

**THRIVING SOUTHLAND  
CATCHMENT GROUP,  
FARMER AND  
STAKEHOLDER  
annual survey**

# 2021



**THRIVING  
SOUTHLAND**

*Tōnui ana te whenua. Tōnui ana te takata.  
A thriving, prosperous land. A thriving, prosperous people.*



**Agriculture & Investment Services**

Ministry for Primary Industries  
Manatū Ahu Matua

[thrivingsouthland.co.nz](http://thrivingsouthland.co.nz)



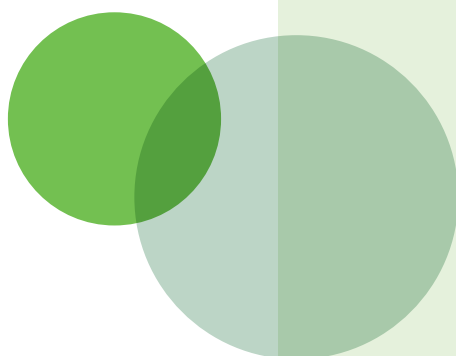
# Thriving Southland is a Southland community and farmer Catchment Group instigated organisation.

The Ministry for Primary Industries Sustainable Land Use Programme has funded a change and innovation project to support Southland's primary sector to be agile and adaptable to change.

After detailed project development work in the first half of 2020, four Catchment Coordinators, a Project Manager and a Project Administrator were employed to work with the Project Lead to help deliver Catchment Group support and project milestones.

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# Summary

The following summary outlines the results of the first annual Thriving Southland survey. The survey was conducted to help Thriving Southland determine what is happening on Southland farms, what Catchment Groups want and how Thriving Southland can work with farmers and stakeholders in a pro-active, co-ordinated manner for the ongoing health of Southland's people and environment.

Thriving Southland seeks to understand how they can continue to support farmers find solutions to problems as the Thriving Southland programme progresses, how effective Thriving Southland has been to date and how well they have addressed Catchment Groups needs to date. The results of the survey will help inform how Thriving Southland can continue enabling and supporting Catchment Groups.

## Summary of recommendations

1. **Demographics**
2. **Farmer pride**
3. **Uptake and use of Farm Environment Plans (FEPs)**
4. **Areas being focused on for on-farm change and/or improved environmental outcomes**
5. **Understanding water quality**
6. **GMP habits and attitudes**
7. **What ongoing support would be beneficial for farming businesses**
8. **Farmer personal wellbeing**
9. **Awareness of Catchment Groups and their functionality**
10. **Awareness of Thriving Southland and it's functionality**
11. **Sector Group collaboration**

## *What makes you proud to be a farmer, involved in farming in Southland?*

*“The lifestyle.”*

*“Farming with awesome like-minded people. Being able to take care of our animals and land as best as we can, and make a honest income doing it.”*

*“Looking after the environment for future generations, producing great food.”*

*“We help feed the world.”*

# Background

The survey is targeted at Southland farmers, Catchment Group members and stakeholders, and was designed to collect information on their environmental practices, their knowledge and understanding of the role of Thriving Southland to support them, and how they want to be engaged with and on what topics.

It is important farmer opinion and attitude are monitored on a regular basis to ensure Thriving Southland:

- is delivering what is required in the work programme
- is engaging with Catchment Groups and the wider community at an appropriate level
- remains up to date with Catchment Group support needs and opinion
- can prepare for anticipated future Catchment Group needs.

# Objectives

The survey sought to understand:

1. The demographic of respondents
2. Farmer pride
3. Uptake and use of Farm Environment Plans
4. Areas being focused on for on farm change and/or improved environmental outcomes
5. Understanding of Southland's water quality
6. GMP habits and attitudes
7. What ongoing support would be beneficial for farming businesses
8. Farmer personal well being
9. Awareness of Catchment Groups and their functionality
10. Awareness of Thriving Southland and it's functionality
11. Sector group collaboration with Catchment Groups.

Understanding these points will help Thriving Southland work effectively with Catchment Groups to help plan further support for them.

# Methodology

The survey, ran from 10 to 28 February 2021 and was emailed directly to Thriving Southland contacts via Survey Monkey and also promoted via the Thriving Southland website. There was an incentive of a \$100 grocery voucher offered.

There were 200 responses with an average completion rate of 82%. 192 responses were collected via the direct email and 8 responses were collected via the website.

There were 24 questions in total which varied in format. Some required a simple yes/no. Some were asking people to rate their thoughts on a scale of 1 – 5 and for many questions, respondents could select multiple answers, e.g., “What farm type best describes your farm? (Tick as many as you like).”

Many of the questions had an ‘other’ option if respondents wanted to add a comment or their answer didn’t fit in any of the pre-selected tick box options. Two of the questions asked only for comment.

This report has grouped and listed questions according to which objective section they fell into and results summarised by noting the main points or strongest responses. More granular detail on the survey responses are included in the appendices which can be obtained upon request.



**THRIVING  
SOUTHLAND  
SURVEY**

*Speak up!  
Tell us what you think?*

**Our annual survey gives us vital information to ensure that we are supporting Southland the best we can.**

**Please help us by taking this short (and very painless) survey.**

The survey is open from 10 - 28 February so please look out for a link in an email coming to you soon.

We really appreciate your input.

**Do the survey and go in the draw to WIN A \$100 GROCERY VOUCHER!**

**ONLY  
6 MINS**



**THRIVING  
SOUTHLAND**

Tōnui ana te whenua. Tōnui ana te takata.  
A thriving, prosperous land. A thriving, prosperous people.

