
LINK ONLINE

Short webinars for environmental policy-makers and practitioners

What drives decision making in New Zealand's primary sector?

The following questions were asked during our live webinar with Pike Stahlmann-Brown but due to time restrictions, we were unable to answer these in the session.

I wonder if the prevalence of duck hunting in Southland influences wetland management (fencing)?

Hi Aaron. This is one of the challenges with the survey: it makes us wonder about the connections between many diverse activities and situations. This is not one we've tackled but if someone wants to fund it, we possibly have data that could be helpful.

Do you think there is a risk people are telling you what they think they should say, re acceptance of climate change? If so, how big an effect?

Sure, this is a well-known issue in survey research called "social desirability bias". The best way to handle this is to phrase questions neutrally. For example, the climate change question was worded "There has been a lot of discussion about climate change in the media. Which of the following statements best describes your personal thoughts about climate change?" and options stipulated that the effects could be positive or negative.

Has the wellbeing measure changed much over recent years?

We started asking about well-being in 2021, so we can't tell yet. But we'll ask again in 2023.

B+LNZ are building a Catchment Groups map, for those interested in their expansion: <https://beeflambnz.com/catchment-groups/map>.

The catchment groups are doing really important work. Cheers for mentioning that!

Would be interested in hearing more about catchment group question above ^ and how many farmers/growers are part of catchment groups

We agree that it would have been very interesting to look at catchment groups in detail over the last few years - particularly as there was such an uplift in activity, profile and membership of those groups. We have worked with agencies (including MfE) to understand the specific information gaps relating to catchment groups but this topic has not made the cut when funding decisions were made! There are a number of ways we can tackle this and we will be in touch directly.

Purely speculating, but do you think horticulturalist in the Nth Island might feel less positive about climate change after the recent storms and flooding which destroyed crops? (Or have they experienced similar damage in the recent past and they remain optimistic?).

It's a good question. We can test that in the next survey.

Could compare to the NZ Attitudes and Values Study?

Kia ora Alana! Fully agree on this -- in fact, we coordinated the well-being and stress questions with people who have been involved with the NZAVS.

Are the aspirations dependent on farm operation size?

It's a great question! We haven't looked into that question specifically, but the results I shared were only for commercial operators (lifestyle block owners weren't included in those results).

Given the cyclical nature of nature and climate, is there really any significance to be given to the "belief" in climate change other than the political and media focus currently? We all acknowledge that climate changes and has done so in cycles for centuries

Thanks for raising this! The question didn't specify whether any changes in climate are anthropogenic. It was whether they believed that climate was changing. I think the question is important because people will only think about adaptation if they believe climate is actually changing.

On climate change aspect, were there questions around how farmers/growers are adapting to the impacts of climate change such as introducing new varieties, climate-resilient crops, etc.?

Kia ora Danilo. We have some general questions (for example, about working to reduce GHGs) in the 2021 survey, but we'd like to explore adaptation in much greater detail in the 2023 survey.

Does the higher percentage of wetlands fenced off in Southland because there are more wetlands there, or has the data been corrected to take into account the occurrence of Wetlands?

Thanks for the question, Dorothy. The question reflected the share of wetlands that people had fenced *among people who had wetlands*. As such, we think it's legitimate to compare across regions.

What is the impact of the size of farm (especially number of workers) on areas such as wellbeing, plans and future planning?

Great question! We have collected data on staff in previous waves of the survey but haven't considered the relationship with outcomes like well-being. That's a good suggestion for future analysis.

Do you know what percentage of respondents answered 'unsure' to believing in climate change?

9.1% of lifestyle block owners and 11.8% of commercial operators responded "unsure" when asked about climate change.

Maybe because industry events usually involve other farmers sharing ideas, and also usually held on farms?

I suspect that that might be the case. But we'd have to dig deeper into that to know for sure.

Do you have any idea why industry events are trusted more than industry as a whole?

Another attendee suggested that it could be that industry events often involve other farmers and are usually held on farm. That makes a lot of sense to me.

How does the SRDM feed into national-level policy development on rural land use and management?

