



**THRIVING SOUTHLAND  
CATCHMENT GROUP,  
FARMER AND STAKEHOLDER  
Annual Survey**

**2023**



**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 community-led group  
in the Southland region  
with an overall vision  
“to create a prosperous  
Southland, healthy people,  
healthy environment from  
the mountains to the sea.”<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Source: [www.thrivingsouthland.co.nz/about-us](http://www.thrivingsouthland.co.nz/about-us)

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# Summary

- Similar to the previous two years of surveys, the majority of respondents were farmers, most of whom had been farming for 10+ years and run sheep, beef, sheep and beef, dairy or dairy support farms.
- The majority of respondents were also European New Zealanders although a small portion identified as Māori. In 2023, respondents were slightly skewed to male and slightly older than previous surveys.
- More respondents in 2023 represented the Matuara catchment.
- Similar to 2022, in 2023 respondents' main goals over the last five years have been to increase profitability, improve wellbeing, increase farm business resilience and productivity.
- Also of significance is the jump in goals that focused on increasing profitability, which increased by 14% from 57% in 2022 to 71% in 2023; and the drop in waste reduction as a goal by 9%.
- The most common Good Management Principles to be adopted in the last five years were fertiliser use application and placement, paddock selection for wintering, riparian planting and buffers and critical source area protection. This highlighted a shift from 2021 and 2022 and specifically a marked increase in fertiliser use, application and placement and riparian buffers and planting (from 2022).
- 91% had, or were developing, a Farm Environment Plan.
- The majority of respondents who have an FEP responded that they refer to it occasionally (58%), 1 in 5 don't refer to their plan at all and 1 in 5 refer to it regularly.
- The most common things respondents monitor on-farm are fertiliser placement (80% compared to 74% in 2022), rainfall (75% compared to 71% in 2022). However, compared to 2022 there is a slight drop in grass/crop growth rates (65% compared to 73% in 2022) and soil monitoring (63% compared to 72% in 2022).
- Respondents rated their own farm's water quality as overwhelmingly excellent (54%) or good (38%), with none rating it poor. Their reasoning, similar to previous years, was typically personal perception, e.g. how it looked (30%), or because the waterways were protected (20%), or implementation of good management practices (20%). 16% answered that way because of water quality testing or monitoring.
- When asked to rate their view of water quality across Southland's waterways, the results were markedly different, although a larger percentage rated waterways as excellent or good compared to 2022 (48% in 2022 compared to 52% in 2023). In particular, in 2022 only 5% rated the water quality excellent; whereas in 2023, 11% rated it excellent.
- In 2023, there appears to be a significant increase in the number of respondents who felt optimistic rarely and only some of the time and a decline in feeling optimistic often or all the time. It also appears that in 2023, the respondents felt making decisions easily happened more some of the time and less all of the time.

- Similar to 2021 and 2022, in 2023 most respondents sourced Good Management Practice (GMP) advice from other farmers (65% compared to 57% in 2022), Catchment Group events (57% compared to 59% in 2022) and sector support (45% compared to 61% in 2022).
- In 2023, and the same as 2022, most people wanted information and support relating to certainty around rules and regulations, their timeframes and how to apply them to their own farm. This was followed by wanting information on applying current rules and regulations, engagement with other farmers, sharing farmer driven innovation and interpretation of relevant science.
- Of note is the increase in farmers wanting shared farmer driven innovation, an increase in wanting to understand and address on-farm environmental changes and financial planning advice. There was also a drop in farmers wanting information about climate change and its impacts.
- The most common resources requested were speakers and experts, science and farm systems specialists. Project funding support and rules and legislation changes are also important to respondents. Compared to 2022, respondents wanted more support with farm systems specialists and leadership upskilling.
- Fewer people in 2023, than in 2022, said they didn't know how to answer questions about connecting with Iwi. When asked what degree are Iwi starting to talk to their Catchment Group, only 39% (compared to 56% in 2022) said they didn't know/unsure, but 25% (compared to 13%) said not at all. There was a shift in 2023 to respondents having a better understanding of Iwi interaction with 20% saying there was limited degree compared to only 13% in 2022.
- When asked about Catchment Group members learning about what matters to Iwi, 42% said they were unsure, 21% said they not at all but 37% said to a limited, moderate or high degree.
- There was a significant increase in 2023 in the number of respondents that rated Thriving Southland as effective in helping Catchment Groups achieve their goals and that they were working well to provide requested support to Catchment Groups.
  - Respondents rated that Thriving Southland was effective in helping Catchment Groups achieve their goals to a moderate or high degree; 58% in 2022 and 64% in 2023,
  - and that they were working well to provide requested support to Catchment Groups at 60% in 2022 and 63% in 2023.
- There was a shift on how Catchment Groups felt about the collaboration with sector/ industry groups. 42% of people didn't know how to answer the question on the degree that sector groups/ industry associations collaborated well with the Catchment Groups. Of those who did feel they could answer, only 40% (compared to 37% in 2022) responded that sector groups/ industry associations collaborated well with the Catchment Groups to a 'moderate' or 'high' degree. Almost 1 in 5 (18%) answered 'not at all' and 'limited degree' to the question.



- Similar to 2022, in 2023 respondents tended to think that members of the Catchment Groups were good at making newcomers feel welcome, listening to each other and expressing views. Although in 2023, there was a slight drop in how people rated getting on well together and listening to each other.
- It was consistent across both 2022 and 2023 that respondents rated, to a moderate or high degree, that Catchments Groups were well led (79%), well coordinated (77%) and well run (79%).
- Respondents in 2023 stated that they were proud mostly of their sustainability efforts, producing a quality product and the lifestyle they lived. They also noted pride in feeding the nation and world and in their animals. Compared to previous year's surveys, fewer noted a pride in their community.
- Other comments typically complimented Thriving Southland's work, made suggestions to the organisation, or to the survey.



# Background

The survey is targeted at Southland farmers, Catchment Group members and stakeholders, and is designed to collect information on their environmental practices, knowledge and understanding of the role of Thriving Southland, 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

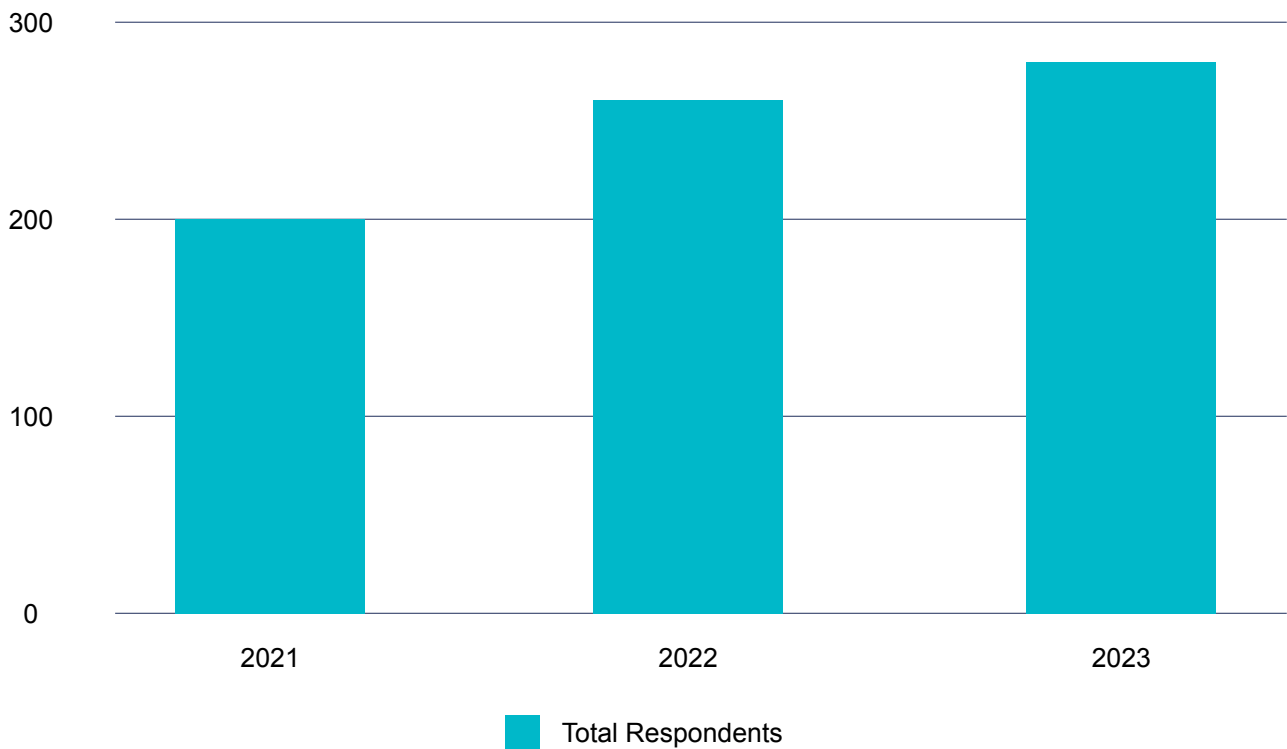
The survey seeks to understand:

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 wellbeing
9. Awareness of Catchment Groups and their functionality
10. Awareness of Thriving Southland and it's functionality
11. Connection to Iwi

# Methodology

The survey ran from 24 February to 12 March 2023 and was emailed directly to Thriving Southland contacts via Survey Monkey. There were 280 responses, the highest number of the last three years.

## Total Survey Repondents



*Figure 1: Total number of survey respondents*





**SURVEY  
RESULTS**

# Farm details

This section presents the general information collected on participating farms / farmers, including role on farm, years in farming, gender and ethnicity, as well as catchment group and farm type.

## Role on farm

The majority of respondents from 2021, 2022 and 2023, identified as farm owners, managers, staff, sharemilkers, contract milkers or contractors.

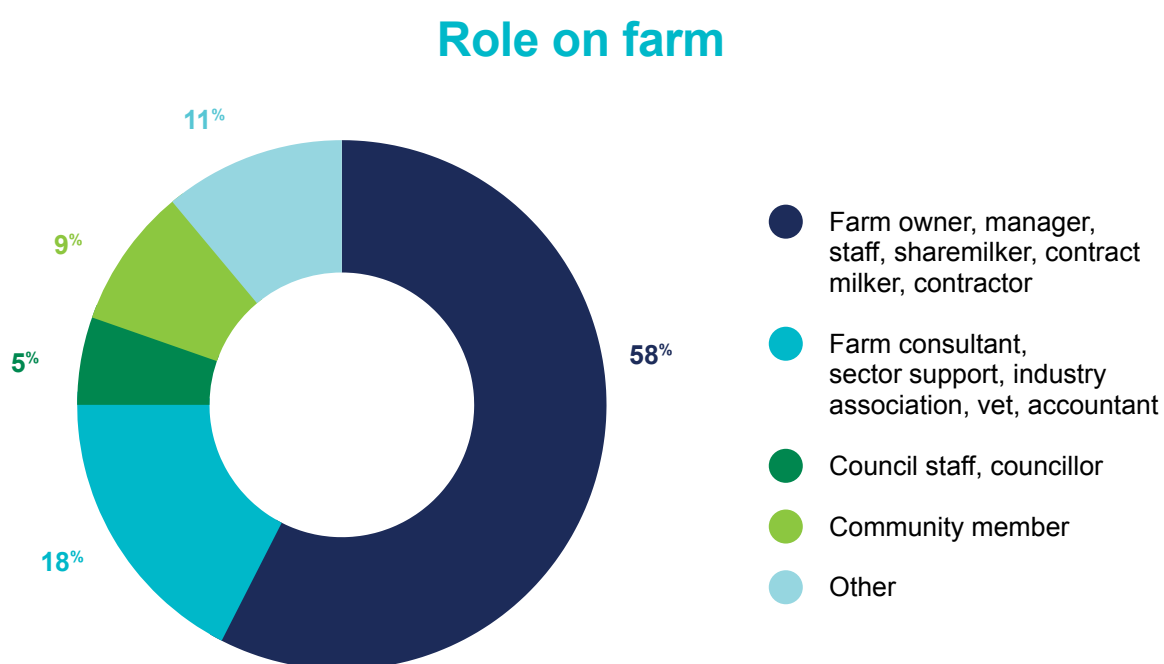


Figure 2: Role on farm<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Note that this was a multiple-selection question in 2021, i.e., the respondent could give more than one answer. Percentages here therefore represent responses over sample, and will add to more than 100%. The question was also changed, with multiple roles being combined into one option.

