

# Sustainable Farm Families™

*Impact Evaluation – Follow-up*

Prepared for

The Department of Primary Industries Victoria

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**Roberts Evaluation Pty Ltd**

## Roberts Evaluation Pty Ltd

ABN 30 097 557 143

Suite 10.06, 343 Little Collins St,

Melbourne, VIC 3000

Tel: 03 9670 0745

Fax: 03 9670 0614

Web: [www.robertsevaluation.com.au](http://www.robertsevaluation.com.au)

Authors	Jacqueline Storey and Elizabeth Sison
Project Manager	Jacqueline Storey
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## Acronyms

DPI	Victorian Department of Primary Industries
NCFH	National Centre for Farmer Health
SFF	Sustainable Farm Families™
WDHS	Western District Health Service

## Executive Summary

The Sustainable Farm Families™ (SFF) health promotion program delivered by the Western District Health Service (WDHS), Hamilton, Victoria, in partnership with the Victorian Department of Primary Industries (DPI), and collaborating health agencies and farming groups, reached almost 1000 farmers across 50 locations in Victoria over three years, from 2007 – 2010.

Roberts Evaluation provided independent evaluation throughout the program; and undertook an impact evaluation in 2009, where the perspectives of 153 farmers were gathered. This follow-up report includes the results of interviews conducted in 2010 with 45 farmers, brought together with the results of the health outcome data collected by WDHS over the three years of workshops (WDHS 2011).

The evaluation assesses the impact of the SFF program on farmers' perspectives on health, identifies the changes farmers have made in their lifestyles and farm safety practices, and the outcomes in terms of farmer health and wellbeing, farm management, and ability to cope with challenging circumstances.

## Findings

### Farmers' experience of the workshops

The program is clearly appreciated by farmers and throughout the evaluation they have consistently praised the content, delivery, value of the health assessments, the workshop presenters and the opportunity to meet with other farmers to discuss and learn about health, wellbeing and safety. Many farmers commented that they would recommend the program to others, and/or wished it could continue.

### Impact on farmers' lifestyles and their health and wellbeing

The program has substantially influenced farmers' knowledge, attitudes and health behaviours. This has ranged from greater awareness and understanding of health, improved diet, increased exercise, preventative action for health conditions, improved management of stress, time and workload, greater prioritisation of leisure time, and awareness and action with regard to farm safety.

These lifestyle changes have translated into improvements in the average results across indicators of health, particularly for those who were classified as being at risk for significant health issues in the baseline study (WDHS 2011). Farmers report feeling better physically and mentally for the changes they have made.

## Success factors in the program

Farmers interviewed in 2010 reiterated previous evaluation findings about the aspects of the program that are successful at creating impacts. These included the social aspects and group learning, the provision of individual health assessments, and the long-term, follow up nature of the program. The majority of the farmers interviewed who had attended the third year workshop (23 of 27) were positive about the value of having a third workshop in the program.

Farmers clearly appreciated the opportunity to interact socially with other farmers and learn together with their peers in a supportive environment. Hearing others' experiences of similar issues is a powerful way to breakdown isolation and silencing of health issues amongst farmer groups.

Farmers who attended the final year workshops in 2010 commented that the health checks were one of the most beneficial aspects, and a motivating factor for their continued attendance at the program.

## Impact on farm management

Impacts on farm management were directly reported by more than a third of the farmers interviewed in 2010, and almost half of the farmers interviewed in 2009. They described improved clarity of thought and decision making, safer work practices, better work-life balance, reduced stress and better physical health as contributing to improved management of their farm. In 2009, one quarter of the farmers interviewed saw a direct link between this improved capacity and their farm success. In 2010, the same farmers who reported improved management practice saw this as congruent with farm success.

Beyond farmers' own reports, the health outcome data provide a practical indication that farmers' physical and mental health and wellbeing has improved. It is reasonable to expect that improved health contributes to improved management capability.

While it is encouraging to see the proportion of farmers who have taken on the message from the program about the centrality of health to the farm, there were a substantial number of farmers interviewed in both 2009 and 2010 who stated that they did not think the program had impacted on their farm management or success. They raised external factors, such as weather, drought, markets and the general unpredictability of farming as the more pertinent factors in farm success.

## Impact on farmers' ability to cope with challenging circumstances

The impacts of the SFF program on farmer health and wellbeing and farm management practices indicate that SFF has built farmer capacity to deal with challenging circumstances.

The interview data demonstrate that many farmers have enhanced their capacity to think critically about their lives and farm management, to make plans and goals and see them through, and to take

increased personal responsibility for their health. The program has also enhanced farmers' connections to support networks, in that it has brought them together with their farming peers, as well as encouraged family involvement in lifestyle change. The practical outcomes achieved in farmer health and wellbeing will also be supportive of farmers' ability to manage their lives and farms well and therefore to adapt in the face of change.

These findings align with the literature on indicators or factors which support individuals to respond in an empowered and resilient way to change or adversity. These include critical thinking and planning skills, communication skills, personal responsibility, self-efficacy, and having a positive attitude or outlook, as well as social networks and support (see for example Bandura 1977; Roberts and Coutts 2006; APA 2010). While external conditions are important and pose real constraints, a resilient or empowered person will make the best of difficult circumstances. The SFF program has made an important contribution to the capacity of farmers to respond in this way.

## Recommendations

### Program delivery

The evaluation strongly supports the approach taken in the SFF program. The following aspects should continue, as they have proven effective in attracting the involvement and attention of farmers, their openness to learning, and their ability to create change in their lifestyles:

- