

# Farming Excellence Strategy

September 2020



*By Farmers. For Farmers™*

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Beef + Lamb New Zealand's (B+LNZ) Farming Excellence Strategy supports the organisation's vision of *'Profitable farmers, thriving farming communities, valued by all New Zealanders'*. It brings together the outcomes of work carried out across the organisation to deliver information and resources to farmers.

In 2019, B+LNZ began the process of refreshing its Farming Excellence Strategy. This involved surveying more than 1000 farmers and running nine focus groups to better understand their science and extension needs. The strategy will evolve and respond to changes in the sector and the needs of farmers.

B+LNZ drew on the significant experience and knowledge within the organisation, such as the Market Development, Policy, Insights, and Extension teams to understand the broader trends and issues that needed to be considered.

Historically, the focus of farming excellence has been on driving improvements in productivity, efficiency and reducing costs. It now has a much wider remit in line with a stronger focus on consumers and the wider public.

With new research providing fresh insights into on-farm practices, farming excellence needs to be flexible and build these findings into the work delivered. Likewise, the way material is delivered is changing, with the COVID-19 pandemic in particular highlighting how the sector can use both online channels and face to face events for extension delivery.

## At a glance

Our new Farming Excellence Strategy takes a six-step approach to ensure investments made on behalf of farmers deliver real value to them on farm.

The process is:

1. Future vision and needs
2. Science and innovation
3. Extension tools and resources
4. Farmer focused delivery
5. Impact measurement and reporting
6. People and capability (which wraps around all aspects of this strategy)

Each of these steps involves an associated programme of work and more details on these, as well as examples of how they're being brought to life, can be found further on in this document.

Farmers played an instrumental role in shaping the new farming excellence strategy, so it's very much *'By farmers. For farmers™'*. We particularly want to acknowledge the input of B+LNZ's Farmer Council which played an important role in developing this strategy and will also have a crucial role in its successful execution. Farmer uptake and the on-farm application of information provided by B+LNZ will be critical to the strategy's success. Driving productivity and profitability ensures sheep and beef farmers will continue to contribute to thriving rural communities which are valued by all New Zealanders.



# INTRODUCTION

Beef + Lamb New Zealand's vision is 'Profitable farmers, thriving communities, valued by all New Zealanders.'

Underpinning this vision are five farmer-focused priorities that make up B+LNZ's overall strategy:

1. Supporting farming excellence
2. Government and public insight and engagement
3. Enhancing our environmental position
4. Unlocking market potential
5. Building a great organisation

## Beef + Lamb New Zealand's overall strategy

### Vision

*Our desired future for NZ's sheep and beef producers*

**Profitable farmers, thriving farming communities, valued by all New Zealanders**

### Purpose

*How and why we do what we do*

**Insights and actions driving tangible impact for farmers**

### Priorities

*How we generate impact*



Supporting farming excellence



Government & public insight & engagement



Enhancing our environmental position



Unlocking market potential



Building a great organisation



In 2019, we set about refreshing our Farming Excellence Strategy for the next three to five years. We ran nine focus groups and surveyed over 1000 farmers to better understand their science and extension needs. As we talked to farmers, a number of themes emerged which helped form the structure and content of this strategy. These were:

- A desire to understand where our research portfolio is heading, particularly with regards to on-farm productivity.
- A wish to better understand the processes for deciding science priorities and how research results are delivered through extension.
- A desire to see Beef + Lamb New Zealand Genetics (B+LNZ Genetics) integrated into the organisation's activities.
- An understanding of what role various farmer extension activities play and how they fit together.
- How we work with other investors, including government and other industry organisations, to maximise farmers' investments.
- How emerging market trends, regulatory changes, wider public interests, and staff recruitment and training are integrated into science, development, and extension activities.
- How we ensure that science and extension activities impact on-farm and contribute to improved farmer profitability.
- How other strategies interlink with farming excellence.

These farmer themes were reinforced by discussions and outcomes of strategy workshops held with stakeholders including research organisations, universities, government agencies, farm consultants, and service organisations.

In the past we would have described farming excellence in terms of driving productivity, increasing efficiency, or driving down cost of production.

As illustrated below, farming excellence has become a far more complex and multifaceted discipline with a stronger focus on the consumer and the wider public.

While our farmers have always maintained the integrity of their land assets, environmental stewardship has taken a step up and is now centre-stage.

This strategy is dynamic. While the outcomes of research will solve some problems, it will also highlight where long-term investment is needed. B+LNZ will continue to incorporate insights gathered from farmers, markets and societal and policy changes in extension design.

By utilising the network of 120 farmers who make up the Farmer Council, B+LNZ will ensure all of its work is appropriately grounded - in other words it is 'By farmers. For farmers™.'

The Farming Excellence Strategy will be successful when we've supported farmers through science, innovation and extension, and in recruiting and training capable people to help them, to run profitable farming businesses that contribute to thriving communities and are valued by all New Zealanders.



# WHAT YOU'LL SEE IN THIS STRATEGY

The strategy sets out a six-step process to ensure that the investments B+LNZ makes on behalf of farmers deliver tangible results inside the farm gate:

1. Identifying future trends and farmer needs
2. Investing in science and innovation
3. Extension tools and resources
4. Farmer focused delivery
5. Measuring impact and reporting
6. People and capability

For each of those steps, detail is provided on what B+LNZ is investing in now and where future investment will be targeted.

Each step involves a programme of work, either collecting information or returning the information back to farmers. All steps, which are interdependent, are underpinned by people, capability and farmer need.

