



## New Zealand's farmers are trusted, but there's still work to do.

In 2022-2023, a series of research projects by the Our Land and Water National Science Challenge explored New Zealanders sense of connection and trust in farming.

The key takeaway is that, on the whole, New Zealanders value their farmers and trust them to do the right thing by their land, animals and communities. But the job isn't done.

Public expectations about farming are changing, people feel disconnected from the source of their food and they're asking for more open and honest communication about what happens on-farm.

This factsheet covers the key findings from four of these research projects and suggests how the New Zealand food and fibre sector can take action on connection and trust in farming.



# Defining 'good farming'

Good news! Farmers and the public generally agree on what 'good farming' looks like. While some groups have different views on which practices most underpin 'good farming', there is broad agreement that **good farming is about producing good food with minimal impacts on people and the environment, while maintaining strong local connections based on honesty and transparency.**



## Take Action

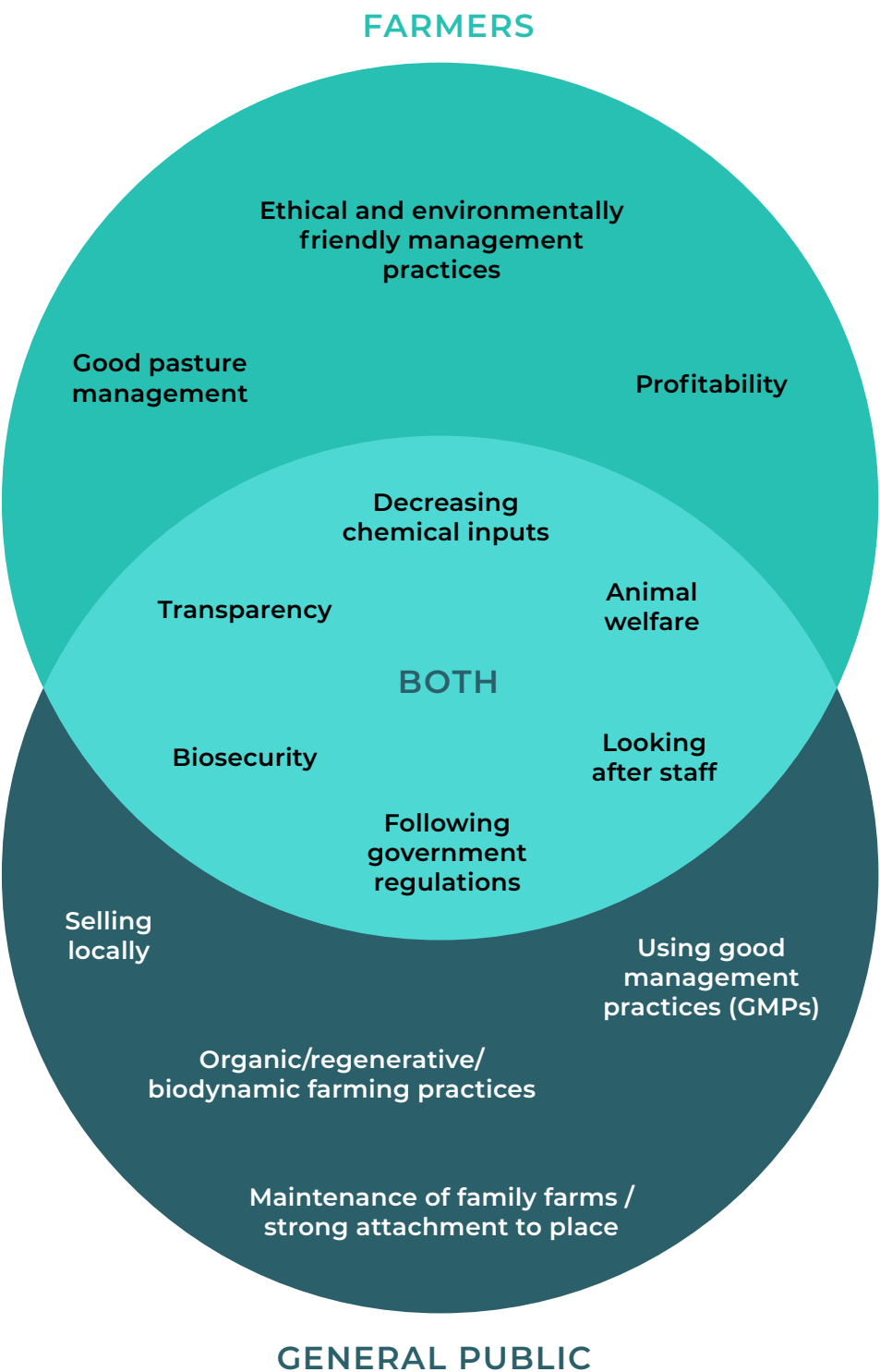
Farmers and the public share a mutually beneficial relationship.