Kia ora Heather. We are aware of many occasions where the SRDM has influenced decision-making and provided evidence to inform policy. These are often at the edges of big policy matters such as freshwater management where it's helpful to understand what farmers are already planning or the extent to which they have already taken up mitigations or adopted new practices. Regional councils have found the SRDM of value in establishing networks and understanding how effective regulation has been to date (or likely to be in future).

Has anyone indicated they are considering leaving the industry due to well-being, regulatory pressure or climate change?

We know whether people are planning to retire in the near future, but we haven't asked about specific reasons driving that suggestion. Thank you for the great idea!

Considered asking about being part of catchment groups and how that has helped the regulatory pressures?

We agree that it would have been very interesting to look at catchment groups in detail over the last few years - particularly as there was such an uplift in activity, profile and membership of those groups. We have worked with agencies (including MfE) to understand the specific information gaps relating to catchment groups but this topic has not made the cut when funding decisions were made! There are a number of ways we can tackle this and we will be in touch directly.

A question asking about what has helped alleviate stress' they are feeling would be interesting.

Agreed. Thanks for the suggestion.

Was there a correlation of poor well-being with age?

I hadn't looked at that before, but I just did! Well-being correlated positively with age overall: generally speaking, as age increases, so does well-being. However, well-being is also very high for farmers, foresters, and growers under age 30.

Is it accepted that the term Climate Change in the survey is really a reference to accelerated global warming?

Thanks for the question. The wording was "There has been a lot of discussion about climate change in the media. Which of the following statements best describes your personal thoughts about climate change?" We used plain language and tried to keep the question neutral.

In terms of the response rate do you know what the representation rate for Māori land based management structures was - e.g Ahu Whenua Trusts or Māori Incorporations

In 2021, about 6% of our respondents identified themselves as Māori. If someone responded on behalf of a Māori trust or incorporation, we also asked about the structure. Both Ahu whenua trusts and Māori incorporations were represented.

Would love to chat around Biosecurity and Contingency Planning please for 2023.

We will be in touch!

It would be interesting to see the trust comparisons between central govt and regional govt and what drives that view.

Kia ora Simon. I agree! Maybe something to consider for the 2023 survey.

It would be interesting to see regulatory stress mapped onto the Venn diagram about what people want from the land and why they farm.

That would be quite interesting -- perhaps one Venn diagram for people who consider regulatory pressure to be high and another for those who don't? Those data come from two different years, so it isn't immediately possible, but perhaps something to consider for the future.

Is it possible that people wanted to send a message via the survey to regulators about the stress regulations are causing them, thus biasing the survey?

Thanks for the question. I agree that this is possible, but I also think it's highly unlikely! First, that would require an enormous amount of coordination. Second, Manaaki Whenua isn't the regulator.

Can you know if the survey include iwi landowners? Is there any plans to adapt it to be able to comment on anything specifically for Māori?

In 2021, about 6% of our respondents identified themselves as Māori. If someone responded on behalf of a Māori trust or incorporation, we also asked about the structure. Both Ahu whenua trusts and Māori incorporations were represented.

I'd be interested in the standards of industry, their own standards and regulation. You said you would leave this to discussion but there are loads of questions! I would be keen to chat further about this if/when you have time.

You remember the result showing the gap between farmers assessments of the industry expectations and their assessments of their own environmental performance. That gap is even wider when considering perceptions of environmental regulations: for dairy, sheep and beef, and arable, more people described current environmental regulations as "extremely strong" than anything else. In horticulture and forestry, the most common answer was "strong". We have an information sheet on that that can be downloaded from the website.

Hi Pike, did you get any data on farmer views of local govt regulations. Too tough? General awareness? What regs?

Kia ora Tim. We haven't focused on those questions in the past, but I can imagine there might be interest among other councils as well.

Did survey responses mirror model predictions that pastoral farming may improve slightly under climate change in colder areas such as Southland?

Hi Troy. Thanks very much for the question. I have a paper currently under review that overlays climate expectation with IPCC projects to ask the questions "who's expectations are right?" and "does having correct expectations matter"? Hopefully, we'll see that in print before too long.