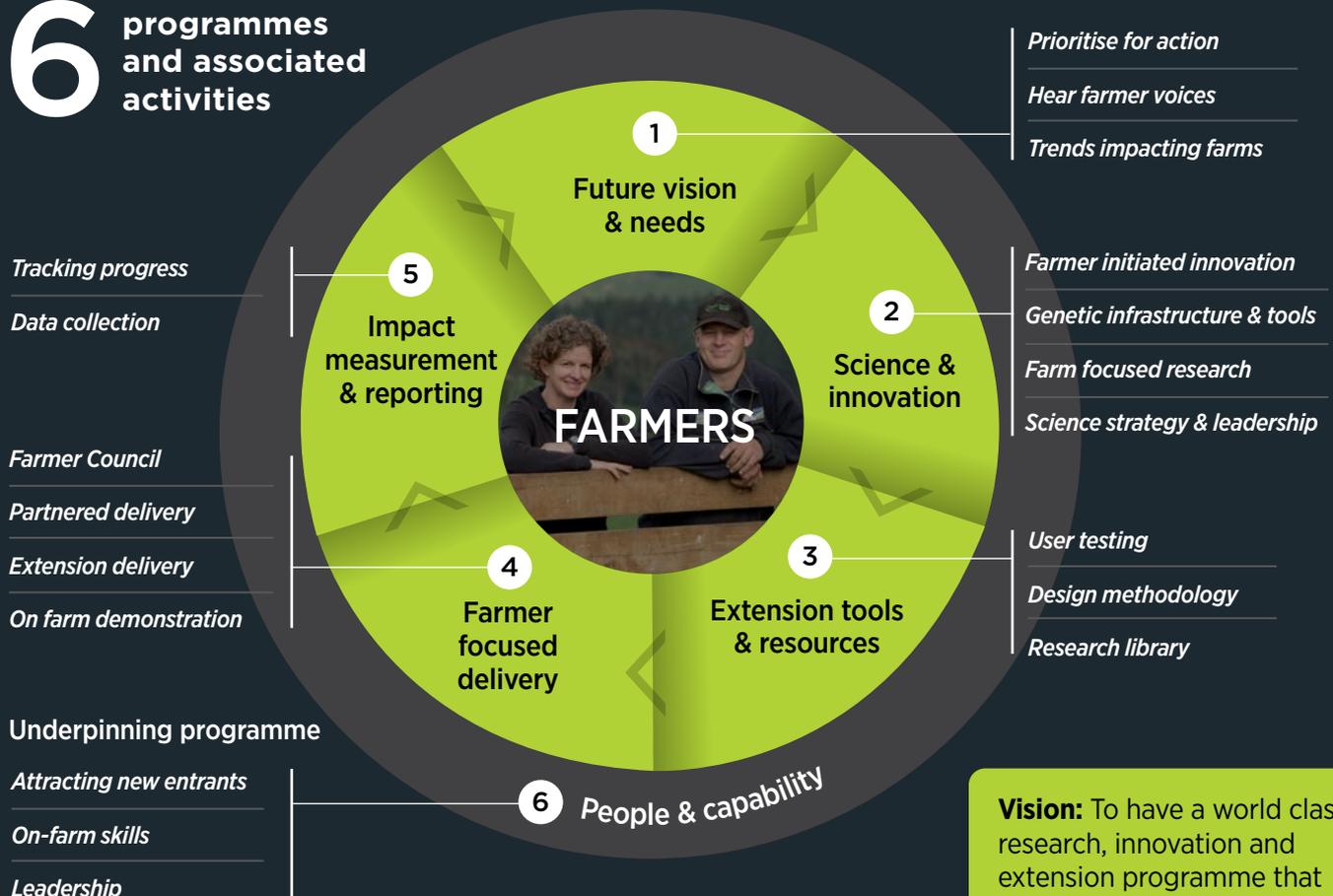
As part of this strategy, we've placed particular emphasis on what we consider to be central to maximising the impact that B+LNZ can have on farmers' bottom lines:

- B+LNZ Genetics being fully integrated into B+LNZ.
- Using the power of Red Meat Profit Partnership (RMPP) Action Groups and the benefits that adoption of this model has delivered to farmers.
- The central role of the Farmer Council in helping to groundtruth B+LNZ's work.
- Using our Regional Delivery Plans (RDPs) to allow an agile response to specific regional needs.
- The ongoing importance of on-farm demonstration and application.

## Farming Excellence Strategy at a glance

**Our strategy for Supporting Farming Excellence is a cycle of continuous improvement, driven by farmer needs, alongside a practical vision of the future on-farm.**

### 6 programmes and associated activities



**Vision:** To have a world class research, innovation and extension programme that supports farming excellence now and in the future.

# Future vision and needs

**OBJECTIVE: A practical and achievable vision for the future of farming**



## Trends impacting farms

We look across all the activities of B+LNZ ensuring we understand the big issues, risks and opportunities that may impact farm businesses.

### This means we will...

1. Understand global demand drivers including product attributes and consumer, social and ethical expectations
2. Understand the legislative and regulatory drivers with potential to impact on-farm
3. Develop and maintain a practical vision of future sheep, beef and dairy beef farming in New Zealand



## Hear farmer voices

We are closely connected with farmers and recognise their priorities in what we set out to do.

### This means we will...

1. Conduct needs assessment so that all farmers can have their say
2. Use B+LNZ Farmer Council to support issue identification and prioritisation
3. Use B+LNZ extension activities and events to receive farmer needs feedback



## Prioritise for action

We look at the potential on-farm impacts of risks and opportunities and prioritise our resources to deliver the biggest benefit to farmers.

### This means we will...

1. Model impacts in terms of on-farm costs/benefits
2. Develop decision criteria and operate a clear decision process with short, medium- and long-term horizons of action

Our farming excellence activity is based on a deep understanding of the risks and opportunities for the sector. We've drawn on expertise and information from across the organisation, particularly our Market Development, Policy, and Insights teams to identify what changes may be required on-farm to position our sector for the future.

We will ensure we listen to farmers to prioritise activity that delivers the greatest benefit to farmers.

To understand future trends and the requirements for our sector, the Farming Excellence Strategy used the insights developed from a wide range of sources including:

- Future trends research conducted by KANTAR and B+LNZ's Market Development team to identify changing trends in consumers and consumer behaviours which pose both risks and opportunities for New Zealand farmers.
- Ongoing consumer research conducted by the Market Development team e.g. the 'conscious foodie' in Los Angeles and San Francisco, to help us understand what farmers need to be doing on-farm to ensure New Zealand's grass-fed beef and lamb is their first choice.
- Farmer Needs research to identify farmers' concerns and understand how B+LNZ can help them improve their farm and business performance.

This involved an intensive process of focus groups and surveys of over 1000 farmers across New Zealand. A quarterly UMR survey assesses key issues for farmers and how B+LNZ is delivering against them.



- Ongoing analysis of public perceptions of the sector and how we could, or should, build our social licence.
- Ongoing analysis from B+LNZ's Economic Service which has a unique 70-year data set built from a representative group of 550 sheep and beef farms each year. This is a powerful indicator of changes at farm level.
- Advice from the B+LNZ policy team on likely future policy developments in areas such as water quality, climate change, biodiversity and animal welfare. B+LNZ will ensure farmers have the tools and information required to be ready for policy changes, while also ensuring farmers have a voice in the creation of new policy.
- He Waka Eke Noa – the Primary Sector Climate Change Commitment under which a framework is being developed for farmers to measure and ultimately price agricultural emissions – will engage closely with Farming Excellence. Research will be required into changes to farm systems and the economic impact on farmers. The eventual solutions and tools will need developing, testing and delivering through farming excellence activities.
- Environmental and resource management are becoming increasingly important for farmers. Within B+LNZ, Farming Excellence will work hand in glove with the Environment team to deliver B+LNZ's Environment Strategy. This will include advising on the impact of environment policy on farm systems and businesses, directing and overseeing research where it is required and developing tools to help farmers deliver on-farm actions.
- Farmer networks will be used to inform our farming excellence activities. These networks include the regional Farmer Councils (see below), Dairy Farmer Advisory Groups and our network of Action Groups and catchment groups. Farmer input will ensure we can best support and enhance their farm businesses and communities.

### Programme in action

#### **Regenerative Agriculture study**

A global study looking into the trends around Regenerative Agriculture (RA), and farmer, consumer, and regulatory perspectives on it. This includes understanding any market premiums associated with RA, how these could be captured within our Taste Pure Nature brand and our current farming systems. It will also examine the costs and benefits of science-based RA farming systems.

#### **Economic Service survey of 550 farms**

B+LNZ's Economic Service continues to conduct their Farm Survey, collecting thousands of data points from a representative sample of 550 farms across the country. These are then cross checked against other data sources such as Statistics New Zealand, to build an in-depth picture of sheep and beef farming in New Zealand going back 70 years.

#### **Consumer research in the United States and China**

With the launch of the sector's country of origin brand in March 2019, Taste Pure Nature (TPN), significant consumer research has been (and still is being) carried out which led to the identification of the 'Conscious Foodie' as an ideal target market for New Zealand's grass-fed, naturally raised beef and lamb.

#### **Developing a dairy farmer advisory group**

B+LNZ is instigating a dairy farmer advisory group to provide advice and feedback to the organisation on how we can improve our farming excellence activities to better meet their needs.



## Programme 2

# Science and innovation

**OBJECTIVE: Enhance farm profitability and kaitiakitanga of animals and the environment through targeted science and innovation**



### Science strategy and leadership

We connect and align the science community and farmer requirements to address identified priorities.

**This means we will...**

1. Identify research and innovation opportunities against priorities informed by farmer needs
2. Co-design and lead targeted research programmes to deliver solutions on research priorities
3. Consult a science advisory group featuring farmers and researchers to prioritise science investment
4. Increase the profile of the pastoral sector by communicating science priorities to the wider sector and government to advocate for aligned research and development investment



### Farm focused research

We will co-design and lead research programmes that provide tangible outcomes for farmers and meet current and future stakeholder and consumer needs.

**This means we will...**

1. Look for ways to further enhance the health and welfare of animals on our farms
2. Investigate the impact of our farming systems on the environment and find solutions for farmers where they are needed
3. Understand farm systems; examining new and innovative ways farmers can design their farm systems to achieve their individual goals



### Genetic infrastructure and tools

We will design and build a genetic toolbox which allows for the best animals to be widely used in the industry.

**This means we will...**

1. Enhance our genetics toolbox to improve our ability to meet the needs of current and future farmers and consumers
2. Deliver a simple and effective tool for farmers to access genetic information
3. Ensure sheep, beef and dairy beef farmers are all getting value from genetic advances and technology
4. Help farmers understand the value and impact breeding and genetic decisions have on their farm systems



### Farmer initiated innovation

We recognise the power of farmer-initiated innovation. We will support the development, evaluation and adoption of innovations that can make a difference on farm and in our rural communities.

**This means we will...**

1. Support farmers to lead on-farm innovation that delivers results through existing B+LNZ programmes or leveraged partnerships
2. Provide a pathway for innovators and farmers to work together to turn ideas into reality



B+LNZ is a science-led organisation.

Programme 2 of the Farming Excellence Strategy takes inputs from Programme 1: Future Vision and Needs, to identify knowledge gaps. Working closely with science partners, we will invest in finding solutions for farmer-identified issues. Where possible, we will look for additional co-funding sources to optimise the return on levy investment.

B+LNZ also operates a farmer research advisory group which ensures B+LNZ's investment in science programmes is aligned to farmer needs.

B+LNZ will use commercial farms to test innovation either in isolation or as part of a whole farm system change. Innovations developed on one farm can be applied on others.

Having identified knowledge gaps, B+LNZ has developed a Sector Science Strategy. This will inform farmers, scientists, government and other industry bodies about our sector's research priorities. This sector strategy will be a catalyst for working collaboratively to find solutions to common issues.

Confidence in the direction of B+LNZ's science and research programmes will encourage investment and help maintain our industry's long-term research capability. A direct medium- to long-term benefit of B+LNZ's investment in science will be the funding of young scientists entering agricultural research in New Zealand, and in the short term it will continue to give farmers the tools they need to improve on-farm productivity while minimising their environmental footprint.

Science can deliver short, medium, and long-term solutions for farmers. B+LNZ will continue to allocate science funding and staff resources across all three of these time-horizons, knowing that farmers have immediate problems, like triple drench resistance, as well as long-term issues such as environmental management, climate change, and community resilience to work on.

In a period of rapid change, supporting farming excellence through science and innovation will include investigating new farm systems in response to changing customer and community expectations. This will help farmers meet the needs of those customers while providing evidence for why they farm the way they do.

B+LNZ's science and innovation portfolio will continue to work on challenges both inside and outside the farm gate, including those that impact on farm profitability such as working with the Meat Industry Association on identifying the health benefits of grass-fed meat.

Our research portfolio currently falls into three broad categories:

- animal health and welfare
- environmental research
- farm systems.

Farmer survey and focus groups identified specific focus areas within these portfolios. B+LNZ will be working with farmers to design projects for future investment that deliver on these issues.

## Programme in action

### **Beef + Lamb New Zealand Genetics**

*\$3.15m investment*

A key strand of Programme 2: Science and Innovation is the work of Beef + Lamb New Zealand Genetics (B+LNZ Genetics).

Genetics play an integral part in unlocking market potential, enhancing our environmental position and supporting farming excellence as well as being at the core of good farming practice.

Genetics has traditionally been focused on improving production on-farm but is now incorporating environmental outcomes, better animal welfare and an improved eating experience for consumers.

[www.blznzgenetics.com](http://www.blznzgenetics.com)

### **nProve**

Since its inception, B+LNZ Genetics has worked with the national database of sheep genetic information (SIL) to find a tool that is quick, user friendly and effective for commercial farmers. A new tool, nProve, has replaced FlockFinder and RamFinder and is available to farmers now.

[www.nprove.nz](http://www.nprove.nz)

### **Dairy-beef**

With the aim of better utilising bobby calves and improving returns from beef production, our dairy farmers are turning to the dairy-beef market to provide solutions. Progeny tests conducted by B+LNZ Genetics reinforce that there are excellent dairy-friendly beef bull options available to dairy farmers – and dollars to be made.

### **Hill Country Futures**

Hill Country Futures is an \$8.1m programme focused on future proofing the profitability, sustainability and well-being of New Zealand's hill country farmers, farm systems and rural communities.

Within the programme, there are four research strands – these are: Stakeholder Interviews, Landscape Classification Tools, Biodiversity in Forage Landscape and Communities to Market.

B+LNZ, alongside partnering organisations, have recently launched a new website for the Hill Country Futures research programme.