65%

of the public respondents already feel connected to farmers and many more want to learn about on-farm practices, ideally from farmers themselves. How could you help people reconnect with the source of the food and see 'good farming' practices in action?



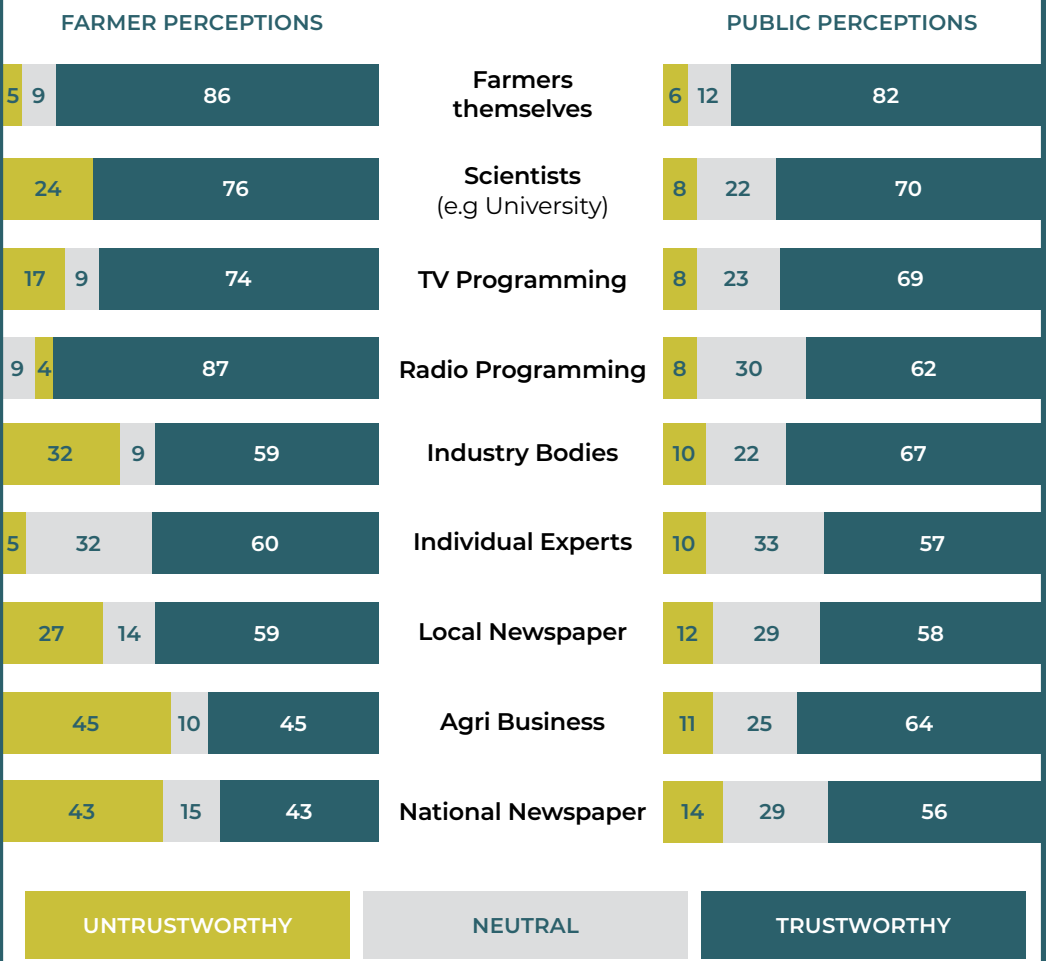
## The top attributes of 'good farming' according to:



## Farmers: trusted sources of information

**82% of public respondents** thought farmers themselves are the most trustworthy sources of information. Followed closely by scientists, various sources of media and industry bodies. The least trusted sources of information were social media, alternative media and online media (not shown). In general, the public were more trusting of all sources of information about farming, while farmers are more sceptical.

Perceived trustworthiness of sources of information about farming in New Zealand



Research project: Connecting Food Producers and Consumers

# Diverse Experiences of Farming surveyed and interviewed over 1,300 New Zealanders, and asked them – urban and rural – what they really think about farming. **The results might surprise you.**

Despite what some media and politicians claim, **there is no deep and antagonistic chasm between urban and rural New Zealanders**, town and country dwellers, including farmers.

**We value our farmers** for the food they grow, and recognise their role in creating jobs and managing the environment.

New Zealanders share two main concerns about farming: environmental impact, and costs of food and inputs.

Food is a connection point.

Urban consumers want to feel confident that farmers are taking action for environmental sustainability

Alongside planned events like Farmers Markets and Open Farm Days, everyday interactions where people connect as people can foster dialogue and understanding.

While most New Zealanders feel that farming provides strong benefits to the country, **recognising the sector's benefits does not equate to greater trust in farming.**

**Honest, clear, communication** from farming sectors, which listens to the public's point of view, **drives trust.**

Rural and urban people both recognise a disconnect between town and country.

They lay the blame with institutions – government, media and supermarkets – rather than each other.

Affordability, taste, and buying NZ made.

New Zealanders value these most when buying food

Farmers want to see more positive, real stories about farming in media.

Total 1,384 people surveyed, representative of the New Zealand population across gender and age. Follow-up interviews conducted with representatives from farming, environmental groups, iwi, government and food supply chains.



National **SCIENCE** Challenges





# Mapping the conversation on food & farming

Intangible ideas like ‘connection’, ‘social licence’ and ‘trust’ are hard to get the head around. To help, one research team developed an inventory to pinpoint emerging food and farming topics being negotiated (what), the places and spaces issues negotiation happens (where) and some of the ways people are negotiating (how).



## What: The Big Issues

Established issues (regulated)  
e.g. environmental degradation  
& animal welfare

Formalising issues (starting  
to be regulated) e.g. protecting  
high-class soils from  
property development

Emerging issues (no regulation)  
e.g. food security / sovereignty,  
localisation / democratisation  
of food and authentication /  
quality assurance



## Where: Places & Spaces People Talk About Farming

Farms

Farm gates

Farmers’ markets

Special agricultural events

Food and fibre cooperatives

General retailers

Food boxes

Media



## How: Ways That People Talk About Farming

Campaigns by farmers  
or industry bodies

Protests and  
awareness raising

Marketing

Promotions, sponsorship,  
and endorsements

Awards

Certification schemes  
and labelling

Research and  
reporting



## Take Action

Farmers and the public have a range of options when it comes to negotiating the social licence to farm. After a glance at the negotiation map, what food and farming issues matter to you, where is the right place to talk through them with others and what format will work best to have a productive conversation with impact?