You can also access our survey at  
[www.thrivingsouthland.co.nz](http://www.thrivingsouthland.co.nz)



# **SURVEY RESULTS**

# 1. Demographic of respondents

Questions establishing demographics were:

**Question 1:** What's your role? (Tick as many as you like)

**Question 2:** What farm type best describes your farm? (Tick as many as you like)

**Question 3:** How many years have you been directly involved in farming?

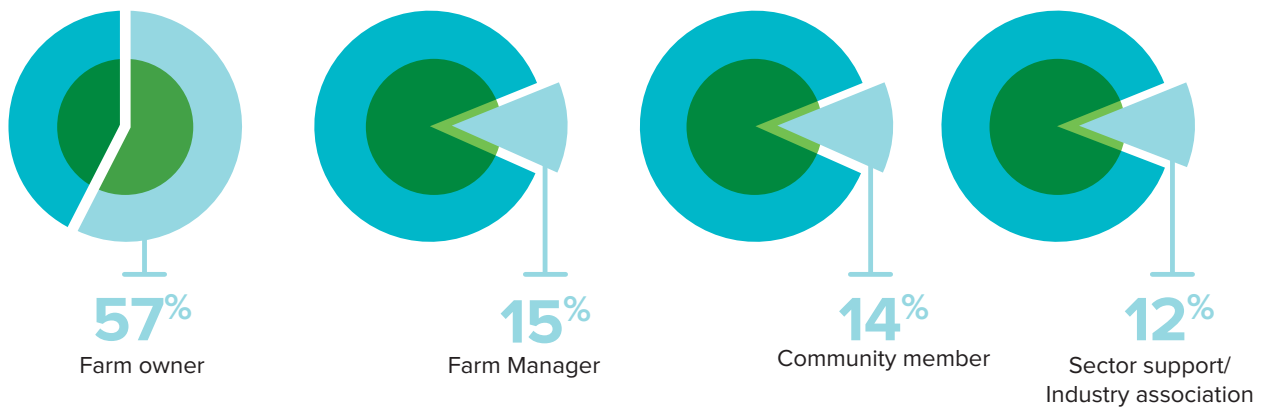
**Question 5:** Which river catchment does your farm link to?

**Question 25:** What is your age group?

## QUESTION 1. What's your role? (Tick as many as you like)

There were 13 answer choices to Q1. and respondents could tick multiple options. Many people chose to tick two or more options, for example, both share milker and farm owner or farm manager and farm consultant, an indication of the complexity of ownership and employment options and business structures.

However, the greatest number of responses in order was:

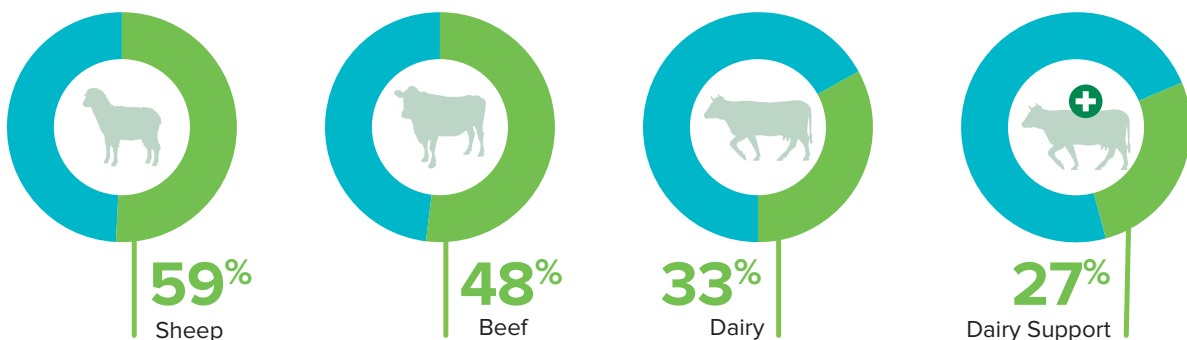


Some farm owners also ticked share milker, consultant or a variety of other options.

Roles described as 'other' referenced farm or professional roles, e.g., 'Rural Professional Technical Sales Manager, Farm Source' to generic descriptions such as 'teacher', 'environmentalist' or 'concerned community member'.

## QUESTION 2. What farm type best describes your farm? (Tick as many as you like)

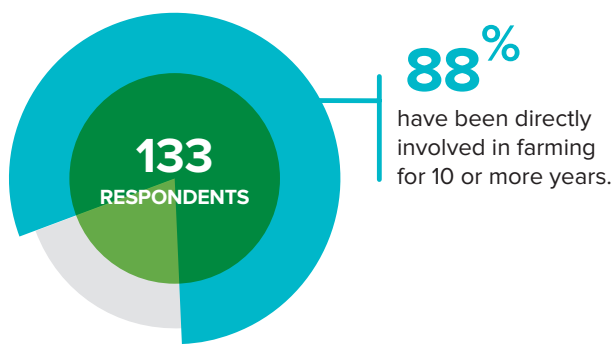
134 people responded to Q2. by selecting one or more options. Responses were:



As could be expected, many respondents ticked sheep *and* beef. The balance was made up of deer, cropping, forestry, horticulture, other, with other being a mix of niche agricultural activities, tourism and forestry.

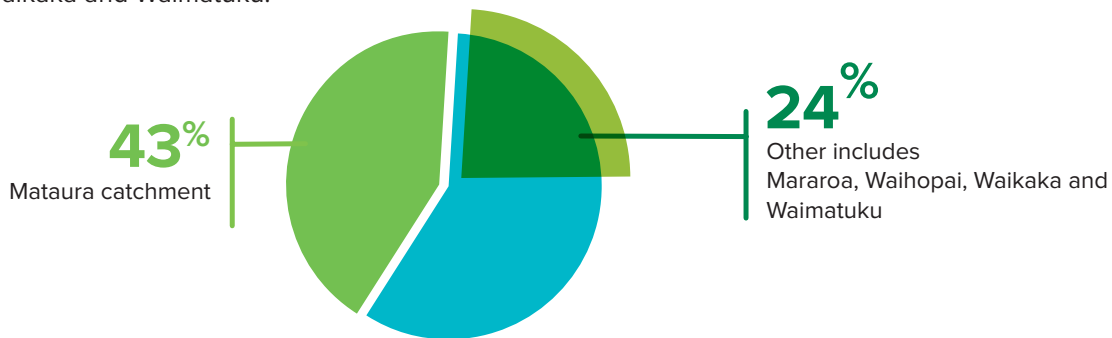


**QUESTION 3.** How many years have you been directly involved in farming?



**QUESTION 5.** Which river catchment does your farm link to?

Respondents who linked their farm to the Matura catchment far outweighed all the other main catchments at 43%. The 'other' option comprised 24.43%, which included 14 smaller sub catchments, such as Mararoa, Waihopai, Waikaka and Waimatuku.



**QUESTION 25.** What is your age group?



**SUMMARY**

Farm owners and managers were well represented in the survey. This aligns with nearly 90% of respondents having been involved in farming for more than 10 years and being over 35 years old. Of the 114 people who identified themselves as a farm owner, 68 identified as sheep farm owners and 33 as dairy farm owners.

## 2. Farmer Pride

### QUESTION 4. What makes you proud to be a farmer, involved in farming in Southland?

105 respondents made comments in this question. Responses were varied and mainly commented on things such as loving working the land, producing quality food, contributing to the economy and being part of a supportive community.

#### SUMMARY

Although the comments didn't necessarily answer the question about what makes them proud to be a farmer in Southland, they were almost all positive.

"I am proud of how I protect and enhance my farm, care of our animals and land as best as we can, and make a honest income doing it"

"Supportive community. Farmer collaboration and idea shearing. Beautiful country side"

"Farming responsibly and efficiently within the constraints of our fluctuating budget"

"Growing quality product in a sustainable way"

## 3. Uptake and use of Farm Environment Plans

These questions were:

**Question 6:** Does your farm have a Farm Environmental Plan

**Question 7:** If yes, do you use it?

### QUESTION 6. Does your farm have a Farm Environmental Plan? (FEP)



58%

Yes



22%

of respondents said they have an unfinished Farm Environmental Plan

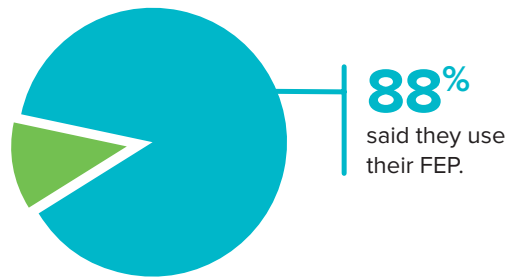


9%

or 13 farmers, replied no but they need one, 11 of whom were farm owners.

The raw data confirms that the majority of farmers have a Farm Environment Plan or one in draft (80%).

**QUESTION 7.** If yes, do you use it?



**SUMMARY**

80% of farmers involved in the survey have a Farm Environment Plan. It is unclear why the remaining 20% didn't have a Farm Environment Plan, but there is an opportunity to explore this further.

- As 58% of respondents wanted practical support for on-farm change, Thriving Southland to encourage Catchment Groups to support farmers to complete a fit for purpose farm environment plan.

**4. Areas being focused on for on farm change and/or improved environmental outcomes**

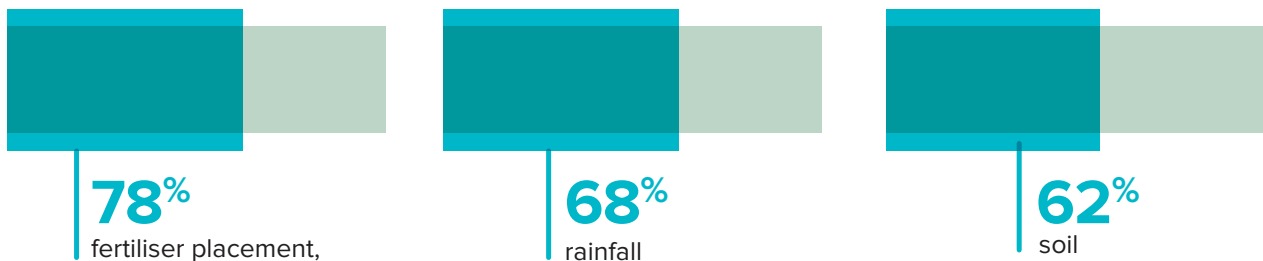
These questions were:

**Question 8:** What do you monitor on your farm?  
(Tick as many as you like)

**Question 9:** Over the last 5 years have any of the following been part of your farm goals? Please rank 1 to 5 with 1 being the highest farm goal priority and 5 being the least or not at all (N/A).

**QUESTION 8.** What do you monitor on your farm? (Tick as many as you like)

Out of 11 options | Total of 115 respondents the three most monitored things on the farm are:



**QUESTION 9.** Over the last five years have any of the following been part of your farm goals?

Please rank 1 to 5 with 1 being the highest farm goal priority and 5 being the least or not at all (N/A).

**Ranked by highest priority**

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Improving wellbeing for myself/staff/family                     | 52% |
| Improving animal welfare  | 48% |
| Increase profitability  | 45% |
| Increase farm business resilience                               | 43% |
| Providing the next generation with options to farm (succession) | 36% |
| Improving water quality   | 35% |
| Increasing productivity   | 32% |
| Retaining sediment  | 30% |
| Reducing cost   | 29% |
| Waste Reduction   | 21% |
| Improving biodiversity  | 17% |
| Regenerative farming  | 12% |
| Diversification   | 9%  |
| Reducing green house gases, emissions, footprint                | 9%  |
| Changing land use   | 7%  |
| Organic farming   | 5%  |

### Ranked by lowest priority

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Organic farming   | 35% |
| Regenerative farming  | 32% |
| Changing land use   | 27% |
| Diversification   | 27% |
| Reducing green house gases, emissions, footprint                | 19% |
| Providing the next generation with options to farm (succession) | 7%  |
| Waste Reduction   | 4%  |
| Improving biodiversity  | 3%  |
| Reducing cost   | 3%  |
| Retaining sediment  | 2%  |
| Increase profitability  | 2%  |
| Improving wellbeing for myself/staff/family                     | 2%  |
| Increasing productivity   | 1%  |
| Improving animal welfare  | 1%  |
| Increase farm business resilience                               | 1%  |
| Improving water quality   | 0%  |

### SUMMARY

A high percentage of people monitored fertiliser placement and rainfall. The four water quality indicators (more work and cost to implement) had a relatively low uptake of monitoring.

The top four ranked priorities were improving wellbeing, improving animal welfare, increasing profitability and increasing farm business resilience.

## 5. Understanding of water quality

The questions were:

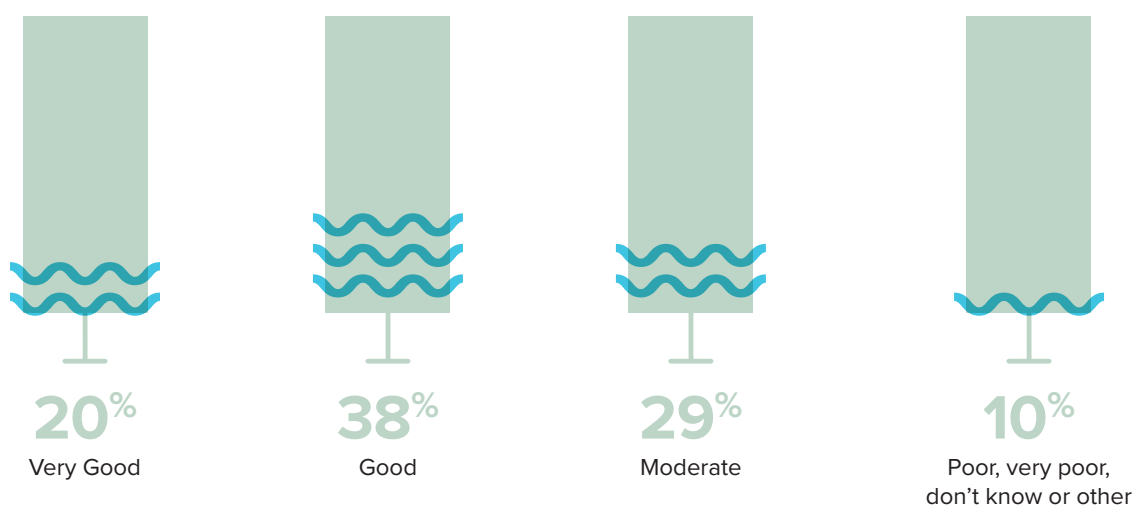
**Question 10:** How would you rate the water quality on your farm?

**Question 11:** Why did you select this water quality rating?

**Question 16:** What's your view of water quality in Southland waterways?

### QUESTION 10. How would you rate the water quality on your farm?

There were 111 responses to this question, of which



### QUESTION 11. Why did you select this water quality rating?

There were no pre-selected options for this question, and all answers were comments written in the respondents own words. There were 96 comments.

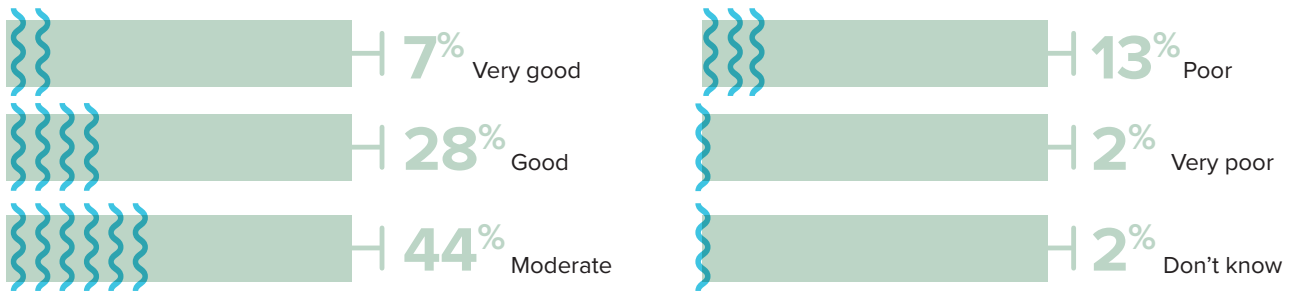
Reasons given for why they rated the water quality on their farm as they did, either good or not, were loosely grouped into general themes as follows:

- based on random water quality testing or on going monitoring either on farm or from local Environment Southland sites
- GMPs being implemented or because they have low impact enterprises. The GMPs cited most frequently that people were implementing were fencing off waterways and riparian planting
- personal perception, either anecdotal evidence or how the water looks and/or the presence of visual aquatic life. For example, "because there is plenty of fish life, appears clear"

Broadly speaking, reasons for all ratings were spread evenly over the general themes of testing, use of GMPs and personal perception.

**QUESTION 16.** What's your view of water quality in Southland waterways?

168 people responded to this question.



By comparison to question 11, where 68% rated the water on their farm as good or very good, only 35% of respondents rated Southland's water as good or very good. This is possibly because respondents were rating other waterways (outside of their direct knowledge or influence). Similarly, in question 11, 10% rated water quality on their farm as poor, very poor, don't know or other, compared with 17% in question 16.

**SUMMARY**

Of the 111 written responses to why respondents rated water quality on their farm as they did, having grouped responses loosely into themes, only 23 responses were based on having tested or monitored the water in some way. This is reasonably consistent with the question asking what is monitored on farm, where fewer than 20% monitored each of the common water quality indicators of nitrates, E. coli, phosphate and sediment.

Twenty-seven responses were more about the individual's perception based on visual appearance and presence of aquatic life, which may or may not be an accurate assumption.

16% of respondents thought water quality in Southland was poor or very poor, opposed to 10% thinking water quality on their own farm was poor or very poor.

## 6. GMP attitudes and practice

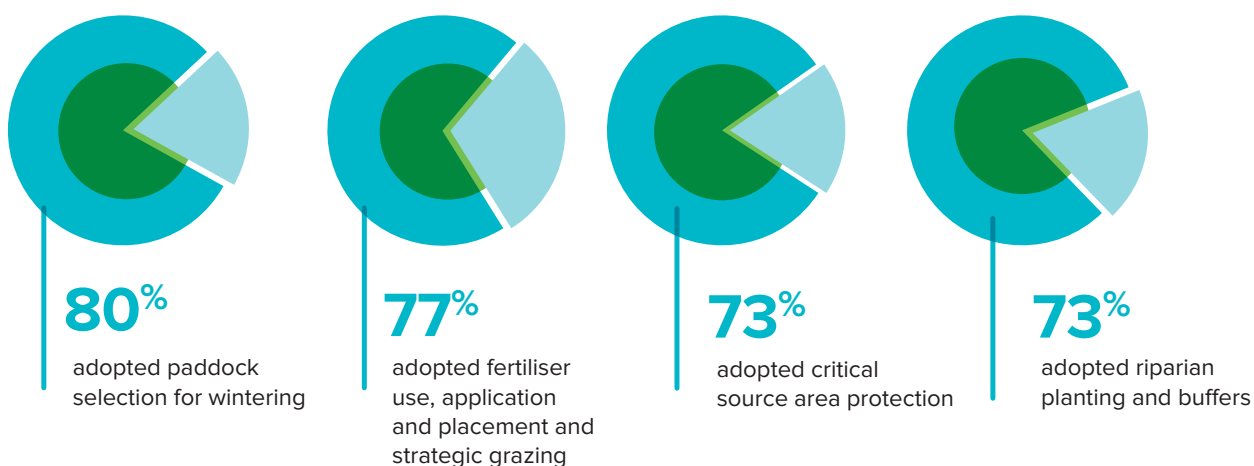
The questions were:

**Question 12:** In the last 5 years, have you adopted any Good Management Practices (GMP's)? (Tick as many as you like)

**Question 13:** Where are you most likely to seek advice on Good Management Practices? (Tick as many as you like)

**QUESTION 12.** In the last five years, have you adopted any Good Management Practices (GMP's)? (Tick as many as you like)

There were 11 answer options to this question and 109 people responded. The four highest ranking adopted GMPs by percentage of respondents were:

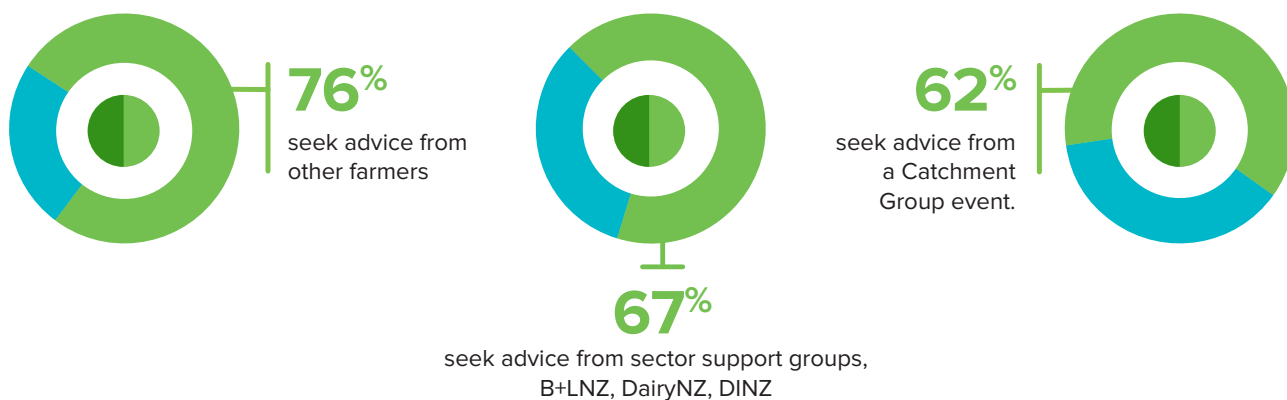


The 'other' option included specifying infrastructure installed. Infrastructure included new wintering barns, wintering pads, fencing, new staff houses, wetlands, concreting lanes, new cattle yards.



**QUESTION 13.** Where are you most likely to seek advice on Good Management Practices?  
(Tick as many as you like)

108 people responded to 8 answer options. The three highest ranking were:



Other areas where people seek advice were environmental discussion groups, Fonterra, private people, and field days.

### SUMMARY

With critical source area protection, wintering paddock selection and strategic grazing all being selected by a high percentages of respondents it would seem wintering messages are being taken up and wintering GMP is being adopted. 'Riparian buffers and planting' was also rated highly.

With 76% of respondents saying they seek advice from other farmers and 63% from Catchment Group events, it is worth investing in farmer information sharing and upskilling Catchment Groups leaders, as and when they want/need it, so they can continue to spread information via their Groups.

68% seeking information from sector support groups also indicates it is worth Catchment Groups collaborating with these groups.

## 7. What ongoing support would be beneficial for farming businesses

**Question 14.** What information and support do you think would benefit your farming business the most over the next 18 months?

### Ranked by most beneficial

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Certainty around rules and regulations and their timeframes                                  | 61% |
| Understanding current rules and regulations and how they apply to my farm                    | 50% |
| Understand expectations and timeframes of Local and Central Government rules and regulations | 49% |
| Sharing farmer driven innovation   | 45% |
| Interpretation of new relevant science   | 45% |
| Understanding and addressing my farm's environmental challenges                              | 44% |
| Engagement with other farmers  | 38% |
| Understanding consumer expectations and market trends  | 34% |
| Applying current rules and regulations on my farm  | 29% |
| Financial advice and planning  | 28% |
| Improving animal welfare   | 28% |
| Attraction and retention of staff  | 27% |
| Engagement with local sector support   | 23% |
| Engagement with processors/cooperatives  | 23% |
| Succession planning  | 19% |
| Professional farm advisory services  | 10% |
| Information on climate change and its impact   | 8%  |

### Ranked by least beneficial

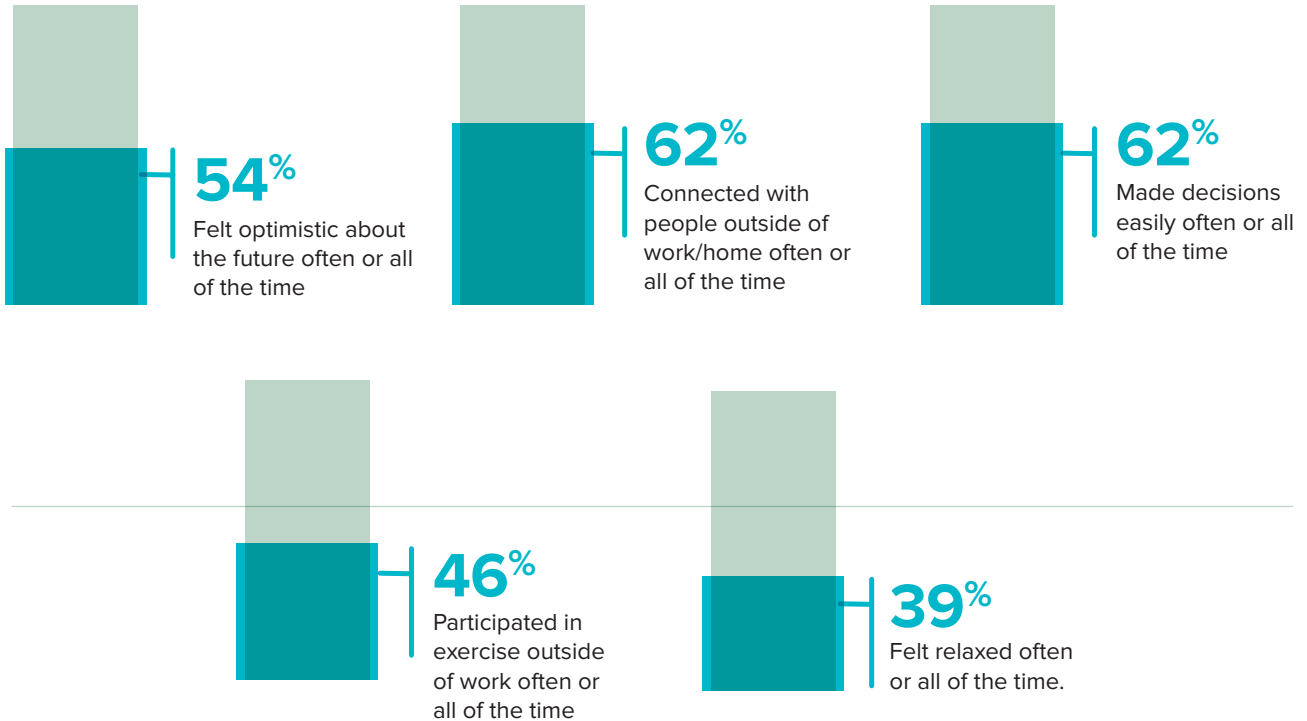
|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Attraction and retention of staff  | 29% |
| Information on climate change and its impact   | 16% |
| Financial advice and planning  | 12% |
| Succession planning  | 11% |
| Professional farm advisory services  | 7%  |
| Applying current rules and regulations on farm   | 6%  |
| Engagement with processors/cooperatives  | 6%  |
| Improving animal welfare   | 6%  |
| Understanding consumer expectations and market trends  | 4%  |
| Engagement with local sector support   | 4%  |
| Understanding and addressing my farm's environmental challenges                              | 4%  |
| Understand expectations and timeframes of Local and Central Government rules and regulations | 4%  |
| Sharing farmer driven innovation   | 2%  |
| Understanding current rules and regulations and how they apply to my farm                    | 2%  |
| Certainty around rules and regulations and their timeframes                                  | 2%  |
| Interpretation of new relevant science   | 1%  |
| Engagement with other farmers  | 1%  |

### SUMMARY

The information and support that was viewed most beneficial for farming businesses was certainty, understanding of and expectations and timeframes of the rules and regulations. Along with sharing farmer driven innovation and understanding new science.

## 8. Farmer personal well being

**QUESTION 15.** Thinking about the last two weeks please choose the answer that best describes your feelings on the below statements. 110 people responded.



### SUMMARY

Half of respondents ticked 'often' or 'all the time' in response to the five indicator questions. This could indicate a general lower level of wellbeing and is consistent with 'improving wellbeing for myself, staff and family' being rated as of very high importance in question 9.

- Research if the results are similar with the general population / other NZ farming regions
- Work with the Rural Support Trust to ascertain if this is typical for the Southland farming community
- As these responses could vary greatly and rapidly, according to current events either locally or nationally, it may be helpful for Catchment Groups to try and ask members these questions more frequently.

## 9. Awareness of Catchment Groups and their functionality

There were five questions in this section.

**Question 17:** Have you heard of Southland's farmer-led Catchment Groups?

**Question 18:** Are you involved with one of Southland's farmer led community CGs?

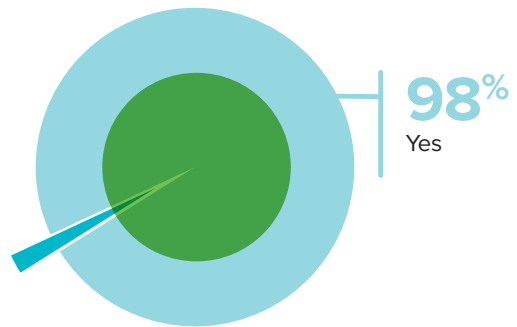
**Question 19:** How well is your CG working?

**Question 20:** What resources would support your local CG to thrive over the next 18 months? (please select all that apply, and add extra ideas and information into the 'other' section)

**Question 21:** How strong are the linkages between your CG and local Iwi?

**QUESTION 17.** Have you heard of Southland's farmer-led Catchment Groups?

168 people responded with 98% saying yes.

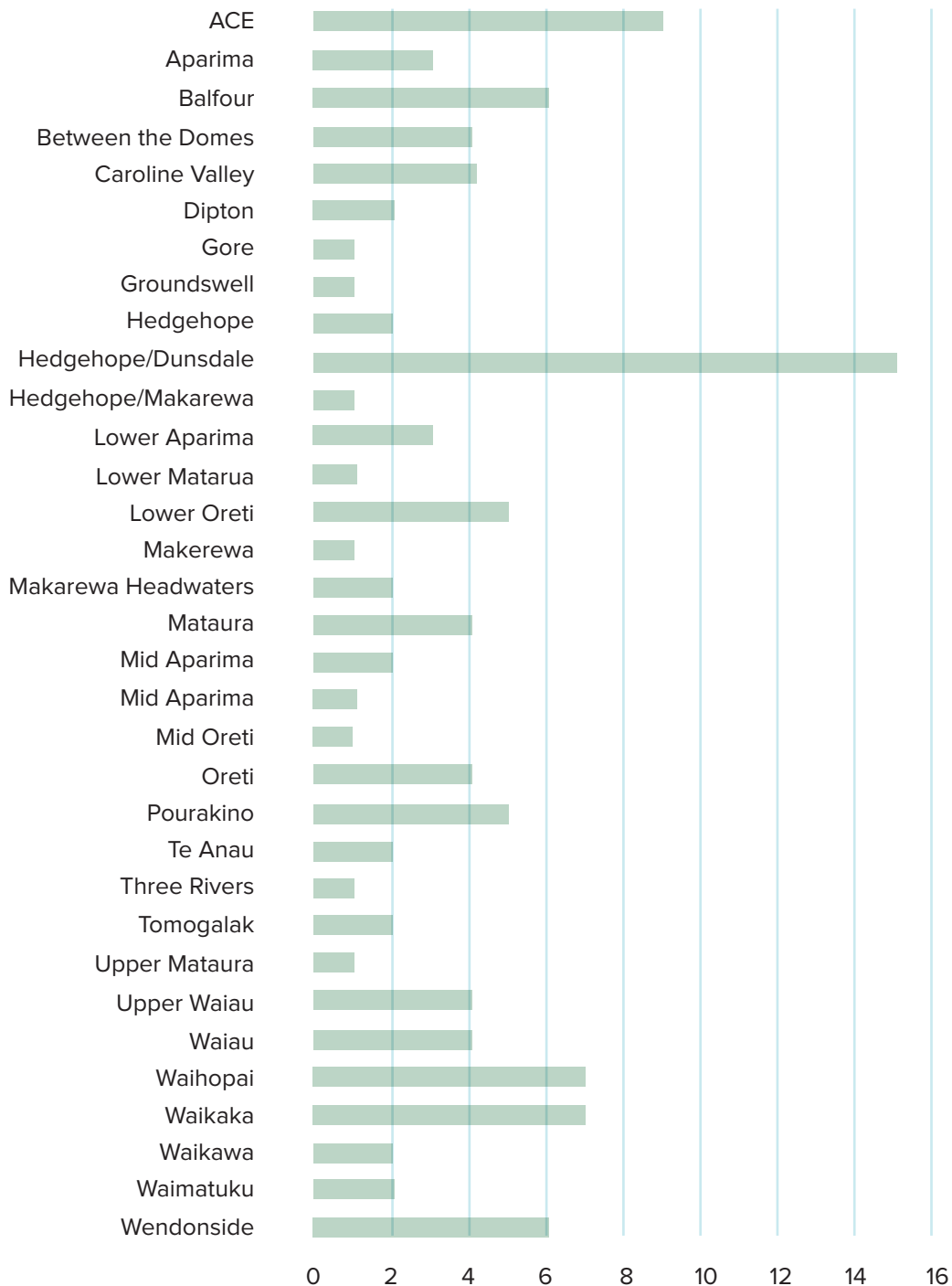


**QUESTION 18.** Are you involved with one of Southland’s farmer-led community Catchment Groups? If yes, please specify which one?



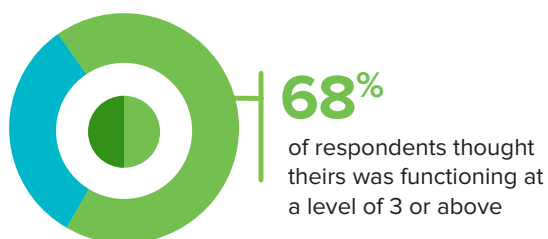
104 people itemised one or more Catchment Groups they are involved with, as they are involved with multiple groups. The below graph shows how many respondents were involved with the groups they named. The names of the groups are the respondent’s words.

**Number of people involved with each group**



**QUESTION 19.** How well is your Catchment Group working?

102 people responded to this question, ranking the answer on a scale of 1 (struggling) – 5 (working really well). Of the respondents, 68.63% of respondents thought their Catchment Group was functioning at a level of 3 or above and 22.55% were unsure.



**QUESTION 20.** What resources would support your local Catchment Group to thrive over the next 18 months? (please select all that apply, and add extra ideas and information into the 'other' section) The percentage of respondents who selected each answer choice is illustrated in the table below in order.

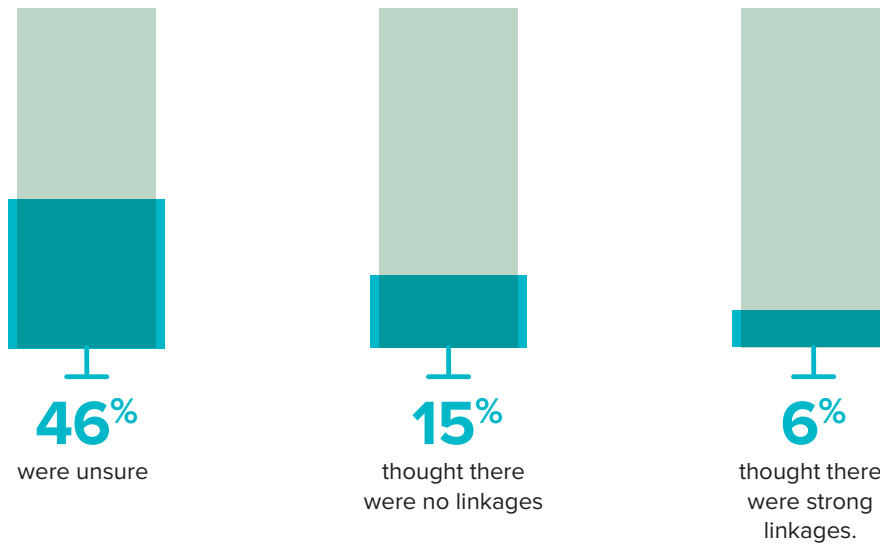
**Answer choices**

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Science   | 59% |
| Practical support for on farm change e.g. Farm Environmental Management Plans | 59% |
| Speakers and experts  | 54% |
| Project funding support   | 54% |
| Rules and legislation support   | 51% |
| Farm systems specialists  | 44% |
| Communication and engagement support  | 42% |
| Facilitation and extension support  | 38% |
| Health and wellbeing support  | 25% |
| Leadership upskilling   | 21% |
| Don't Know  | 14% |

Other suggestions for support from the six comments provided were:

- support to build momentum for new groups
- support for input into RMA changes
- carbon footprint assessments for community members households along with farmers households.

**QUESTION 21.** How strong are the linkages between your Catchment Group and local lwi?



**SUMMARY**

Awareness of Catchment Groups is high. However, 23% of respondents are unsure how well they are functioning. This could be that while they are aware of the Groups, they may lack understanding of how the Groups work`

Awareness or understanding of Catchment Groups links with lwi is relatively poor with 79% of respondents saying they thought either there was no or little linkage or they were unsure.



## 10. Awareness of Thriving Southland and it's functionality

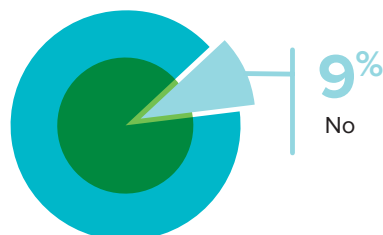
The three questions were:

**Question 22:** Before today were you aware of TS?

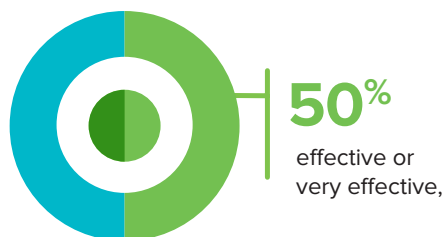
**Question 23:** How effective do you consider TS is in helping Catchment Groups achieve their goals

**Question 24:** How well do sector support groups/ industry associations collaborate with Catchment Groups?

**QUESTION 22.** Before today were you aware of Thriving Southland?



**QUESTION 23.** How effective do you consider Thriving Southland is in helping Catchment Groups achieve their goals?



*“Would like to see more appreciation of farmers and the positive things we are doing for the environment and been great food producers”*

*“I believe that farmers are under-valued as most do an amazing job. The changes that have been made on farm by farmers to date are not getting the recognition they deserve. Farmers are constantly changing farming practices to achieve better environmental outcomes and financial security.”*

### SUMMARY

Awareness of Thriving Southland is high with 90% of respondents agreeing they are aware of the organisation. This is an expected result as most respondents were from the Thriving Southland database so had a pre-existing relationship with Thriving Southland.

A third of respondents were unsure how effective Thriving Southland is in helping Catchment Groups achieve their goals. This could be because they do not understand the relationship between Thriving Southland and Catchment Groups. Alternatively, it could be that they are not engaged with their Group enough to understand what the Group is doing with the support of Thriving Southland.

## 11. Sector group collaboration with Catchment Groups

**QUESTION 24:** How well do sector support groups/industry associations collaborate with Catchment Groups?



### SUMMARY

With 40% of respondents unsure of how well sector groups and Catchment Groups collaborate and only 13% thinking the level of collaboration is good, there is room for either greater collaboration or greater awareness of current collaboration.