[www.hillcountryfutures.co.nz](http://www.hillcountryfutures.co.nz)

R&D Projects	Expenditure (\$,000)	Description of research projects invested in by B+LNZ for 2019-20
Hill Country Futures	700	Multi-year \$8.1m programme supported by MBIE, B+LNZ, PGG Wrightson Seeds, and Seed Force, focused on future-proofing profitability, sustainability and wellbeing for NZ's hill country farmers, farm systems and rural communities. Trans-disciplinary approach considering the whole-farm system. Includes on-farm emphasis on forages. <a href="http://www.beeflambnz.com/hillcountryfutures">www.beeflambnz.com/hillcountryfutures</a>
Pastoral Genomics	520	Using modern genomic technologies in ryegrass and clover to enhance profitability and sustainability in NZ pastoral farming. Supported by MBIE, B+LNZ, DairyNZ, Dairy Australia, Barenbrug, PGG Wrightson Seeds, and AgResearch.
The Pasture Raised Advantage Research	107	Co-funding to support MIA innovation-led programme. Investigate health benefits of NZ pasture-raised red meat as part of well-balanced diet, provide robust scientific data to help distinguish NZ product in international markets. Collect data on composition of red meat and nutritional impacts of its consumption as well as psychological aspects of health and wellness for consumers, including taste, wellbeing and sleep.
Ethically and sustainably produced high value lamb	78	Funding to support B+LNZ and sheep breeder-led MPI SFF co-funded project. Low-input-sheep breeder group have formed select maternal sheep that have had minimal intervention through drenches and treatment, are resilient to specific diseases and importantly with reduced methane outputs and feed efficiency – while improving profit from high value lamb produced in NZ extensive hill and high country farms.
Assessing the feasibility of a laboratory test for facial eczema tolerance.	80	AgResearch-led pilot study investigating development of a laboratory based test to assess tolerance to sporidesmin, the toxin associated with facial eczema.
A multifaceted approach to assessing the impact of long-acting anthelmintics on rumen microbes, ewe health and fertility.	45	AgResearch-led study primarily investigating potential effect of anthelmintics belonging to benzimidazole and/or macrocyclic lactone classes on composition of rumen microbiome, recently shown to be important in sheep performance and productivity.
Ewe udder health & effects on lamb production	10	Massey University-led project developing udder scoring system that can accurately be used by farmers and which is proven to be associated with udder health, lamb survival and lamb growth rates. Involves Massey University, Lincoln University, and AgResearch. <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tqQXpMnhCxE">www.youtube.com/watch?v=tqQXpMnhCxE</a>

## Pastoral Greenhouse Gas Research Consortium

*\$800,000 investment*

PGGRC's mission is to deliver technologies and knowledge that changes the correlation between pasture eaten and methane produced through:

**Genetics selection:** Confirmed that methane emissions are influenced by sheep genetics and the trait has a heritability of 0.19, which could deliver small incremental reductions in methane per feed. The work has been rolled out to New Zealand sheep breeders in 2019-20 in what was a first of its kind globally, working with B+LNZ Genetics and AgResearch. Selection mechanisms in cattle and deer are advancing but are currently under development.

**Feeds:** Options are limited with our pasture fed systems – we have confirmed that Brassica rape can offer up to a 30% reduction in methane and have further investigated the nitrous oxide impacts when this is fed to livestock. Both impacts will be required for this mitigation solution to be used by livestock farmers.

**Methane inhibitor:** Development for delivery through feed or in a slow release capsule. A promising compound has been successfully trialled in both sheep and cattle through delivery via a rumen capsule. There are further substantial technical, cost of delivery and consumer risks to be addressed. If the molecule passes these hurdles, delivery is likely to be 7-8 years away.

**Methane vaccine:** Using the ruminant's immune system to target methane producing microbes in the rumen. A vaccine has the potential to be widely used in all species and farm systems but is proving technically very challenging. Many of the known barriers are being overcome and we believe it is still achievable. However, a proof of concept of measured reduction in methane has not been achieved yet and delivery will be 5-7 years after that.

[www.pggrc.co.nz](http://www.pggrc.co.nz)

R&D Projects	Expenditure (\$,000)	Description of research projects invested in by B+LNZ for 2019-20
Improving Post Weaning Growth Rates Twin lamb and lamb growth management	100	Massey University-led project aiming to demonstrate both single and twin-born ewe lambs born to ewe hoggets can be bred as ewe lambs and that lifetime performance will not be compromised. Also determining if ewe lambs grown to heavy pre-mating weights achieve heavier mature weight and effect this may have on ewe efficiency.
Pasture Management in a Volatile World	60	Co-funding supporting farmer-led MPI SFF project quantifying benefits of deferred grazing as low cost method of pasture conversion and renovation. Led by B+LNZ Mid-Northern Farmer Council, project includes AgResearch, Ballance Agri-Nutrients, Plant and Food Research, Bay of Plenty and Waikato regional councils.
Grazable shrubs for hill country	55	Co-funding supporting Hawke's Bay Regional Council-led MPI SFF project assessing suitability of tree Lucerne (tagasaste) as both a soil stabiliser and stock feed. This hardy nitrogen fixer has high protein foliage suitable for sheep and cattle, thrives on steep, erosion-prone, north-facing hill country, and provides shade and shelter.
Assessing change and quality of native woody vegetation on sheep and beef farms – select case studies	11	Supporting a University of Canterbury Master's student using remote sensing and aerial photography captured over time as well as ground-truthing of vegetation types and spatial distribution to map current distribution of native woody vegetation using vegetation classification framework at five pilot study locations.
Protecting our soils - helicropping	35	Co-funding contributing to Ballance Agri-Nutrients-led MPI SFF project developing best practice guidelines for helicropping to ensure process is environmentally sustainable, thus protecting soils and water quality.
Catch crops for sediment and leaching	10	Co-funding contributing to AgFirst-led MPI SFF project evaluating a range of catch crop species and establishment techniques to reduce sediment and surface flow losses following winter grazing of forage crops. Initially focused on hill country in Hawke's Bay but systems developed will provide benefits to farming regions and terrains nationally.
Catch crops for nitrate control	10	Co-funding contributing to Lincoln Agritech-led MPI SFF project. Farmer-led initiative aiming to develop and demonstrate use of catch crops in winter forage grazing rotations to lower nitrate leaching footprint. Using catch crops successfully will also increase N use efficiency and feed production on farm.



## Programme 3

# Extension tools and resources

**OBJECTIVE:** Alongside farmers, design extension tools and resources to support learning and adoption



### Research library

We maintain an easy-to-access library of previous research and innovation outputs as an input to product and service design.

#### **This means we will...**

1. Maintain a database of known science and innovation relating to sheep and beef farming practices
2. Continually review our research inventory for solutions that can be re-packaged or re-purposed before investing in further science



### Design methodology

We operate a disciplined and systematic process to bring new products or services to farmers.

#### **This means we will...**

1. Ensure we are clear on the task to be done
2. Develop possible product/service concepts using the design method
3. Turn identified product/service opportunities into useable products for farmers

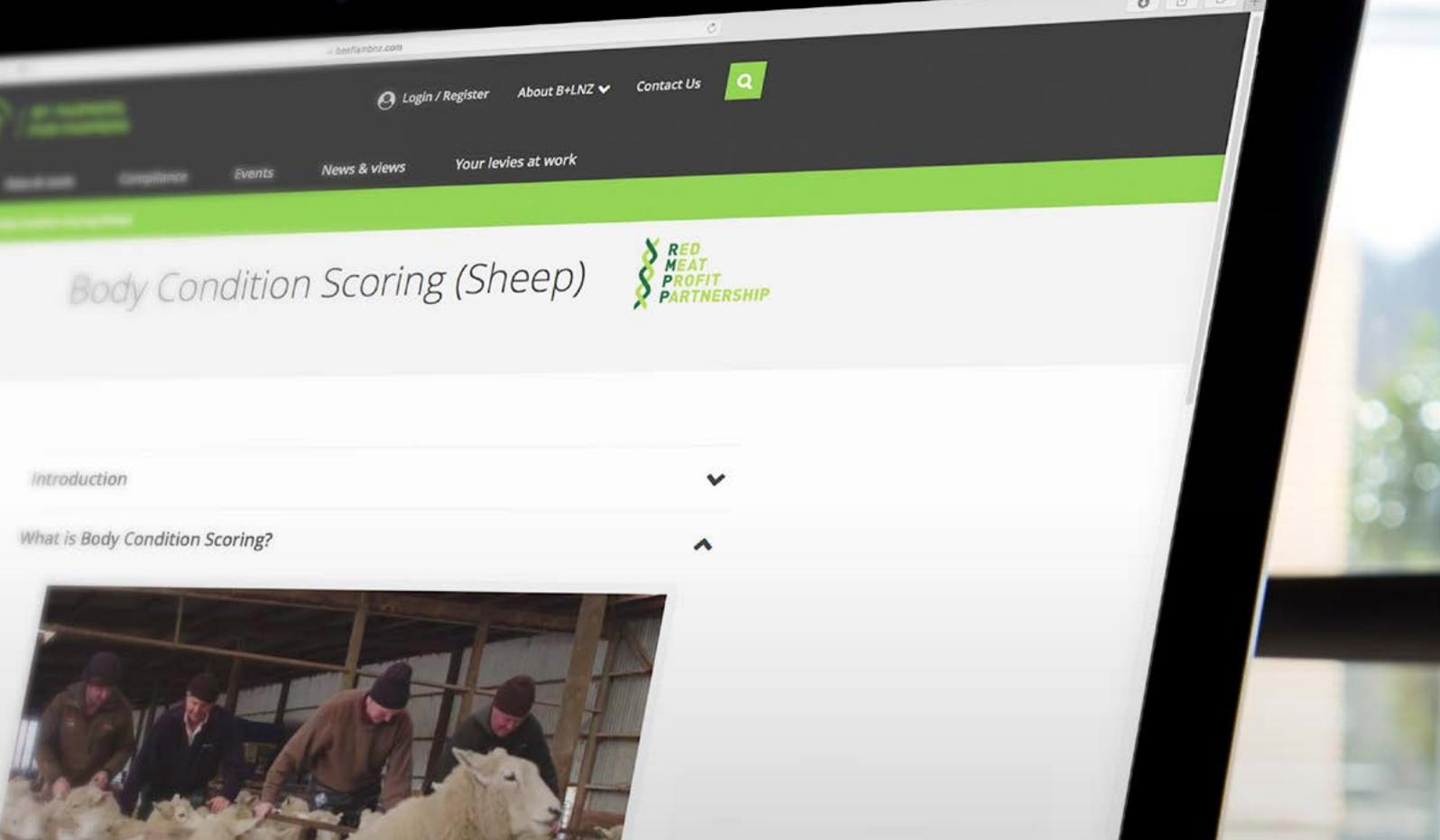


### User testing

Our products and services are tested and co-designed with farmers for delivery in the form and channel that suits them best.

#### **This means we will...**

1. Confirm audience/market for each product/service
2. Engage with farmers to test product usability and viability



Developing decision support products (such as tools and resources) for farmers is pivotal in supporting farming excellence. For B+LNZ this falls into three broad areas: the development of new tools and resources, ensure existing products are still fit-for-purpose, and that they are readily available to farmers and other stakeholders.

The build phase of B+LNZ's products uses a methodology based on insight into farmer needs. This begins with in-depth questioning to identify knowledge gaps and how best to fill them in a way that is accessible to farmers. This process seeks to understand why individual farmers might choose to make changes and the influences and influencers on farmers as they make decisions.

Farmer input into tools and resource development is important and frequent testing with users throughout the development phase ensures the products will be of value to farmers.

The priority in product development is 'how' the information is used. We will take into account farmers' range of personal preferences, identified through RMPP survey work, and tailor our tools and resources accordingly.

This means having the same piece of information packaged in multiple user-friendly formats. Podcasts, videos, workshops, books, and other resources will all be used as appropriate, to ensure we are giving farmers the best opportunity to access information.

B+LNZ will also remain up-to-date with the latest farmer extension methods and tools.

### Programme in action

#### **B+LNZ uses multiple communication platforms to meet the varied needs and individual learning styles and requirements of farmers.**

**An example using Ewe Body Condition Scoring (BCS)**  
 Objective: More farmers BCS their ewes at critical times of year and as a result ewe productivity and welfare improves with fewer ewes below optimal BCS.  
 Outcome: Various products and platforms developed and maintained to support the delivery of BCS advice to farmers. These include:



Ewe BCS learning module



Ewe BCS resource book



Ewe BCS factsheet



Ewe BCS workshop\*



Ewe BCS videos



Ewe BCS podcasts\*\*

\*Can be run as a standalone or integrated with other field-days or workshops  
 \*\*Ewe BCS addressed by Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) in multiple podcasts

**[www.beeflambnz.com/knowledge-hub](http://www.beeflambnz.com/knowledge-hub)  
 Search: Body Condition Scoring**

## Programme 4

# Farmer focused delivery

**OBJECTIVE:** Optimising the way knowledge is packaged, delivered, and adopted for maximum value to farmers



### B+LNZ Farmer Council

B+LNZ's regional Farmer Councils operate as a connector for local extension and identification of local needs.

#### This means we will...

1. Develop nationally aligned Regional Delivery Plans
2. Use Farmer Councils as a key consultation and feedback group



### Extension delivery

Building awareness, skills and knowledge through running regional and national events and activities that farmers value.

#### This means we will...

1. Provide all farmers opportunity to attend activities within their region
2. Provide farmers with multiple extension options for building awareness, skills and knowledge
3. Support small farmer-led groups to implement ways to improve farm performance, such as B+LNZ/RMPP Action Groups
4. Provide multiple formats including downloadable data sheets, video how-tos, and audio podcasts



### Partnered delivery

Working with industry partners who can deliver tailored B+LNZ products and services to their farmer networks.

#### This means we will...

1. Identify potential delivery partners
2. Co-design delivery method and approach
3. Combine resources and skills to maximise uptake and impact for farmers



### On-farm demonstration

Demonstrating science and innovation. Showing farm systems and technology applications on commercial farms.

#### This means we will...

1. Engage industry expertise to direct and support farm innovation
2. Use the Future Farm to assess the impact of innovation and farm system changes across the whole farm
3. Operate a network of innovative farms, each with a specific focus where farmers can see innovations in a real-world setting
4. Evaluate and report impacts and outcomes that can be picked up by early adopters and high performers



Programme 4 of the B+LNZ Farming Excellence Strategy takes the outputs of the previous parts of the cycle and relies heavily on the experienced B+LNZ Extension Team to deliver these to farmers.

We will continue to use our extension programmes to reach farmers – see below – but look for other ways in which we can get information to a wider range of farmers and fine-tune what we offer farmers.

The RMPP Action Network is being incorporated into B+LNZ and will be a core element of the extension programme. The Action Network and its small group model has proven to be an effective way to drive farmer change and innovation.

The B+LNZ Farmer Council plays a critical role in determining the extension requirements of farmers at both regional and national level as well as providing input into the ongoing development of the Farming Excellence Strategy.

Over time, B+LNZ will continue to improve and refine the way extension services are delivered to farmers, using the continuous feedback loop of the Farming Excellence Strategy to capture feedback. We will continue to work with trusted partners to extend our reach beyond what B+LNZ's own staff can achieve and to give farmers access to subject matter experts.

Understanding farmer learning is a strength of B+LNZ and we will continue to build on this, using on-farm demonstrations so farmers can understand the impact farm changes have on a farm system. Farm demonstrations allow farm level innovation to be highlighted and demonstrated across the industry.



### Programme in action

#### **B+LNZ Farmer Council**

Made up of elected farmers and co-opted rural professionals, B+LNZ's Farmer Council is critical to B+LNZ's success, representing the views, needs and recommendations of regional sheep and beef farmers. They contribute to the development of B+LNZ's Region Delivery Plans by planning, guiding and coordinating extension and information activities for sheep and beef farmers. The Farmer Council also acts as a sounding board for farmer research and development, industry issues, as well as extension needs. They help identify opportunities and facilitate understanding of the broader issues affecting sheep and beef farmers and identify and demonstrate the career pathways available in the sheep and beef industry including the professional development of future sheep and beef industry leaders.

**[www.beeflambnz.com/your-levies-at-work/beef-lamb-new-zealand-farmer-councils](http://www.beeflambnz.com/your-levies-at-work/beef-lamb-new-zealand-farmer-councils)**

## Existing extension programmes

Designed to take into account different learning styles and extension needs of farmers, B+LNZ currently uses a variety of methods to support change on farm.

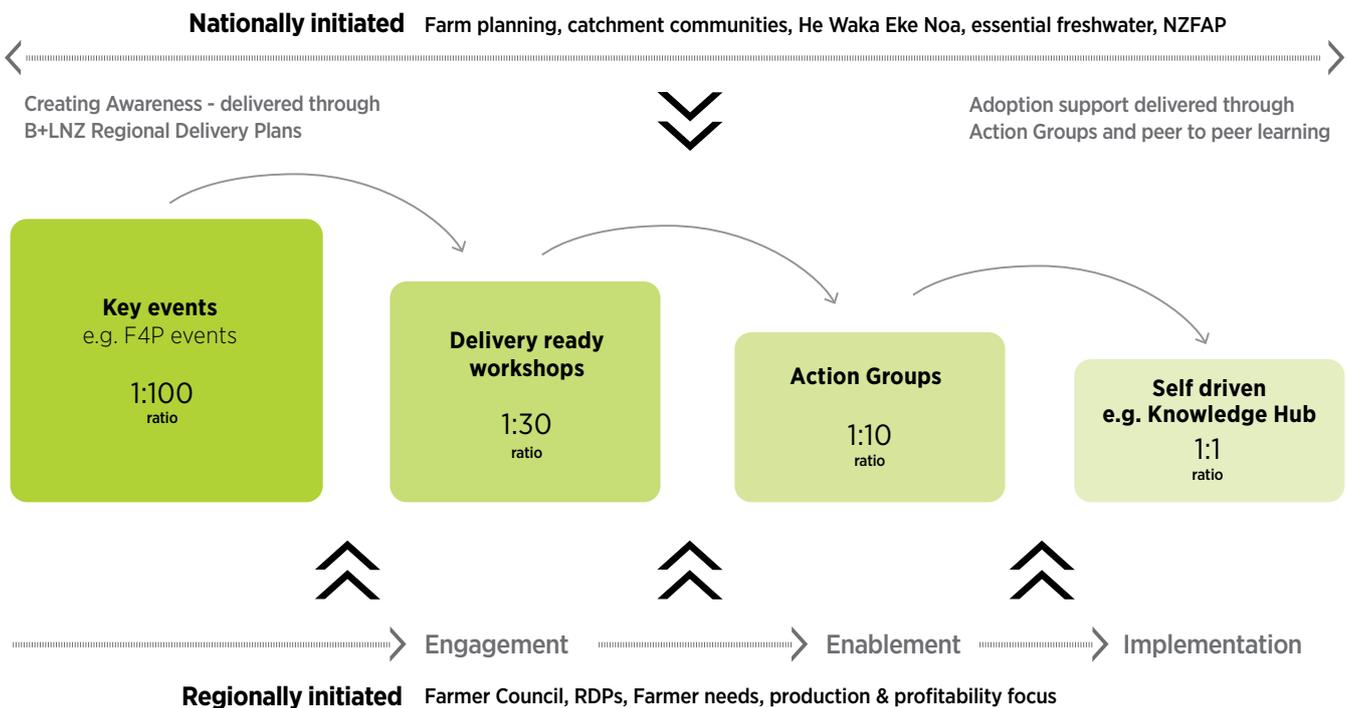
These include:

- conferences and field days to build awareness of emerging risks and opportunities such as Farming for Profit
- workshops and webinars to help farmers build knowledge and skills around specific topics (eg feed budgeting, health and safety, farm environment plans, body condition scoring)

- RMPP Action Groups where farmers work together, with the support of experts, to make successful on-farm change
- self-driven learning and change through B+LNZ's Knowledge Hub, podcasts, online tools, hard copy manuals and booklets.

The subject matter is determined by farmer feedback and Regional Farmer Councils working with B+LNZ extension staff to develop annual delivery plans.

## B+LNZ approach to extension delivery



### Farming for Profit

The Farming for Profit (F4P) programme addresses issues faced by the local farming community from a farm systems perspective. F4P's committees, made up of local farmers, develop a programme of activities to address these issues, and then deliver those activities to the local region through farm field days, seminars and workshops.

### B+LNZ's Future Farm programme

B+LNZ's Future Farm programme is designed to demonstrate the impact of farm system changes and technologies at a whole farm level. The first Future Farm is Lanercost in North Canterbury which is farmed in partnership with local farmers. Read more: [www.futurefarm.co.nz](http://www.futurefarm.co.nz)

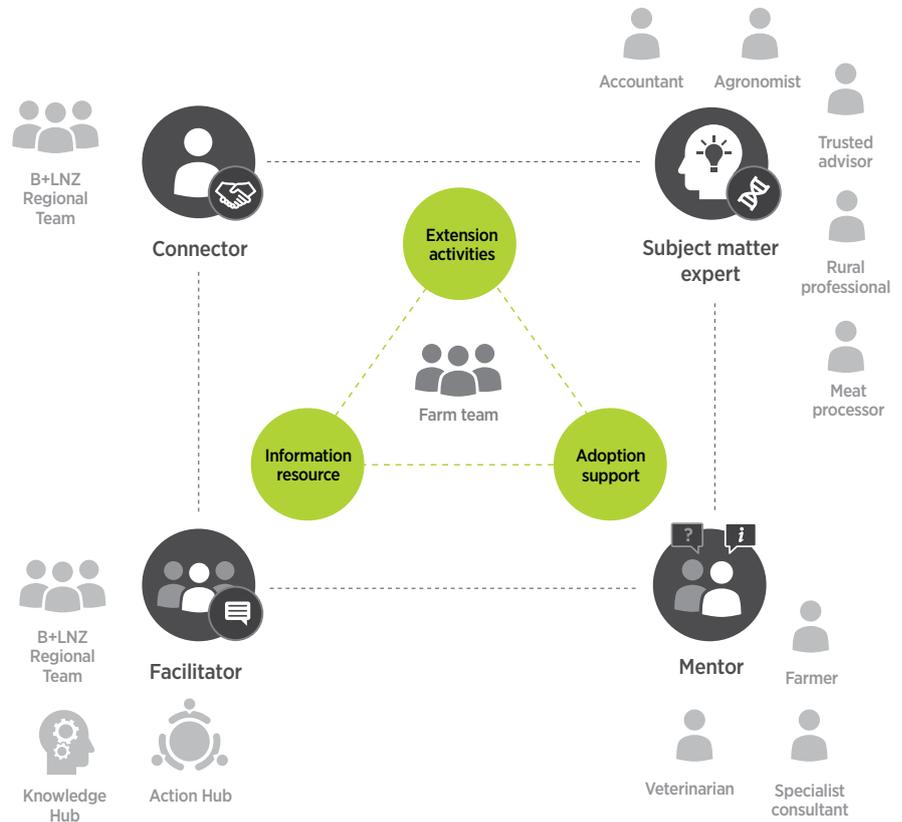
### On-farm innovation

B+LNZ sees on-farm innovation as an opportunity for new technologies and science to be tested on commercial farms. B+LNZ supports on-farm innovation by connecting farmers with the best science and support people to integrate new practices into day-to-day farming. Outcomes will be shared through B+LNZ's extension programmes to ensure uptake of science and innovations.

## B+LNZ/RMPP Action Network

The B+LNZ/RMPP Action Network is made up of Action Groups, with each Action Group centered around a small facilitated group of farming businesses with shared goals. This concept was developed through the Red Meat Profit Partnership, and it has now grown (with RMPP partners) to almost 200 groups.

Research conducted with these groups has shown that the combination of good facilitation and committed goal-driven, accountable farmers with access to subject matter experts is a recipe for successful management changes, increased productivity and profitability. The Action Group concept will be central to all of B+LNZ's future extension activities. The concept is illustrated here. Read more: [www.rmpp.co.nz](http://www.rmpp.co.nz)

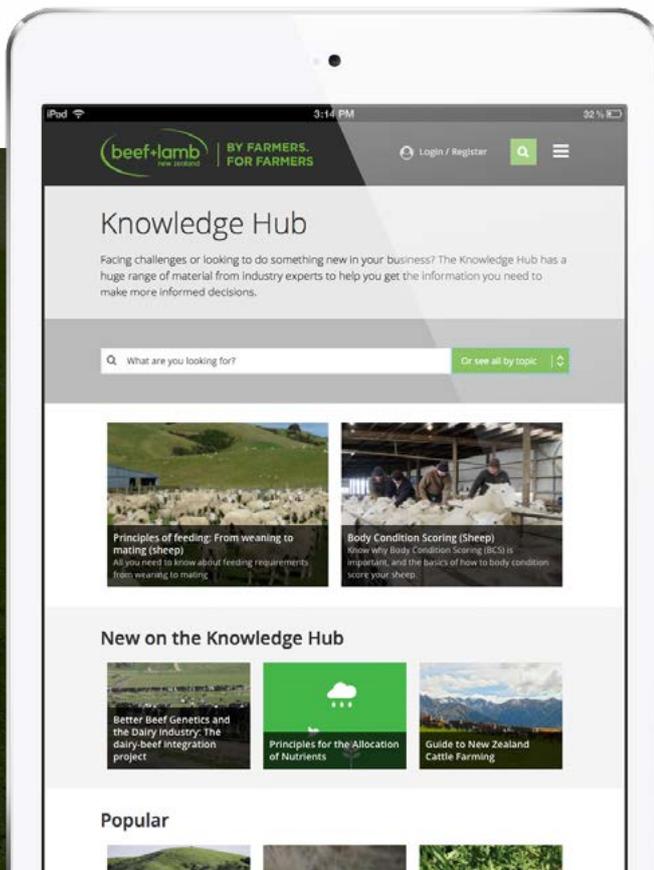


## Knowledge Hub

The Knowledge Hub on the B+LNZ website is a repository of tools and resources, including podcasts, videos and learning modules. This is ideally suited for farmers looking for information on any of B+LNZ's workstreams or those who prefer to learn from home in their own time. Read more: [www.knowledgehub.co.nz](http://www.knowledgehub.co.nz)

## Delivery-Ready Workshops

These are small workshops, delivered by subject matter experts, focused on a single issue. B+LNZ with partners run a range of workshops including: Beef Cow Body Condition Scoring, Ewe Body Condition Scoring, Better Beef Breeding, Better Sheep Breeding, Growing Great Lambs, FeedSmart, Wormwise, Farm Safety Management Systems, Benchmarking workshops, Farm Business Transition and Succession, Farms, Trees and Carbon, Freshwater, Winter Grazing, Farm Planning, Community Catchment Groups. [www.beeflambnz.com/your-levies-at-work/workshops-farmers](http://www.beeflambnz.com/your-levies-at-work/workshops-farmers)





## Programme 5

# Impact measurement and recording

**OBJECTIVE: Measuring the impact of B+LNZ activities in support of farming excellence**



### Data collection

We will define success criteria and measure results for reporting.

#### This means we will...

1. Identify KPIs for *Supporting Farming Excellence* projects as they are initiated
2. Use Economic Service data where possible



### Tracking progress

We will develop a dashboard of *Supporting Farming Excellence* measures that describes KPI results against sector targets.

#### This means we will...

1. Design a reporting dashboard that meets farmer expectations of transparency and simplicity
2. Reporting will include quantitative and qualitative data, farmer attitudes and seek to quantify on-farm impact



B+LNZ is driven by improving outcomes for farmers. B+LNZ's purpose is 'insights and actions making a tangible impact for farmers'.

This part of the strategy ensures B+LNZ is tracking the impact of our activities at farm and industry level, ensuring farmers are getting useful tools and information from the Farming Excellence programme.

To support a culture of continuous improvement, we will maintain a shortlist of agreed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that are recorded and reported upon.

The information will feed directly back into Programme 1: Future Vision & Needs, building our knowledge and helping define where we need to focus our energy and attention.

We will seek to find key performance indicators for farming excellence programmes which identify:

1. whether our extension tools are reaching farmers,
2. whether farmers are implementing changes, and
3. the impact of those changes on their farming business, community, and reputation.

Each of the three steps is progressively harder than the previous one. For example, we can tell how many people have downloaded a podcast (step one), but it is harder to measure how many people have done

something because of that podcast (step two) and it is very difficult to measure the impact of that change (step three) when all of the other farm-related variables are taken into account.

Over time we will develop tools and ways to measure these by working closely with the B+LNZ Insights team for qualitative and quantitative data.

Any assessment will include a cost benefit analysis of the work or programme to ensure farmers are getting good value for their levy investment. The B+LNZ Economic Service will play an important role in this including benchmarking on-farm performance and profitability.

Collecting data is important, but presenting it in an accessible and useful manner is necessary for it to become truly informative. By using dashboards and working closely with the B+LNZ Insights team, the data collected will be made available to farmers and stakeholders.

The Farming Excellence Strategy is a cycle of continuous improvement. The information gathered from this part of the process will feed directly back into Programme 1: Future Vision & Needs, building our knowledge and helping define where we need to focus our energy and attention.



## Programme 6

# Supporting farmers as they build on-farm capability

**OBJECTIVE: Support our farmers' ability to attract, develop, and retain people with the right skills and capabilities**



### **Attracting new employees**

Supporting sheep and beef farmers to offer attractive employment and career opportunities for new entrants and those changing careers.

#### **This means we will...**

1. Support farmer networks to communicate the opportunities in the sector
2. Support farmers to provide attractive employment opportunities



### **On-farm skill development**

Supporting sheep and beef farmers to develop their skills and those of their employees.

#### **This means we will...**

1. Engage with national and regional training systems to provide relevant services for the sheep and beef sector
2. Support farmers to develop farmer-led on-farm training solutions
3. Link extension and other forms of development with more formal training



### **Community and sector leadership**

Supporting sheep and beef farmers to provide leadership within their communities and sector.

#### **This means we will...**

1. Support farmers to build community and sector leadership
2. Collaborate with programmes to improve the diversity and resilience of sector leadership
3. Work with community and sector groups to develop primary sector leadership



Lifting the capability of people working in the sheep and beef sector is critical to farming excellence. The sector needs people with the right skills to support our market development, farming excellence, environmental and community goals.

In 2018, B+LNZ reviewed its approach to supporting capability development. The organisation identified that it needed to focus on supporting farmers to attract, develop and deploy capability effectively. Farmer feedback was clear that investment should be on-farm. Efforts in other areas should concentrate on leveraging government and other sector investment.

In 2019, B+LNZ took the opportunity to get involved in the reforms of tertiary and vocational education, to push for a system that better meets the needs of the sheep and beef sector and is focused on lifting capability behind the farm gate. This work will continue for the next few years.

B+LNZ will work with farmers and farmer networks (including our Farmer Council) to ensure that both capability development and extension programmes are fit for purpose, aligned, and are meeting farmer needs.

### Programme in action

#### **Growing Future Farmers**

B+LNZ is one of the partners supporting this on-farm Essential Farm skills programme which aims to accelerate the careers of graduates from entry level through to advanced farm skills and business management. Students will graduate with a NZQA level 3 qualification.

Trainees work on Growing Future Farmers-registered farms throughout New Zealand, with registered farm trainers. There are zero course fees and trainees have access to subsidised equipment and clothing and two pups as well as a living allowance bursary. They are also provided with ongoing pastoral care and learning support. [www.growingfuturefarmers.co.nz](http://www.growingfuturefarmers.co.nz)

## Pulling it all together – a practical farm plan

Farmers' roles have become more complex with the number of stakeholders interested in what is being farmed and how it is being farmed. This extends to customers, regulators and the wider public.

Fitting the various components of farming excellence into a coherent farm plan that farmers, their shareholders, and relevant stakeholders can understand, is useful from a management perspective. It is also becoming critical that all involved in your business are confident that you are moving in the right direction. B+LNZ is focused on helping farmers develop that plan, but is wary of developing an administrative sledgehammer to crack a nut – after all, one of B+LNZ's objectives is to streamline the time and costs of compliance. All of the work B+LNZ does in the Farming Excellence Strategy will be focused on providing farmers with knowledge, tools and templates that add value, not cost.

We'll be working with farmers to prioritise and build the plan in bite sized chunks. The first of these is the environment component; covering climate change, biodiversity, soils and water quality. Having an active farm environment plan will help farmers meet regulatory requirements and provide hard data to the New Zealand public and customers. Towards the end of 2020 B+LNZ, alongside partners, will be launching its updated environment template, running workshops, providing online learning modules and making experts available to help farmers put the plan in place. Farmers can then be confident they're doing the right thing, that they are gathering evidence to track progress and knowing that they can still run a productive and profitable business while enhancing their environment.

## Next steps

This strategy gives B+LNZ the building blocks to deliver on our vision for New Zealand's sheep and beef farmers.

The programmes within the strategy will be built out into actions which we deliver to farmers. Farmer feedback indicates that many of our current initiatives are valuable and we will continue them e.g. the RMPP Action Groups and B+LNZ Genetics, but we have some gaps as well.

We will develop measures to understand how our efforts and investment of farmer levies are producing positive outcomes for farmers. The programmes of work will be included in our yearly operating plan and communicated through our Annual Report.

We will use this strategy to inform any new work and initiatives to ensure we are continuing to deliver value for New Zealand's sheep and beef farmers to ensure we have profitable farmers, thriving farming communities, valued by all New Zealanders.



## Get in touch with our team

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Get involved regionally with your B+LNZ Farmer Council

Look out for opportunities to have your say, such as surveys, or you can give us feedback direct - you can give us a call to discuss any part of this strategy.



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