

# HILL COUNTRY FUTURES

*Farmer Perspective series*

## *The next generation of farmers: succession*



*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.*

Family farm succession is an important conversation in rural communities. The average age of hill country farmers is increasing and family succession is fast becoming more complex and difficult. It is critical to understand these succession challenges and the potential impact it has for securing future generations and hill country farming.

### Why tackle succession?

There are many benefits to living in a rural community that interviewees wanted their kids to have. These benefits were considered to be worth the effort to tackle the stressors of succession.



Great place to  
raise kids



Having a tight-knit  
community



Enjoy the lifestyle  
of farming



## Why is succession difficult?



### Financial concerns

Rising land prices, land-use competition, high debt levels, lowering profitability and increasing regulatory costs all make entry into farming and staying in farming less appealing.

*"This farm across the river...it's a pretty poor farm to be honest - and they expect moon money for it; and they'll probably get it because of forestry and carbon... It pushes it out of reach of anyone who wants to buy it."*

Representative Farmer



### Misunderstood reputation of the industry

Farmers were concerned that the vilification of the industry by media and urban communities was lowering the appeal for young people to enter the industry and the viability of future farming.

*"[My] three-year-old is already mad keen on farming and loves it... but, in the back of your mind, you're going, 'I don't really know if you really want to get into this'."*

Representative Farmer



### Family relations

When farms are inherited there can be major tensions and stress around splitting the value of the farm between siblings and the financial and time costs of doing so.

*"[marginal land used to be] places that young fella's could get a start in; get a cheaper farm and get a start on. But even those places it's just ridiculous the price they want for them now."*

Representative Farmer

## Where are the young people?

Negative perceptions of the industry

Not well advertised as career option

High debt likely

A lack of young farmers

## Key recommendations

### Creating entry pathways for the next generation

#### > Make farming careers known

- Invest in training for young farmers
- Represent sheep and beef farming at career fairs, particularly in urban schools

#### > Support existing farming families through succession

- Make information and workshops that provide practical knowledge about succession accessible
- Encourage families to think about succession sooner rather than later

#### > Make farming attractive

- Emphasise the benefits of rural life
- Share positive farming stories



Find out more at [www.hillcountryfutures.co.nz/resources](http://www.hillcountryfutures.co.nz/resources)