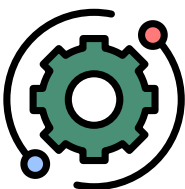
# Assurance systems build trust

Good assurance systems are one of the cornerstones of farming in New Zealand. They ensure compliance with regulations like food safety, animal welfare and environmental management, which in turn underpin international trade and trust in farming amongst the public. Assurance systems help the public to trust that the farming sector is doing the right thing.

## Current Perceptions of Farm Monitoring in New Zealand



Given increasing demands for transparency, rapidly evolving technology and new forms of food production, assurance systems will need to evolve in five critical areas:



Technological development



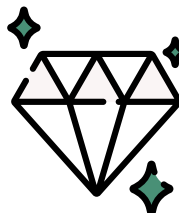
Monitoring public demands for social and environmental accountability



Potential for incorporating Māori world perspectives



Understanding overseas market insights and cultural attributes



Better alignment with international standards



## Take Action

How invested are you in understanding your Assurance Scheme and its future direction? Can you take any steps now to take advantages of future developments?



# Partnering for Change: A shared-responsibility approach to environmental change



## Take Action

For the full 'Partnering for Change' project guidebook (covering lessons learnt and recommendations for building a thriving urban-rural partnership) visit the Farming for Good website.

[Visit Us Online](#)

**The idea:** If farmers could see urban groups making equal change to improve the environment, they would be more motivated to make change themselves.

### Aim / objective

Bring urban and rural businesses together to co-design outcomes and agree on actions that are individually applicable and collectively relevant.

The ultimate objective of this research is to equip the primary industry with a tested, shared-responsibility approach for creating environmental practice change on-farm.

### Participants

Four rural and four urban businesses participated from Te Tai Tokerau / Northland, Dannevirke, Kāpiti, Te Whanganui-a-Tara / Wellington and Ōtautahi / Christchurch.

**Childspace**

**Kamahi NORTH Ltd.**

**NZYF**  
NZ YOUNG FARMERS

**Longview**

**Mills Albert**  
LIMITED

**Te Karoa Farms**

**WOMBATNET**

**Waka Dairies**

### The journey

Businesses met to co-design the project's shared responsibility approach.

They decided they would like to learn from each other, and decided that the best approach was to visit each business in-person to increase connections and understandings of other businesses.

Over the course of six months, from Feb-Aug 2023, participants were brought together during four in-person hui and three online hui. The group visited Dannevirke, Te Tai Tokerau and Te Whanganui-a-Tara. They also stayed connected via group chat.

### Changes made because of the project



Re-used excavated land



Purchased 3 hybrid vehicles



Created a sustainability plan



Asked sustainability questions in job interviews



Made changes regardless of others' help



Installed solar power



Planted more natives



Considered wider perspectives



Increased motivation to implement existing sustainability programme



Sought iwi input



Asked for fruit and veges not to be delivered in plastic



Increased rainwater collection tanks



Set firmer groundwork for green policies



Ran clothing swaps / donations



Became aware of small-scale polluting activities



Learnt about food sources



Considered day to day, individual actions instead of just farm systems



Approached community stakeholders to ensure business changes align with community needs







# About Farming for Good

Farming for Good is a research collection that supports people and leaders across our communities, farming sector and government to build trust in our food and farming system.

[Visit Us Online](#)

The collection spans five Our Land and Water National Science Challenge projects:

1. [Connecting Food Producers and Consumers](#)

(AgResearch | Cawthron Institute | Dirt Road Communications | Lincoln University | Manaaki Whenua | Quorum Sense | Thriving Southland)

2. [Diverse Experiences of Farming](#)

(Massey University)

3. [Enhancing Assurance Schemes](#)

(Synlait | The AgriBusiness Group | University Of Canterbury)

4. [Urban-Rural Partnerships for Equal Change](#)

(Scarlatti | Thriving Southland | University Of Otago)

5. [Peri Urban Potential](#)

(BECA | Lincoln University)

