

# HILL COUNTRY FUTURES

*Farmer Perspective series*

## *The future of farming: Farmer vision for 2030*



PGG Wrightson Seeds



*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.*

The Hill Country Futures programme has investigated many challenges that farmers across the country are facing in their day to day lives. But how do these farmers see the future of the industry playing out? We asked farmers to describe what they think hill country farming could look like in 2030. We asked for their best and worst case scenarios and how they thought the industry can make sure the best vision is achieved.

## The vision for the future

### *Hopes for the future*



#### **Environmental stewardship**

Farmers were firm that looking after the environment is key to a thriving farm. The majority of farmers want to increase their ability to plant natives, control pests, and improve water quality to make sure their land and business is sustainable.

*"I think best case, a lot of us getting waterways clean and continuing to improve that; that would be in the right direction."*

Representative Farmer



#### **Achieving ownership and financial goals**

Farmers want to build their farming careers and progress into farm ownership. Being profitable was also a big part of this vision, often for the purposes of reinvesting into environmentally friendly practices and technology.

*"For me, [best case scenario] would be young people wanting to be involved...and [being] economically sound."*

Representative Farmer



#### **Thriving communities**

Farmers want to see local schools, sports clubs and farming networks thriving. They want to support, and be supported by these communities as they were highlighted as critical for mental wellbeing and a sense of belonging.

*"You can't beat a good community...it is pretty neat to have that feeling...everyone needs that support."*

Representative Farmer

## Fears for the future



### Pine and corporations

Farmers described more and more family farms being bought by large corporations or being converted to pine (carbon) forestry. The direct and indirect impacts of this were seen as the biggest threats to achieving their hopes for the future.

*"These beautiful farms that have kept families for generations in a lifestyle, and forestry now; once it goes to forestry, it's bugged."*

Representative Farmer



### Rising costs and land prices

High land prices due to land use competition and rising regulatory costs were seen as a major threat to achieving farmers hopeful visions for the future. These issues were perceived by farmers as impacting on the financial viability of farms and the future of farm ownership.

*"For me, [the best case scenario] would be young people wanting to be involved...and [being] economically sound."*

Representative Farmer



### Loss of communities

Less family owned farms and shrinking rural populations was a huge concern for farmers. Pessimistic visions of the future included practical issues such as low school enrolment making employment for teachers less viable, and also losing community spirit and support.

*"If it all got planted in pine trees and everyone left, it would be terrible."*

Representative Farmer

## The road to achieving the vision

*Farmers described what they think is the best way to go from where they are now...  
...to where they want to be under their best case scenario.*



### Giving farmers a say

Farmers want agency over their futures and want to be able to directly input into and help develop a feasible roadmap for the future of sheep and beef farming.



### Rural and urban working together

Farmers expressed that they want to work collaboratively with urban communities to bridge the perceived urban-rural divide by sharing the rural experience, connecting with urban spaces and encouraging rural career pathways.



### Building positive media

Farmers believed the greatest tool for creating support for farming would be to shift negative media narratives.



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