## Years in farming

90% of respondents have farmed for 10 or more years.

### How many years have you been directly involved in farming?

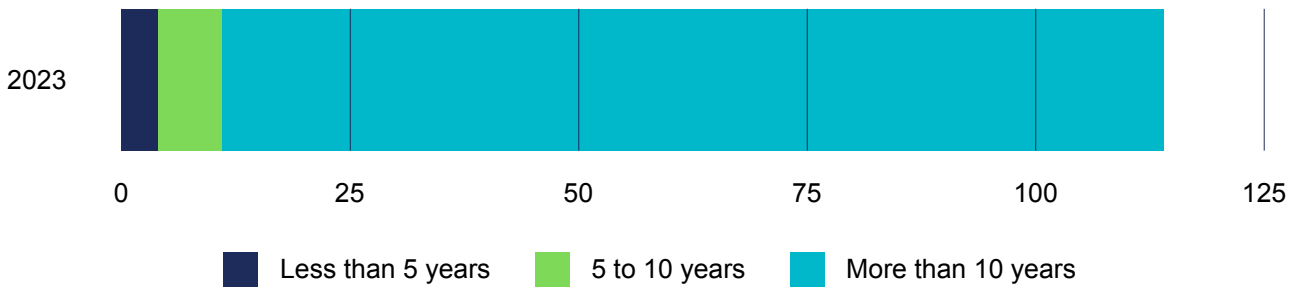


Figure 3: Years in farming (n=114)<sup>3</sup>

## Age

The Thriving Southland respondents reflect a wide range of ages, with a similar skew to 2021 and 2022, apart from more respondents in the 55-64 age category (19% in 2022 and 26% in 2023).

### What is your age group?

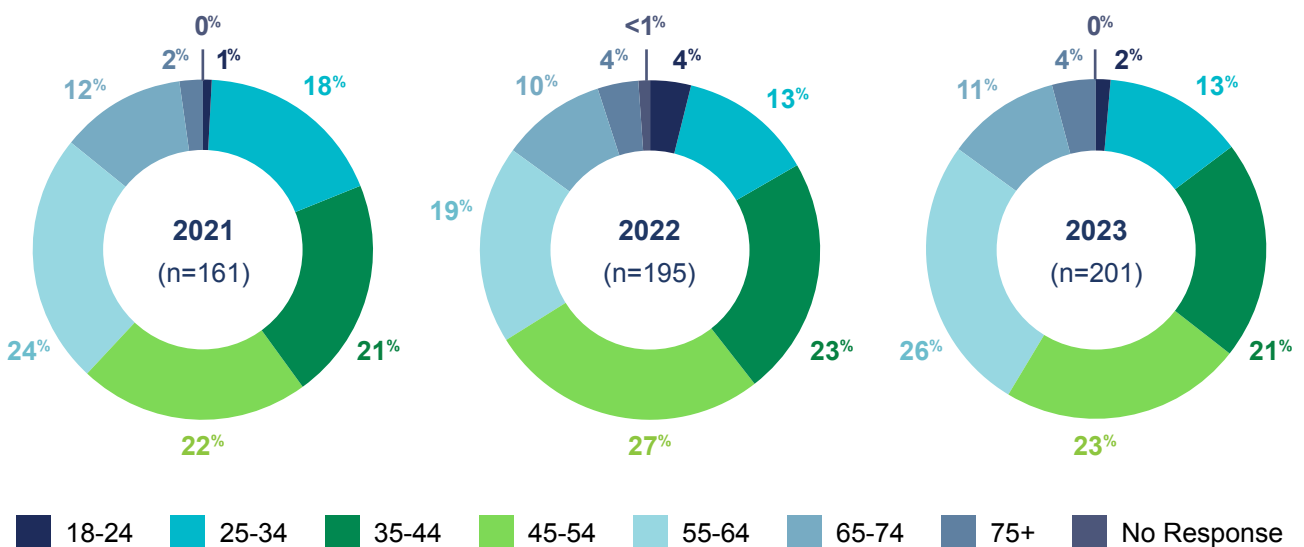


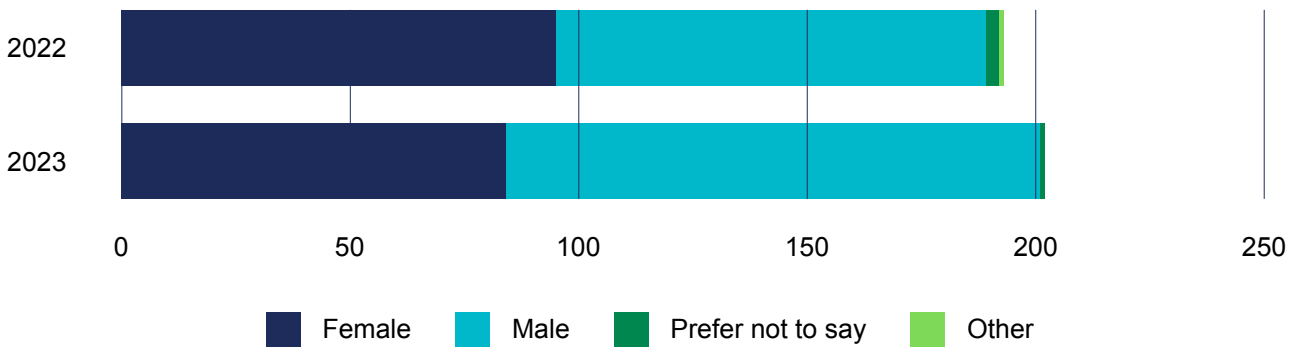
Figure 4: Age group

<sup>3</sup> Note that the ranges within this question were changed in 2022. This change is too substantial for data to be comparable.

## Gender

There were more male respondents in 2023 than female, unlike in 2022 when the respondents were equally divided between female and male.

### What is your Gender?



*Figure 5: Gender (n=193 and 202)*

## Ethnicity

90% of respondents in 2023 identified themselves as European New Zealanders. Six respondents identified as Māori and one as Pacific Islander, eight were other and five preferred not to say.

## Type of farm

In 2023, there were three deer and several comments of how farms were equally split between sheep, beef, cropping or forestry.

### What farm type would you say mainly describes your farm?

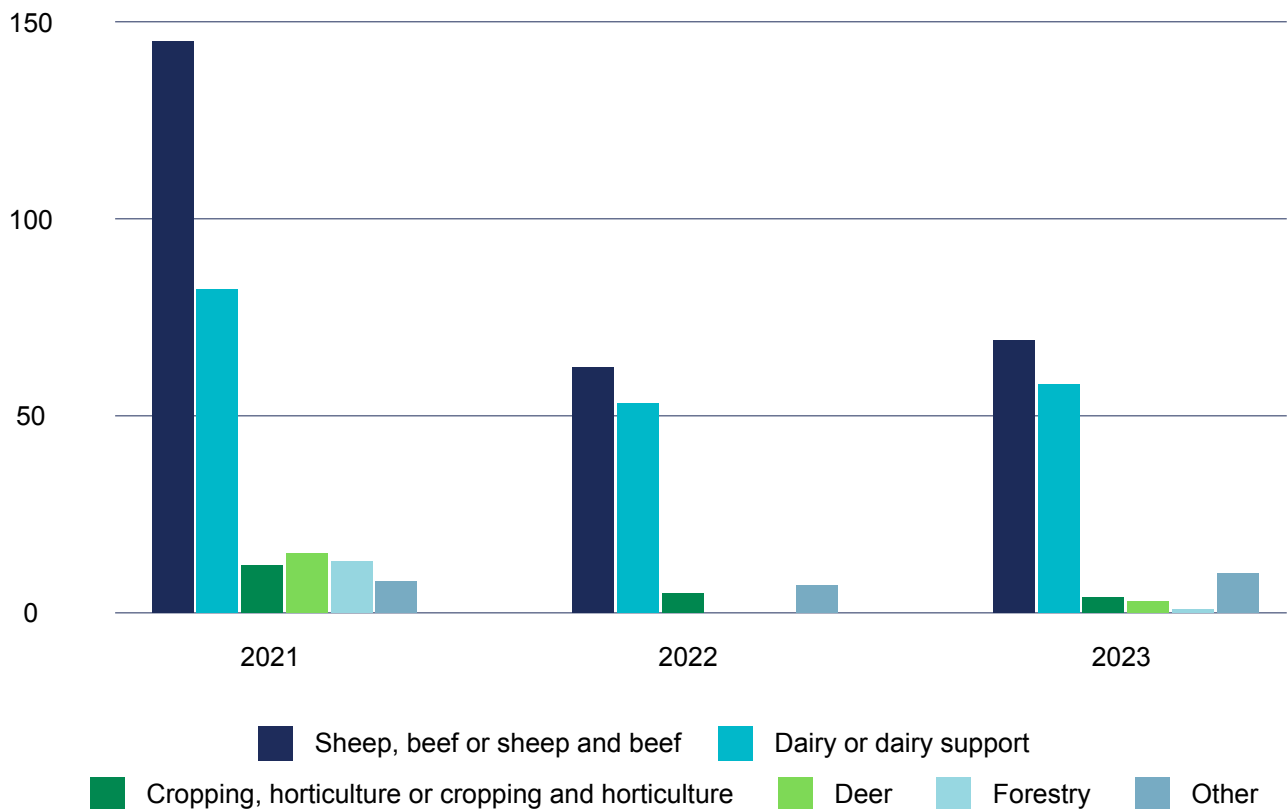


Figure 6: Farm type<sup>4</sup>

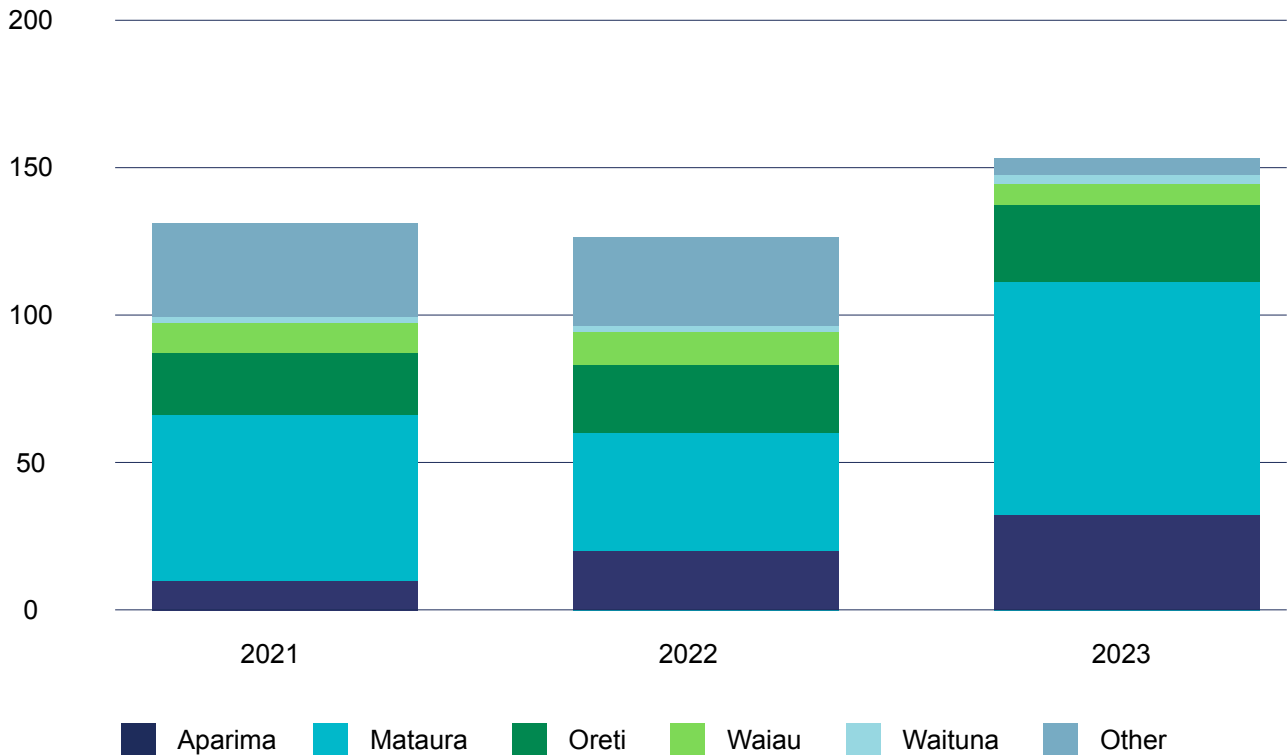
<sup>4</sup> Note that this was a multiple-selection question in 2021, i.e., the respondent could give more than one answer. The question was also changed, with additional options being added such as 'Sheep and beef'.



## Catchment

In 2023, more people from Matura were represented in the survey.

### Which river catchment does your farm link to?



**Figure 7: Catchment Group**

#### Awareness of Southland's farmer-led Catchment Groups

99% of respondents were aware of Southland's Catchment Groups, and this has not changed over the three years of surveys, and slightly improved in 2023. This makes sense when you consider almost half of farmers completing the survey are involved in one of the Catchment Groups (53%).



# Actions on farm

This section presents information regarding actions on farm, for example Farm Environment Plans, on-farm monitoring and Good Management Practices.

## Main farm goals

Similar to 2022, in 2023 respondents' main goals over the last five years have been to increase profitability, improve wellbeing, increase farm business resilience and productivity.

In 2023, also of significance is the jump in goals that focused on increasing profitability, which increased by 14% from 57% in 2022 to 71% in 2023; and the reduction in waste reduction as a goal by 9%.

Q. Here are some areas of focus other farmers have said have been their main farm goals. Which (if any) have been yours in the last 5 years?	2022 n=110	2023 n=115
Increase farm business resilience	63%	63%
Improve wellbeing for myself/staff/family	62%	67% (+5%)
Increase profitability	57%	71% (+14%)
Increase productivity	54%	58% (+4%)
Improve animal welfare	51%	55% (+4%)
Provide the next generation with options to farm (succession)	47%	49% (+2%)
Improve water quality	45%	48% (+3%)
Waste reduction	45%	36% (-9%)
Reduce cost	44%	49% (+5%)
Improve biodiversity	35%	33% (-2%)
Retain sediment	29%	33% (+4%)
Reduce greenhouse gases, emissions, footprint	25%	20% (-5%)
Diversification	20%	18% (-2%)
Regenerative farming	14%	14%
Changing land use	8%	10% (+2%)
Organic farming	2%	3% (+1%)
Other (please specify)	8%	5% (-3%)

**Table 1: Farm goals<sup>5</sup>**

<sup>5</sup> Note that was a multiple-selection question, i.e., the respondent could give more than one answer. Percentages here therefore represent responses over sample, and will add to more than 100%.



## Good Management Principles

In 2023, the most common Good Management Principles to be adopted in the last five years were fertiliser use application and placement, paddock selection for wintering, riparian planting and buffers and critical source area protection. This highlighted a shift from 2021 and 2022 and specifically a marked increase in fertiliser use, application and placement and riparian buffers and planting (from 2022).

Q. In the last 5 years, have you adopted Good Management Practices (GMPs)? (Tick as many as you like)	2021 (n=109)	2022 (n=107)	2023 (n=115)
Paddock selection for wintering	81%	82%	74%
Fertiliser use, application and placement	78%	79%	85%
Strategic grazing	78%	72%	64%
Riparian planting and buffers	73%	68%	73%
Critical source area protection	73%	67%	69%
Wintering systems	68%	65%	60%
Nutrient budgeting	50%	51%	46%
Stocking rates or classes	45%	45%	41%
Improved effluent management and effluent system	39%	42%	36%
Infrastructure (please specify under 'other' below)	14%	15%	13%
Other (please specify)	14%	16%	20%

**Table 2: Good Management Principles<sup>6</sup>**

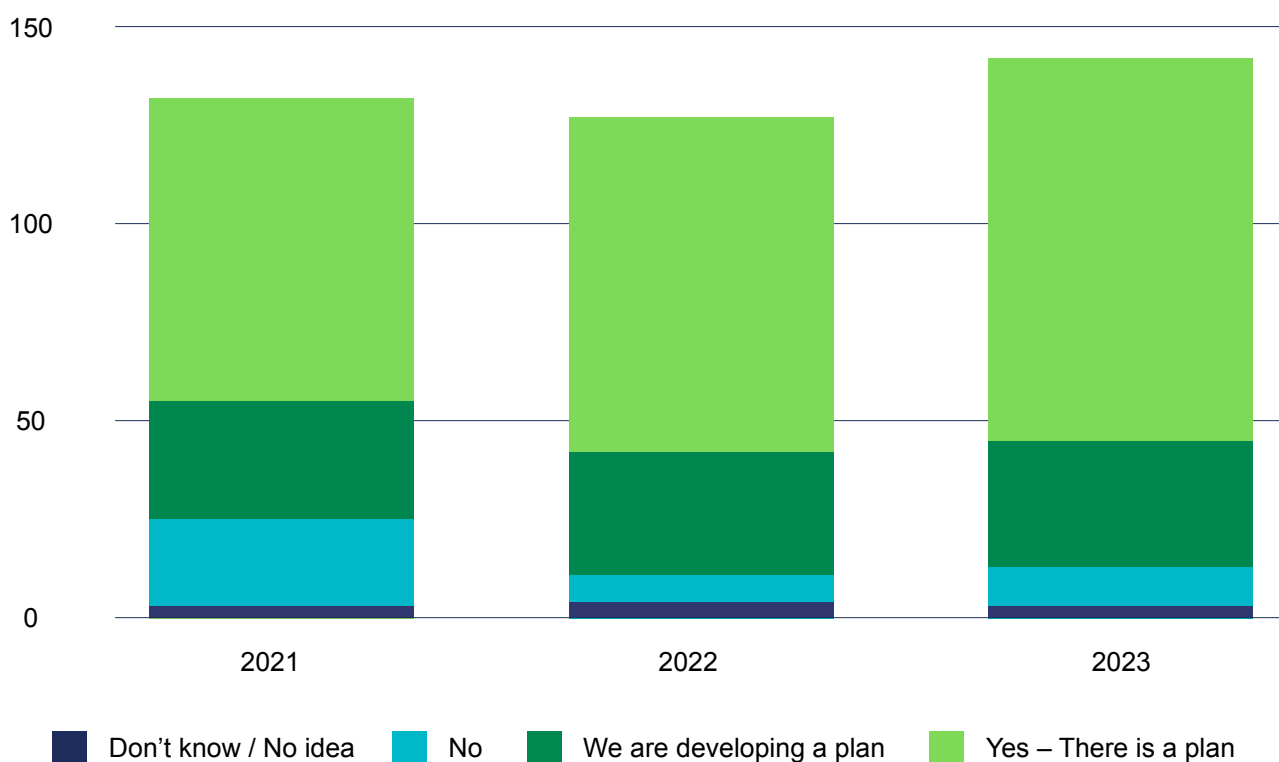
<sup>6</sup> Note that was a multiple-selection question, i.e., the respondent could give more than one answer. Percentages here therefore represent responses over sample, and will add to more than 100%.

## Farm Environment Plans

### Existence of FEP

Most respondents said they had an FEP. Of the 142 responses, 91% had, or were developing, a plan. Only 9% didn't know or didn't have one. The proportion with an FEP or developing one, has increased by 10% from 2021 (81%) to 2022 and 2023 (91%) . And when equated to numbers, as more people completed the 2023 survey, this is extremely positive and has been found to be a statistically significant difference (using a 95% confidence level).

### Does your farm have a Farm Environmental Plan?



**Figure 8: Farm Environment Plan<sup>7</sup>**

<sup>7</sup> Note that the options in this question changed slightly in 2022. However, this are likely still comparable.

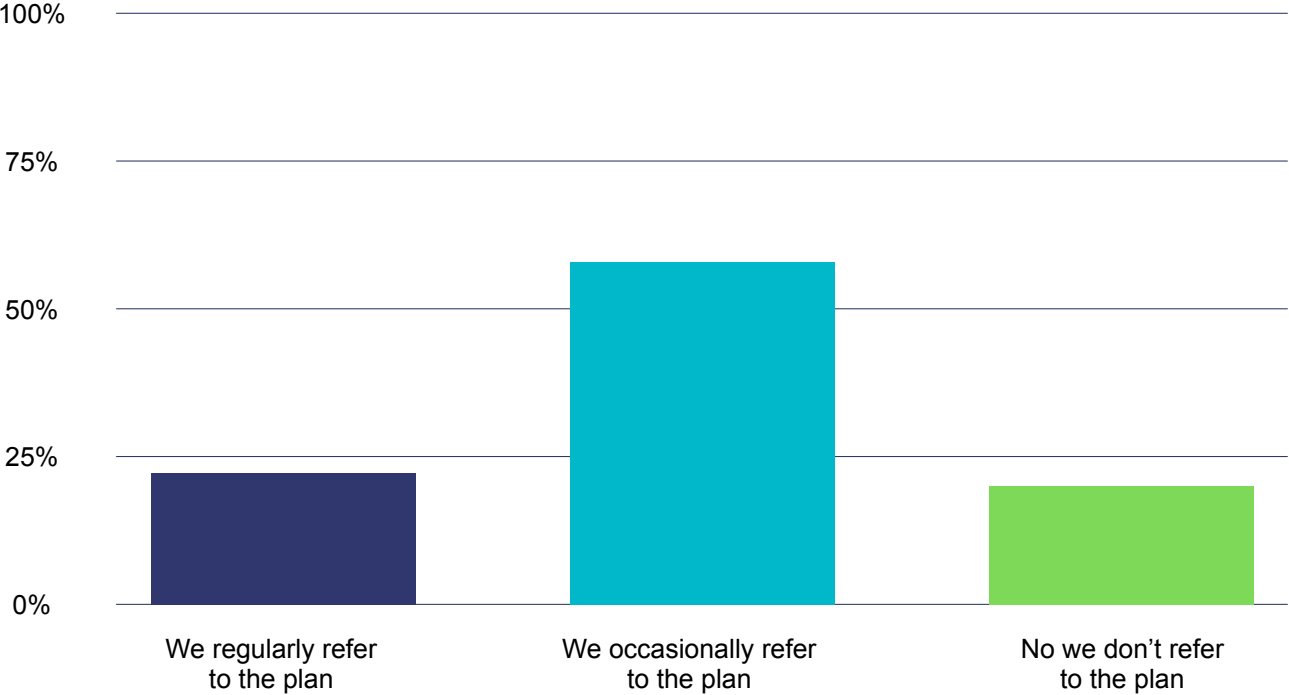




**Use of FEP**

The majority of respondents who have an FEP responded that they refer to it occasionally (58%), 1 in 5 don't refer to their plan at all and 1 in 5 refer to it regularly.

**If your farm has a Farm Environment Plan, do you refer to it regularly throughout the farming year?**



**Figure 9: Farm Environment Plan usage (n=90)<sup>8</sup>**

<sup>8</sup> The question changed between 2021 and 2022 so the data cannot be compared year on year.





## Monitoring on farm

In 2023, the most common things respondents monitor on farm are fertiliser placement (80% compared to 74% in 2022), rainfall (75% compared to 71% in 2022). However, compared to 2022 there is a slight drop in grass/crop growth rates (65% compared to 73% in 2022) and soil monitoring (63% compared to 72% in 2022).

### What do you monitor on farm?

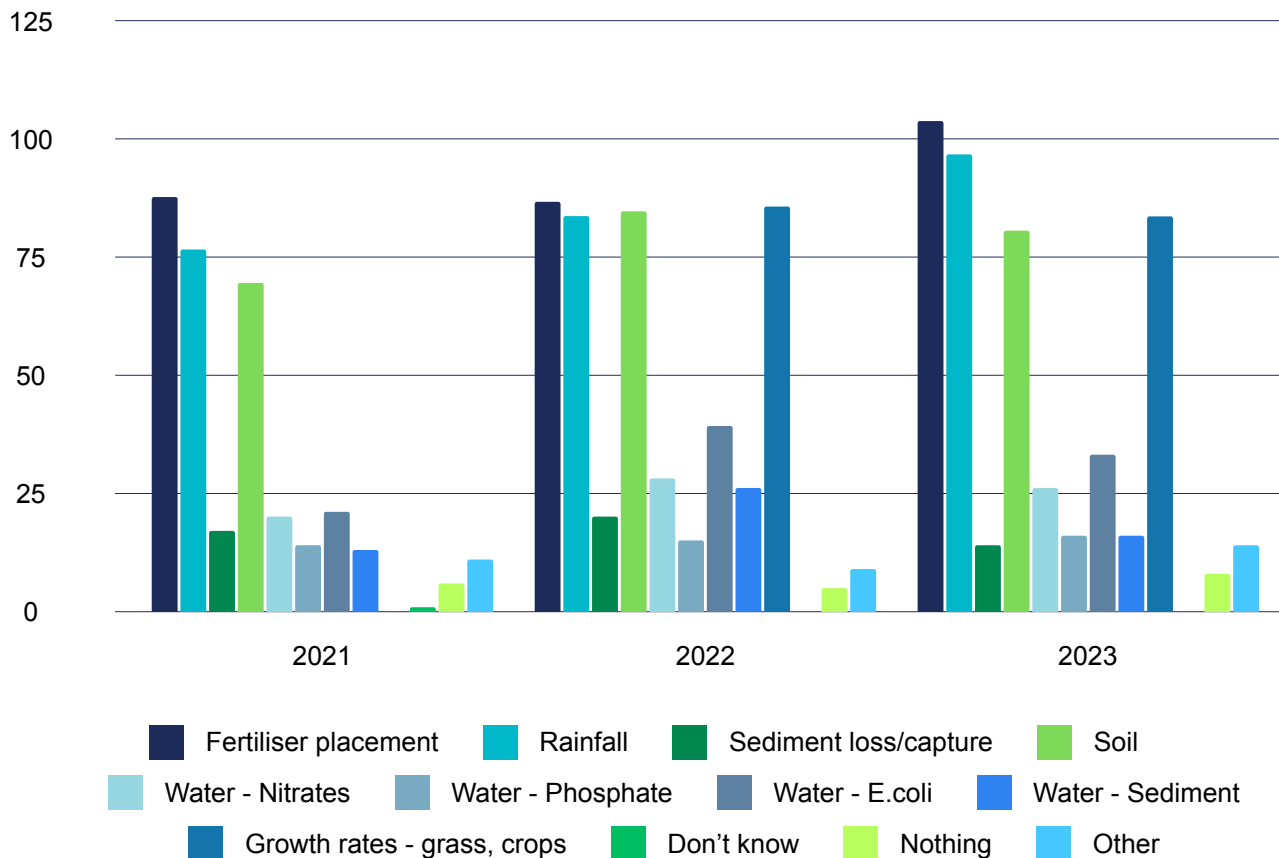


Figure 10: What do you monitor on farm?<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> This was a multiple selection question ie. respondents can give more than one answer. Percentages here, therefore, represent responses over the sample and will add to more than 100%. “Don’t know” was only an option for 2021. “Growth rates- grass, crops” was only an option for 2022 and 2023.





## Farm water quality and Southland water quality

In 2023, respondents rated their own farm’s water quality as overwhelmingly excellent (54%) or good (38%), with none rating it poor. Their reasoning, similar to previous years, was typically personal perception, e.g. how it looked (30%), or because the waterways were protected (20%), or implementation of good management practices (20%). Only 16% answered that way because of water quality testing or monitoring.

When asked to rate their view of water quality across Southland’s waterways, the results were markedly different, although a larger percentage rated waterways as excellent or good compared to 2022 (48% in 2022 compared to 52% in 2023). In particular, in 2022 only 5% rated the water quality excellent; whereas in 2023, 11% rated it excellent.

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

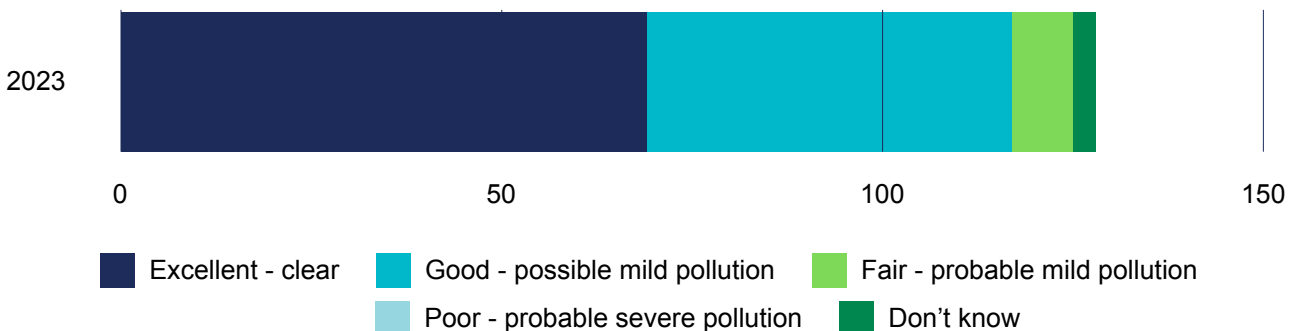


Figure 11: Water quality on farm (n=128)<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Note that the scale was changed in this question in 2022. This change is too substantial for data to be comparable.

## Why did you select this farm water quality rating?

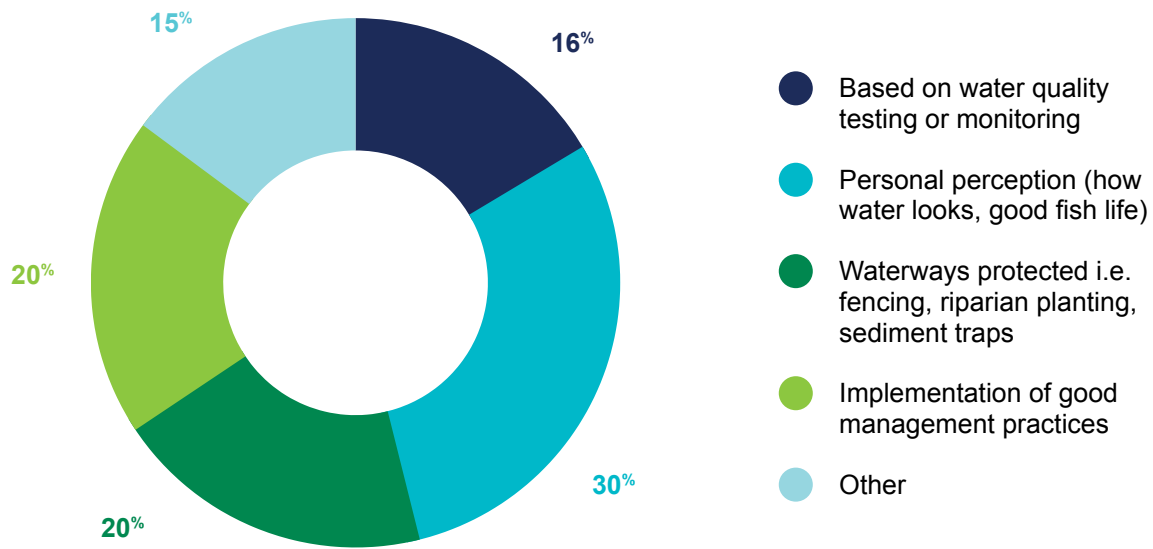


Figure 12: Reasons for selecting the water quality they did for their farm (n=128)

## What's your view of water quality in Southland waterways overall?

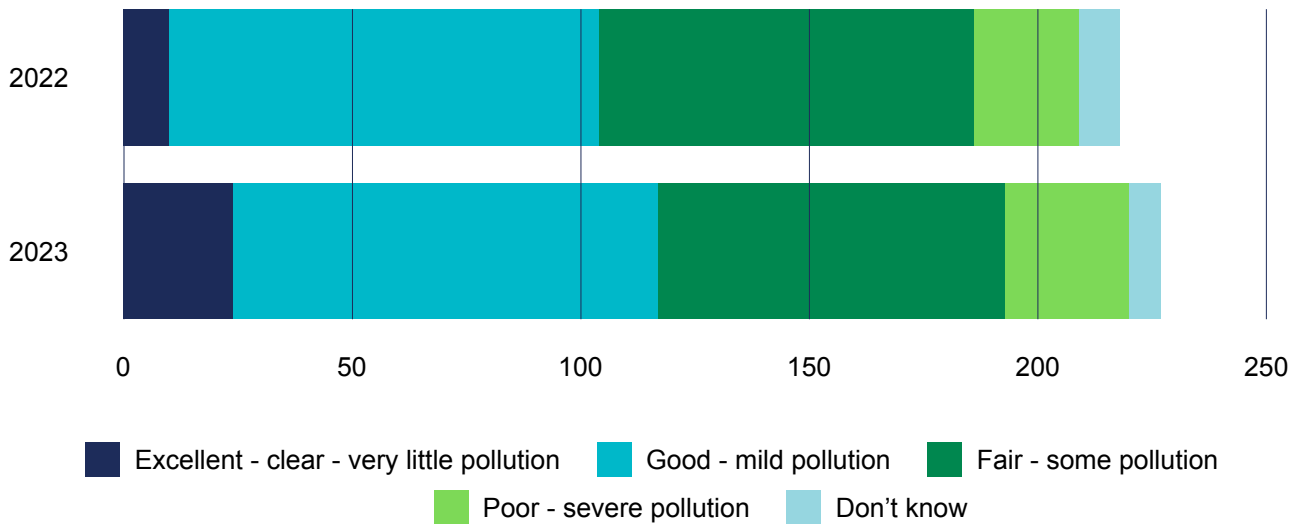
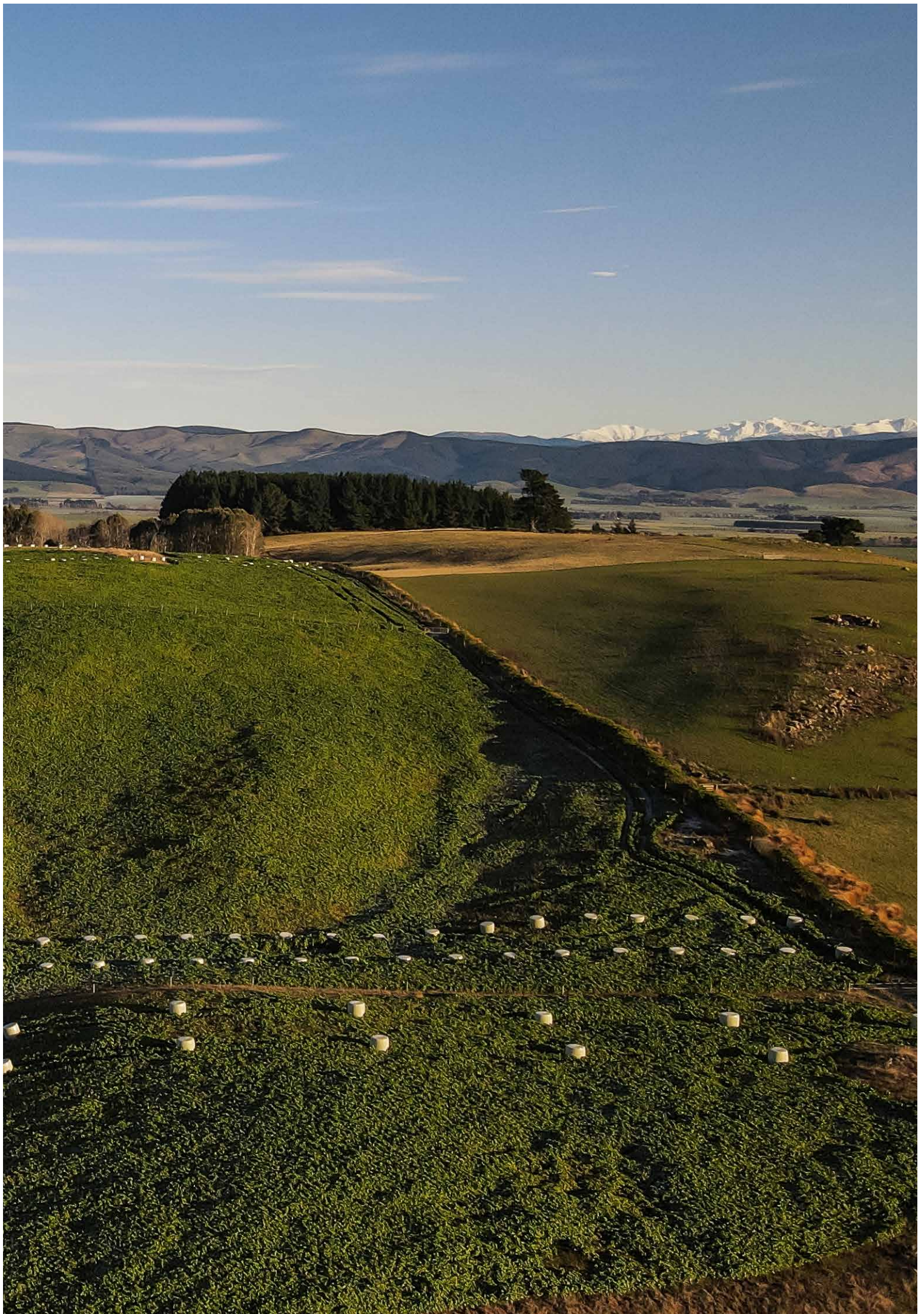


Figure 13: Southland water quality (n=218 and 227)<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Note that the scale was changed in this question in 2022. This change is too substantial for data to be comparable.







## Wellbeing

In 2023, there appears to be a significant increase in the number of respondents who felt optimistic rarely and only some of the time and a decline in feeling optimistic often or all the time, compared to 2022.

It also appears that in 2023, the respondents felt making decisions easily happened more some of the time and often but less all of the time.

### Thinking about the last two weeks, how often did you feel...

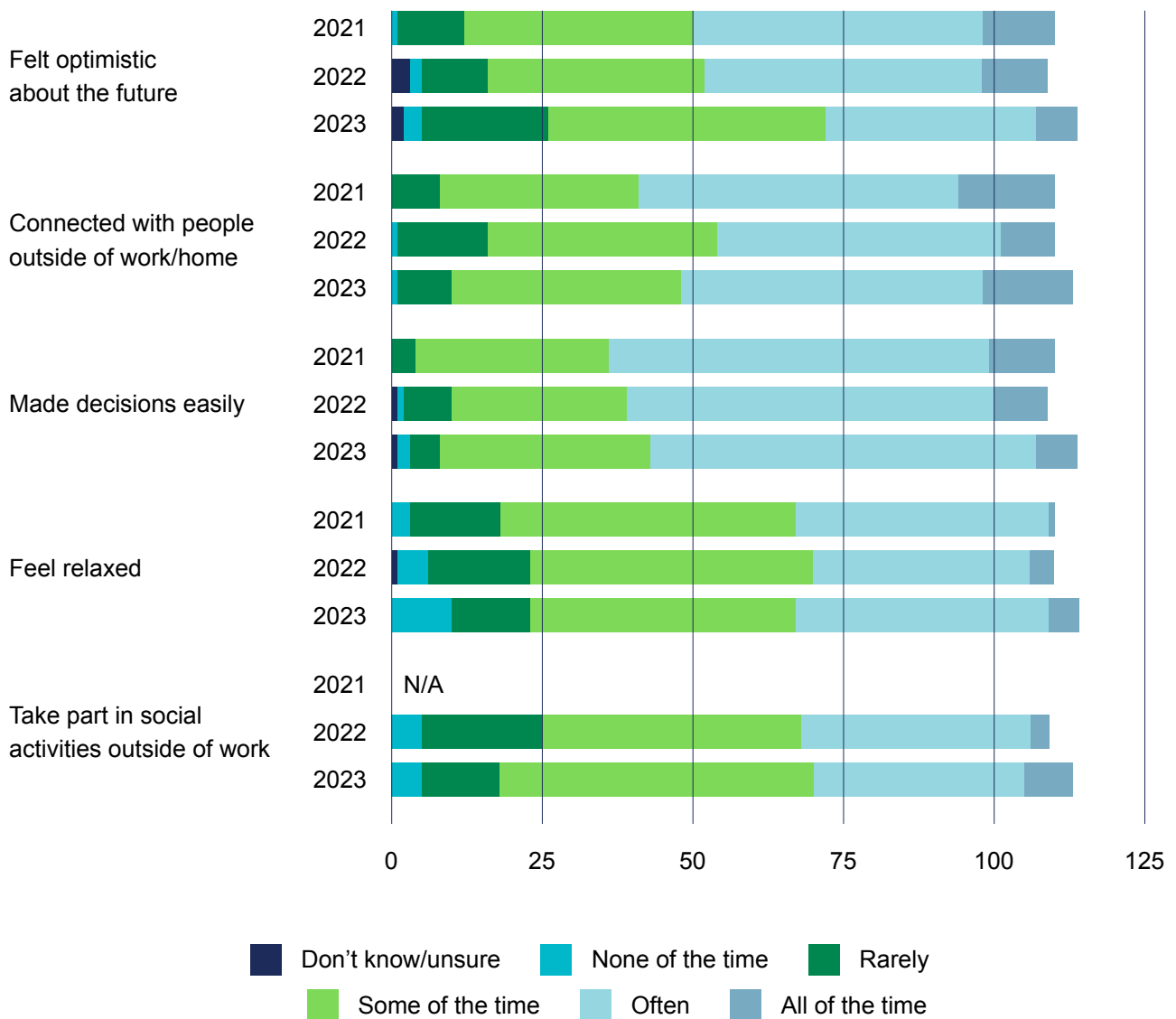


Figure 14: Comparable wellbeing questions

## Most important thing you learnt from Thriving Southland in the last year

In 2023, the main themes feedback on what respondents learnt from Thriving Southland was that they provide opportunities to, and support Catchment Groups and farmers, they provide science/ research/ tools/ information and experts and that they are leaders and support farming practices.

There was a shift between 2022 responses and 2023, with a greater focus on science and research/ information and resources being available and a greater view of Thriving Southland as leaders.

The number of respondents that answered that they hadn't learnt anything or weren't sure was also of note.

	2022 n=113	2023 n=120
Leaders/improve farming practices	12	16
Tactical, e.g. Native seeds, recycling, fertiliser use	6	5
Opportunities/ support for CGs/ supporting farmers	36	32
Science/ research/ information/ experts	12	21
Events	8	10
Nothing/ not sure	21	26
Other	21	14

**Table 3:** *The most important thing you've learnt from Thriving Southland<sup>12</sup>*

<sup>12</sup> The respondents answers were themed, and some answers had multiple themes so the total will be greater than n.

**Respondents identified a number of positive learnings. The following is a sample only:**

### About the organisation

- That there are people and systems in place to help farmers, and they are able to provide us access to these
- The huge amount resources available to farmers and catchment groups
- How our farming is viewed from an overseas perspective
- About engaging positively and drawing in ground up action!
- Working together with other farmers is very worthwhile
- It is doing an exceptional job in providing pragmatic farmer focussed support. We have some of our alumni engaged in its great work
- Feedback from their contact with other catchment groups and TS assessment of overall progress in the province
- The amount of information available
- Experts are available
- Importance of TS to connect and enable the transfer of information for improved land use and management practice
- That you have a monthly newsletter full of great info



### Events

- Stream walks and EDNA has shown that our streams are full of life. More life than we thought they had and are healthier than we thought
- I really enjoyed the 'Everything to Gain' event, very interesting - both worrying but also incentivising
- The meeting in Invercargill where the Chairman of the Climate Commission and others spoke in December was excellent, very thought provoking and informative. I wish more people had taken the opportunity to attend. Well done to Thriving Southland for providing this opportunity for people in Southland top notch work well done
- Good facilitation of events to ensure moving along in topics, and discussion is focused and to the point while allowing some discretion to let conversations flow





**FEEDBACK**



# Feedback

This section presents information that may guide Thriving Southland in the upcoming year, such as information on where farmers seek advice on GMP and what information and support they seek.

## Source of Good Management Practice (GMP) advice

Similar to 2021 and 2022, in 2023 most respondents sourced GMP advice from other farmers (65% compared to 57% in 2022), Catchment Group events (57% compared to 59% in 2022) and sector support (45% compared to 61% in 2022).

### Where are you most likely to seek advice on Good Management Practices?

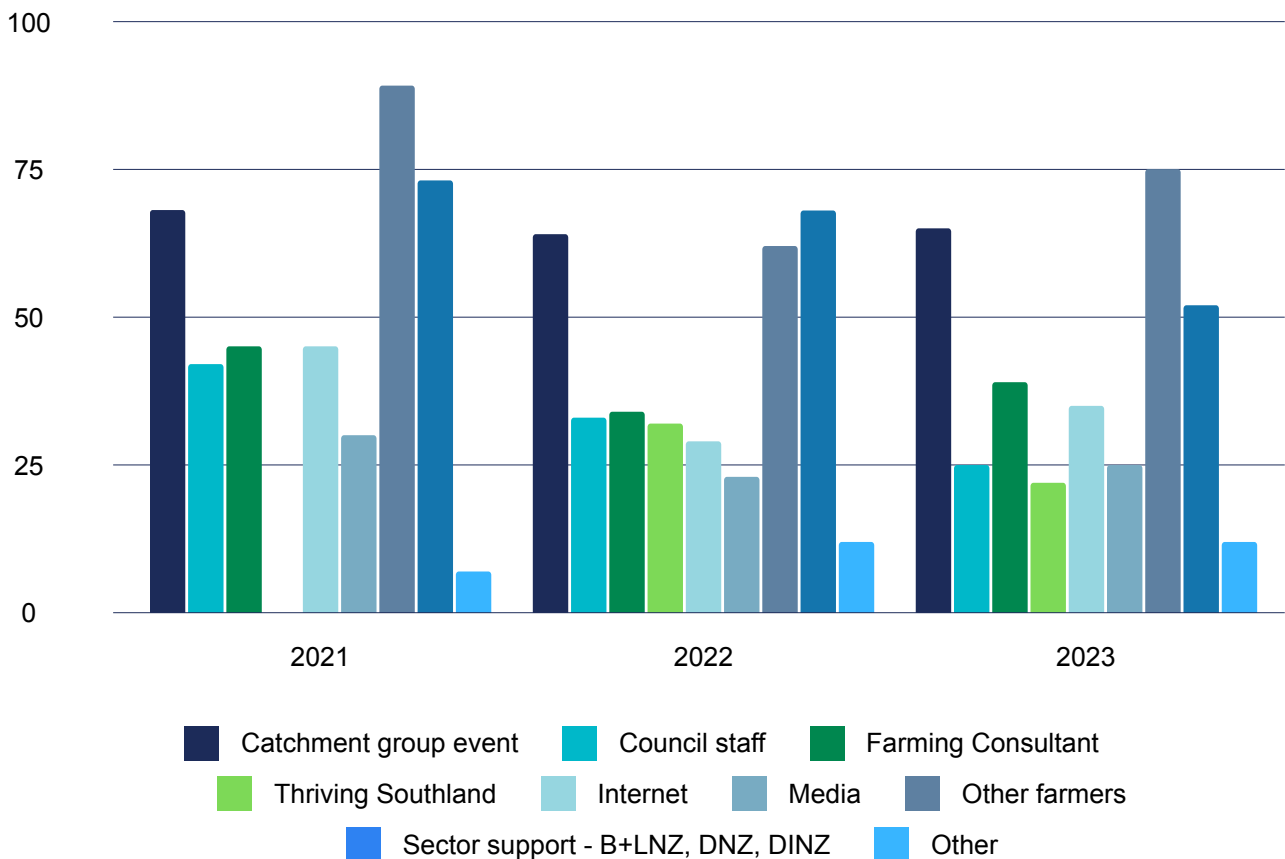


Figure 15: Source of GMP advice<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Note that this was a multiple-selection question in all years, i.e., the respondent could give more than one answer. Percentages here therefore represent responses over sample, and will add to more than 100%. The question also changed – in 2022, the option of “Thriving Southland” was added.

## Information and support needed for farming business

In 2023, and the same as in 2022, most people wanted information and support relating to certainty around rules and regulations, their timeframes and how to apply them to their own farm. This was followed by wanting information on applying current rules and regulations, engagement with other farmers, and interpretation of relevant science.

Of note is the increase in farmers wanting more information on applying current rules and regulations – and this was a significant increase from 2022. They also want shared farmer driven innovation, an increase in wanting to understand and address on farm environmental changes and financial advice and planning.

There was also a drop in farmers wanting information about climate change and its impacts.

Q. What information and support would benefit your farming business the most over the next 18 months? (Tick as many as you like)	2022 (n=110)	2023 (n= 113)
Certainty around rules and regulations and their timeframes	70%	67% (-3%)
Understanding current rules and regulations and how they apply to my farm	69%	65% (-1%)
Understand expectations and timeframes of Local and Central Government rules and regulations	55%	56% (+1%)
Interpretation of new relevant science	46%	43% (-3%)
Sharing farmer driven innovation	43%	47% (+4%)
Engagement with other farmers	42%	43% (+1%)
Understanding and addressing my farm's environmental changes	37%	42% (+5%)
Applying current rules and regulations on my farm*28%	36%	49% (+13%)
Understanding consumer expectations and market trends*26%	28%	28% (0%)
Succession planning*25%	26%	26% (0%)
Attraction and retention of staff*21%	25%	22% (-3%)
Information on climate change and its impact	21%	16% (-5%)
Engagement with processors/cooperatives	20%	22% (+2%)
Financial advice and planning	20%	24% (+4%)
Professional farm advisory services	18%	17% (-1%)
Engagement with local sector support	17%	18% (+1%)
Improving animal welfare	14%	16% (+2%)
Other (please specify)	3%	3%

**Table 4: Information and support needed<sup>14</sup>**

<sup>14</sup> Note that this was changed from a scale question to a multiple selection question in 2022, i.e. respondents could select more than one answer. This change is too substantial for data to be comparable. Percentages here therefore represent responses over sample, and will add to more than 100%.

\* Recalculated numbers in 2023 noticed a discrepancy in 2022 data. New updated and accurate figures are represented in the table.

## Resources needed for catchment

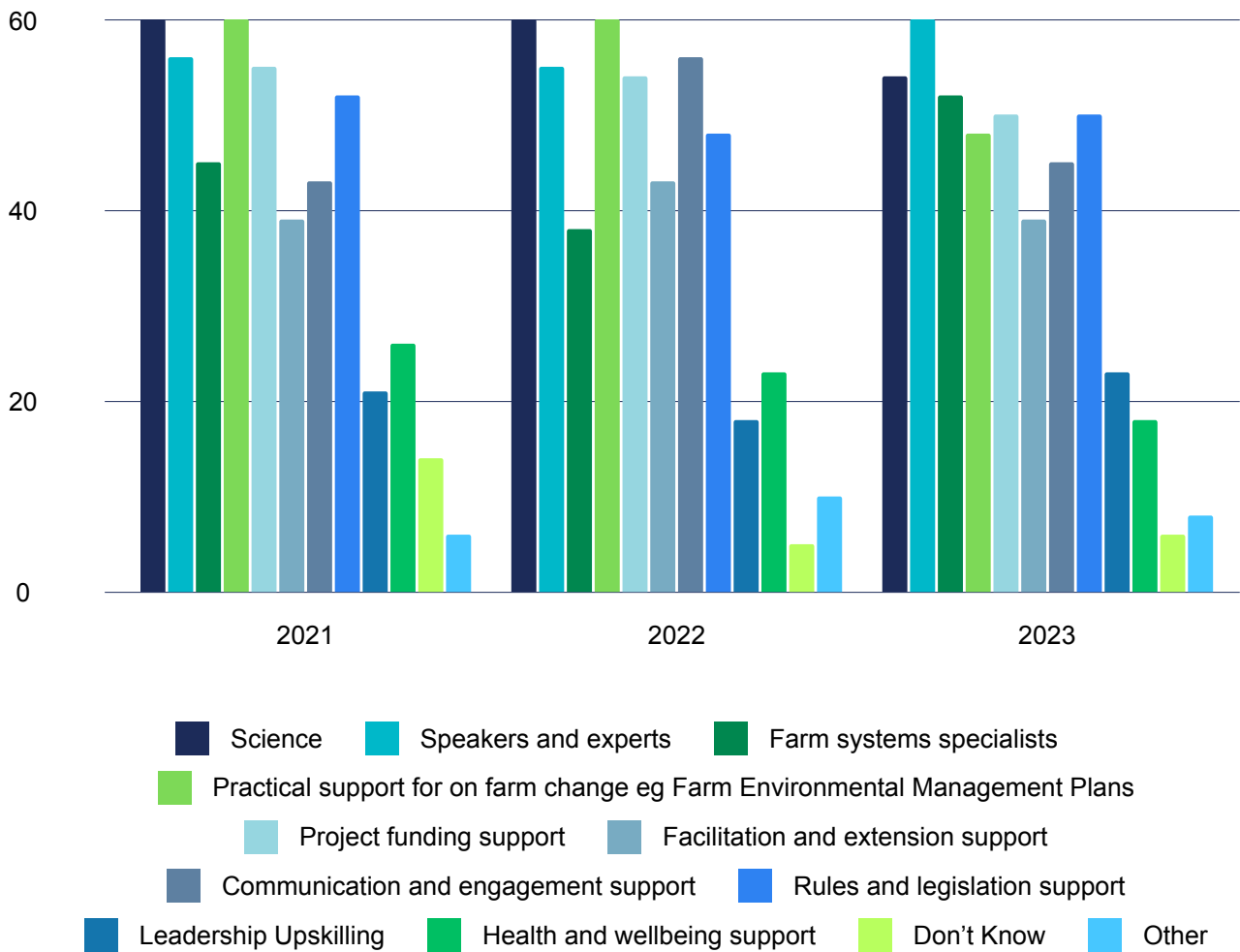
The most common resources requested were speakers and experts, science and farm systems specialists. Project funding support and rules and legislation changes are also important to respondents. Compared to 2022, respondents wanted more support with farm systems specialists and leadership upskilling.

Answer Choices	2021 n=102	%	2022 n=107	%	2023 n=111	%
Science	60	59	60	56	54	49
Speakers and experts	56	55	55	51	60	54
Farm systems specialists	45	44	38	36	52	47
Practical support for on-farm change eg Farm Environmental Management Plans	60	59	60	56	48	43
Project funding support	55	54	54	50	50	45
Facilitation and extension support	39	38	43	40	39	35
Communication and engagement support	43	42	56	52	45	41
Rules and legislation support	52	51	48	45	50	45
Leadership upskilling	21	21	18	17	23	21
Health and wellbeing support	26	25	23	22	18	16
Don't Know	14	14	5	5	6	5
Other please specify	6	6	10	9	8	7
<b>Total respondents</b>	<b>102</b>		<b>107</b>		<b>111</b>	

*Table 5: Resources needed<sup>15</sup>*

<sup>15</sup> Note that this was changed from a scale question to a multiple selection question in 2022, i.e. respondents could select more than one answer. This change is too substantial for data to be comparable. Percentages here therefore represent responses over sample, and will add to more than 100%.

## What resources would support your local Catchment Group to thrive over the next 18 months



**Figure 16: Resources to support Catchment Groups<sup>16</sup>**

<sup>16</sup> Note that this was a multiple-selection question in both years, i.e., the respondent could give more than one answer. Percentages here therefore represent responses over sample, and will add to more than 100%.

## Iwi connection

Fewer people in 2023, than in 2022, said they didn't know how to answer questions about connecting with Iwi.

When asked to what degree are Iwi starting to talk to their Catchment Group, only 39% (compared to 56% in 2022) said they didn't know/unsure, but 25% (compared to 13%) said not at all. There was a shift in 2023 to respondents having a better understanding of Iwi interaction with 20% saying there was limited degree compared to only 13% in 2022.

When asked about Catchment Group members learning about what matters to Iwi, 42% said they were unsure, 21% said not at all but 37% said to a limited, moderate or high degree.

### Thinking about the linkages between your Catchment Group and local Iwi, to what degree are:

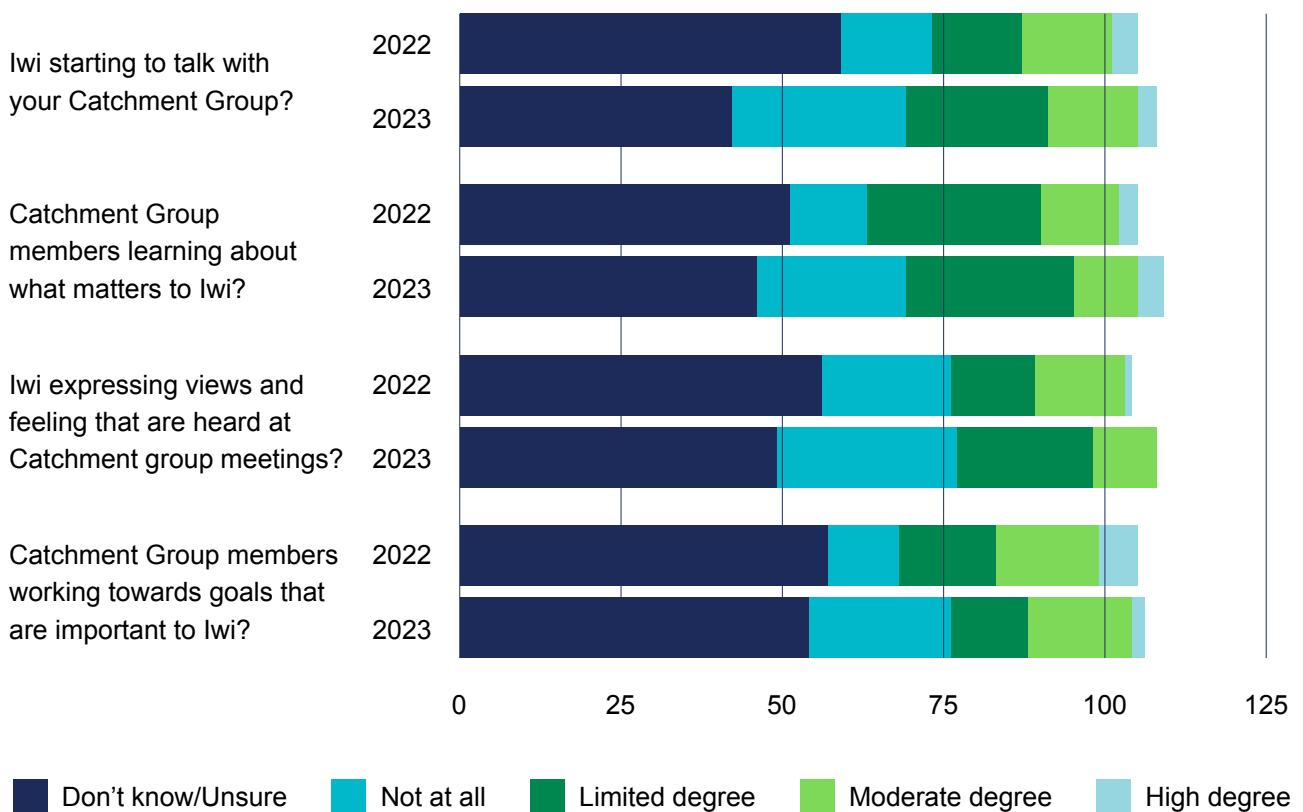


Figure 17: Iwi connection<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Note that the scale of this question was changed in 2022. The changes to this question are too substantial for data to be comparable.

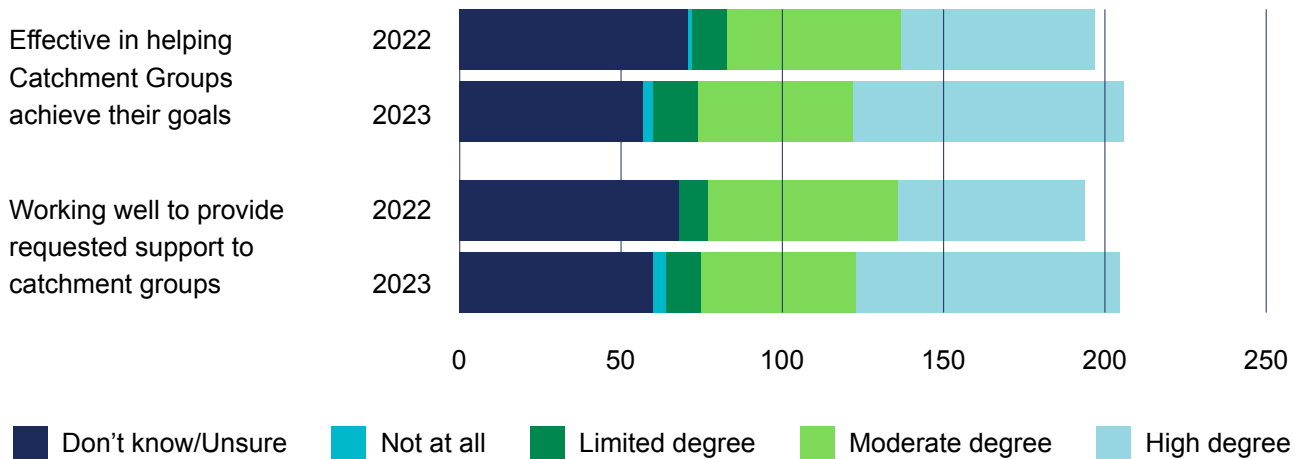
## Effectiveness of Thriving Southland

There was a significant increase in 2023 in the number of respondents that rated Thriving Southland as effective in helping Catchment Groups achieve their goals and that they were working well to provide requested support to Catchment Groups.

Respondents rated that Thriving Southland was effective in helping Catchment Groups achieve their goals to a moderate or high degree; 58% in 2022 and 64% in 2023, and that they were working well to provide requested support to Catchment Groups at 60% in 2022 and in 63% in 2023.

A number of people continued to be unsure / didn't know. 28% and 39% respectively.

### To what degree is Thriving Southland:



**Figure 18: Thriving Southland effectiveness (n=207)<sup>18</sup>**

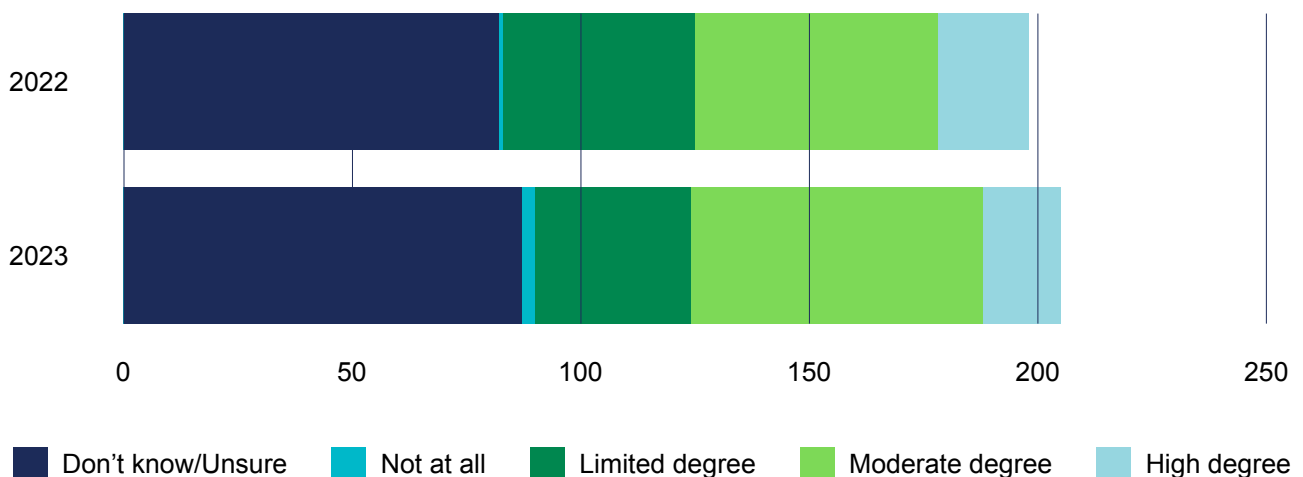
<sup>18</sup> Note that the scale of this question was changed in 2022, including the addition of "working well to provide requested support to catchment groups" as an option. The changes to this question are too substantial for data to be comparable.



## Collaboration of sector groups / industry associations

In 2023, 42% of people didn't know how to answer the question on the degree that sector groups/ industry associations collaborated well with the Catchment Groups. Of those who did feel they could answer, only 40% (compared to 37% in 2022) responded 'moderate' or 'high' degree. Almost 1 in 5 (18%) answered 'not at all' and 'limited degree' to the question.

## To what degree do sector groups/industry associations collaborate well with the Catchment Groups?



**Figure 19:** Collaboration of sector groups / industry associations 2022 (n=198 and 205)<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Note that the scale of this question was changed in 2022. This change is too substantial for data to be comparable.

## Catchment Group evaluation

Similar to 2022, in 2023 respondents tended to think that members of the Catchment Groups were good at making newcomers feel welcome, listening to each other and expressing views.

Although in 2023, there was a slight drop in how people rated getting on well together and listening to each other.

### To what degree can people in the Catchment Group work well together to:

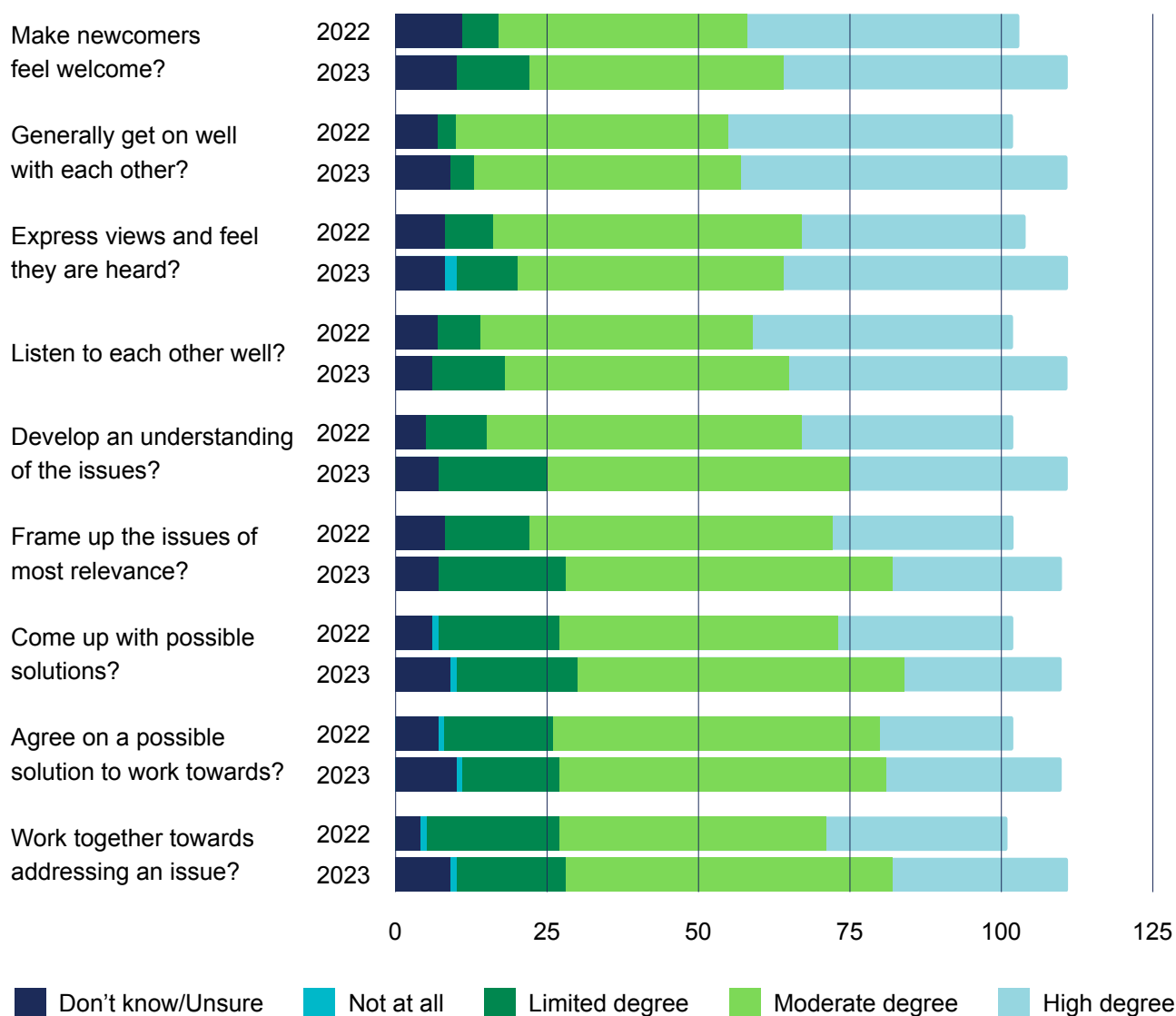


Figure 20: Catchment group evaluation<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Note that this question was not asked in 2021.



It was consistent across both 2022 and 2023 that respondents rated, to a moderate or high degree, that Catchments Groups were well led (79%), well coordinated (77%) and well run (79%).

## To what degree is the catchment group

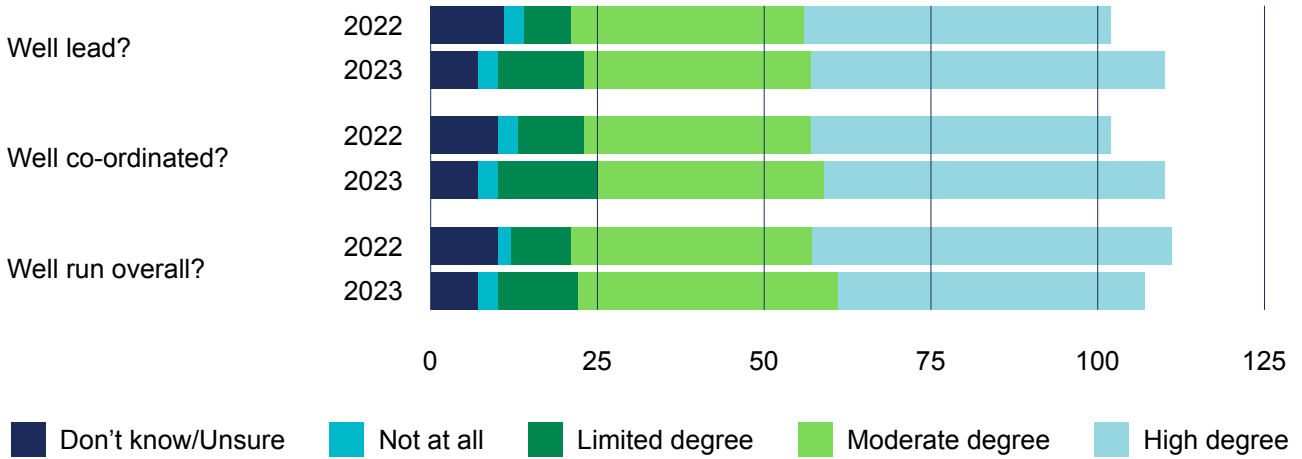


Figure 21: Catchment group evaluation







## Pride – what makes you proud of farming

Respondents in 2023 stated that they were proud mostly of their sustainability efforts, producing a quality product and the lifestyle they lived. They also noted pride in feeding the nation and world and in their animals. Compared to previous year's surveys, fewer noted a pride in their community.

		2021 n=105	2022 n=98	2023 n=111
the most over	Our sustainability efforts 2022 (n=110)	45	39	35
	Producing a quality product/stock 70%	36	33	33
rm	Feeding the nation/ world/ supporting the country 69%	16	9	14
ent rules	Our great community 59%	18	12	4
	Our historical connections to the land 46%	2	6	7
	Our animal welfare standards/love animals 43%	13	11	11
	Improving things for future generations 42%	6	1	5
	The lifestyle 37%	17	14	19
	The people 28%	8	6	10
	Dynamic industry/ innovation 26%	3	8	8
	Other 25%	11	12	13
	21%			
	20%			
	20%			
	18%			
	17%			
	14%			
	3%			

**Table 6: Pride in farming in Southland<sup>21</sup>**

<sup>21</sup> Note that this was an open answer question i.e., the respondent could write in an answer. The data has been segmented aligning comments to these themes. Some comments included several themes so the totals will add up to more than n.

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

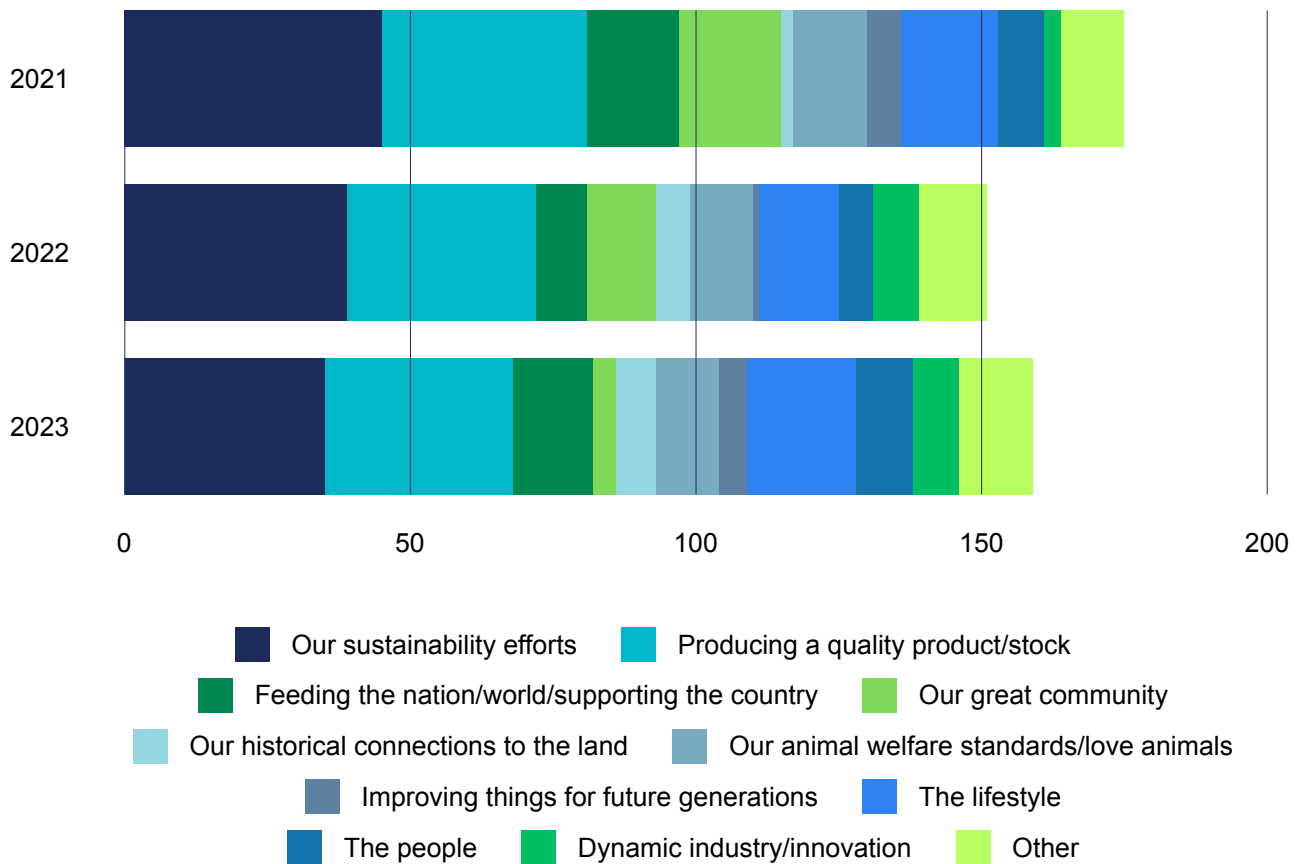


Figure 22: Pride in farming in Southland<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Note that this was an open answer question i.e., the respondent could write in an answer. The data has been segmented aligning comments to these themes. Some comments included several themes so the totals will add up to more than n.



## Further comments

There were 49 further comments in 2023. These are a sample.

### Many respondents complimented Thriving Southland's work:

- Thriving Southland has been fantastic, and I am adamant that it is a big piece of positive farming in Southlands future. We need to ensure that we still have it and sustainable funding needs to be solved in the next 18 months.
- In general I think the Thriving Southland supported Catchment Group model is excellent. Each catchment group is different with different interests/personalities/land use types. I think those which have co-chairs seem to do well - helps to share the load and keep momentum up.
- Keep up the good work. The Southland community will realise how lucky they are as time progresses to have an organisation like TS. This is only the start!
- Thriving is a valuable part of ecosystem of support required for Southland to Thrive
- You do help and good work, cheers.
- Thriving is one of the most important organisations we have in Southland
- Seriously love your work Thriving and I think your success comes down the amazing catchment co-ordinators you have.
- Keep up the excellent work TS, we are making a difference!
- Thriving Southland are a great concept in my opinion.

### Others made suggestions for the programme:

- My biggest want is a greater media connection with what is happening at the grass roots. I still think we fall well short of my ideal.
- After a year I'm still really not sure of the purpose of the catchment group, we have meetings at the most inopportune times for farmers that don't really achieve anything or make any sense, then speakers are arranged at stupid times also.
- We have been approached by different catchment coordinators around NZ to explore leadership development for catchment groups. It would be good to explore this further to see if it would help support the work you do.
- I feel our catchment group has made good progress in their individual projects but is lacking cohesive leadership, and community engagement
- Guidance on future direction is the biggest need for our catchment group
- I always thought it would be good if catchment group members recorded all their improvements to enhancing water quality, recognize and share their work and then build from there
- Catchment groups are awesome. Just need to keep persevering with events and projects that are top of mind and relevant and add value to the farming community
- TS is great but sometimes there are way too many events on. Farmers that are involved in CG are volunteers who are running their own businesses, involved in other aspects of their communities e.g. schools, churches, fire brigades etc. It is important that TS remembers this as sometimes time commitments required are unrealistic.
- A pervasive challenge for the region is responding to insidious and undermining effects of disinformation. Thriving Southland has an opportunity to contribute to a coordinated, active inter-agency response.

### Some were more negatively framed:

- Can't wait to get out of farming
- Have found Southland views farmers, especially in the dairy sector, very negative
- Not sure if it's worth staying in farming. Too much uncertainty, regulation, climate change, market, interest rates.



## Focus areas

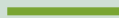
There are some clear areas for focus identified in 2023.

- Farmer goals have changed in 2023, with a greater focus on profitability.
- Farm Environment Plans continue to be well adopted, with a shift in focus to monitoring fertiliser placement and rainfall and a slight drop in monitoring grass/crop growth rates and soil.
- More people are rating waterways as in good health than in previous years and continue to see their own farm's water quality as overwhelmingly excellent or good.
- Wellbeing: In 2023, there is a significant increase in the number of respondents who feel optimistic rarely and only some of the time and a decline in feeling optimistic often or all the time. It also appears that in 2023, the respondents felt making decisions easily happened more some of the time and less all of the time.
- Farmers want to get GMP advice from other farmers – with a significant drop in those who want to get advice from sector groups.
- Farmers want certainty. More than in previous years, they also want shared farmer driven innovation, an increase in wanting to understand and address environmental changes and advice and financial planning. There was also a drop in farmers wanting information about climate change and its impacts.
- Farmers want practical support for on-farm change and science, followed by communications and engagement support, speakers and experts and project funding.
- There is more work to be done for Catchment Groups and farmers to learn about and engage with their local lwi.
- Thriving Southland is effective in helping Catchment Groups achieve their goals and that they were working well to provide requested support to Catchment Groups. There was a greater focus on science and research/information and resources being available and a greater view of Thriving Southland as leaders.
- There is a shift on how Catchment Groups feel about the collaboration with sector/ industry groups.
- Respondents are proud mostly of their sustainability efforts, producing a quality product and the lifestyle they lived. They also noted pride in feeding the nation and world and in their animals. Compared to previous year's surveys, fewer noted a pride in their community.





## 2023 Annual Survey



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