it?
- If you were to do the same exercise but for 'time working on' rather than 'time thinking about' the parts of a farm system, would your results be the same?
- This "bucket" is nearly full, it shows you spend a lot of time thinking about that...what's most on your mind?
- How would you like to spend your thinking/working time? Does this match the current situation?





### Handout 3: FarmSalus Evaluations

In the FarmSalus framework, the farmer is put at the centre of a resilient farm system. With this in mind, the FarmSalus team have developed a set of evaluation questions to help farmers reflect on how they are going and how their own health and wellbeing is connected to what is and isn't happening with their farm system.

The purpose of using the *FarmSalus Evaluations* is to help participants to:

- Look at the other components of the farm system through a wellbeing lens
- Notice how their wellbeing is impacting and being impacted by the other components of their farm system
- Draw connections between their wellbeing on different sets of sliding scales

#### How to use the evaluation sheets

There are four evaluation sheets, one for each component of a resilient farm system. They can be used individually or as a set and each will take 5-10 minutes to complete. These evaluations should be facilitated by a rural professional working with the farmer (or a small group of farmers in a workshop setting). The evaluations can be completed on paper or used as conversation prompts by the session facilitator.

Ideally, participants should have an understanding of how wellbeing connects to resilience before doing any of the evaluation sheets. If necessary, use Handout 1 *You, your farm system and keeping it all going* to review this.

#### Some additional questions for participants when working through the evaluation sheets:

- Are they happy with where they are on each scale?
- Are any of the topics mentioned in the evaluation connected? In what way?
- In five years' time, where would they like to be on the scale and what would get them there?

*The evaluation result provides a useful assessment, but what is more important is the conversations that take place and providing a chance for farmers to stop and take the time to reflect on how their farming system is or is not working for them.*

#### Tips for using the evaluations in a group

When working in groups, depending on factors such as the time available or the size of the group, it may not be appropriate to discuss individual responses to FarmSalus. Options instead include:

- Holding high level conversations about how the different aspects of the farm system can compound to affect wellbeing rather than showcasing individual responses.
- Instead of asking them to share actions, ask them to think about whether they have actions they think they can take.
- Collect written comments from everyone before a break to allow people to raise an issue they need more information about without spotlighting themselves.
- Make every effort to ensure participants get what they need from the FarmSalus session by giving them the *Where to go for more support* guide and providing missing information that they request. For example, if discussions about managing the farm team dominate discussions, you might direct them towards other B+LNZ resources about managing farm teams that can be found on the Beef + Lamb New Zealand Knowledge Hub.



## Handout 4: Best Foot Forward

The *FarmSalus Evaluations* allow participants to notice how they feel about different components of their wellbeing and farm resilience. This *Best Foot Forward* resource asks them to think more closely about why they feel the way they do and helps them to identify actions they can take to improve any areas.

**Note:** It is recommended that participants have completed at least one evaluation sheet prior to completing the *Best Foot Forward* resource.

Purpose of the *Best Foot Forward* resource:

- To deepen participants thinking about why they rated themselves as they did on the sliding scales
- To encourage participants to consider their power to improve their wellbeing and resilience
- To provide opportunity for participants to commit to their next steps

Some questions that can help participants are:

- What are your priorities in your farm system?
- What makes them a priority?
- What are risks/opportunities in addressing or not addressing this issue?
- Which of these issues are interrelated? Could there be one or two underlying root causes?
- Where time permits, a useful technique to assist participants to identify the root cause of an issue is the “5 Why’s” technique – The question of *why* is asked five times to get to the core of the issue, each time unpacking the issue a bit further.
- For question 5, encourage participants to set a goal that is simple, relevant to their challenges and achievable within their resource and time constraints.

## Handout 5: Where to go for more support

The *Where to go for more support* sheet is a summary of helplines and support services that participants might find useful.

It is recommended that you hand this out to all participants, not just those that may indicate they need further help as you never know who might use it.





