

HILL COUNTRY FUTURES

Farmer Perspective series

Barriers and opportunities for on-farm environmental action



We have had the privilege of listening to a range of people involved in hill country farming. This article is part of a short series that provides insights on some of the biggest sector issues our interviewees identified.

New Zealand's hill country farming is facing a system wide move towards environmental sustainability. To secure the future of hill country farming, this change needs to happen at all levels, one of which is on the farm. We must understand what causes farmers to embark on, or resist, taking environmental actions on their farms. Then we can identify the best ways to support them to create resilient farms and farming systems, now and into the future.

Why might farmers want to take action?

Goals



Pursuing benefits

To pursue benefits for livestock, climate resilience, profitability, market access or even personal enjoyment that emerges from sustainable farming.



Fulfilling responsibility

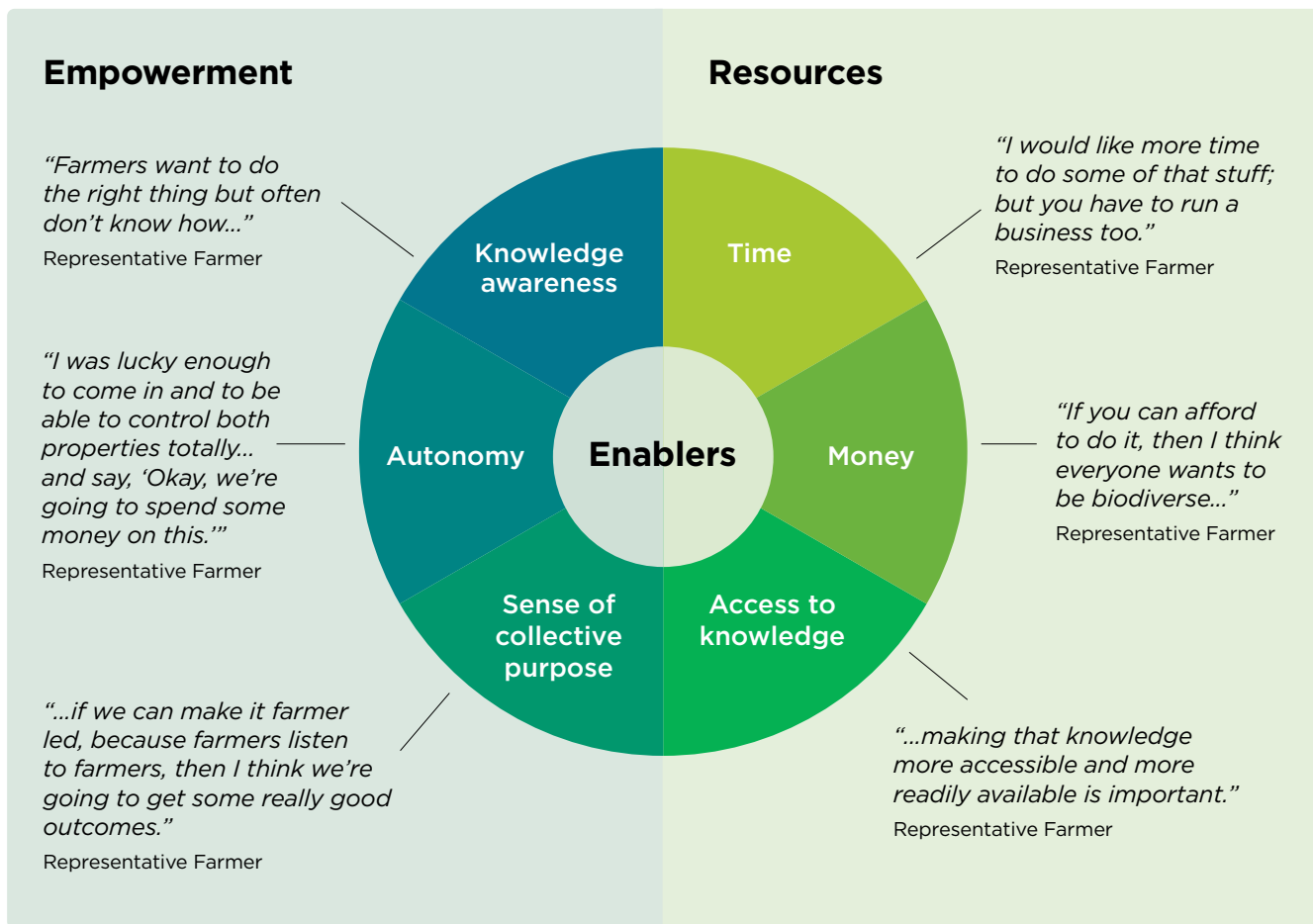
To fulfill their responsibility to themselves, future generations, communities, and the public by ensuring that their farming is sustainable and ecologically healthy.



Meeting requirements

To meet the requirements set by government or council regulations.

What makes action possible?



Resistance: in a nutshell

Farmers feel...

- Misunderstood
- Unfairly blamed
- Undervalued
- Unheard

because

- They perceive regulations as imposed and impractical
- They perceive themselves as already being "green"
- They perceive that their positive work is going unseen

so they are...

- Uncertain about environmental investment
- Unempowered and feel unsupported to change

Next steps

Hill country farmers need

Socially focused investment

Because fixing the environment requires farmers to be supported and empowered

- Improve the narrative of agriculture using positive storytelling
- Improve the narrative around agriculture through honest discussion
- Encourage farmer-led holistic learning about the environment
- Promote resource-based incentives to support farmers to change



Find out more at www.hillcountryfutures.co.nz/resources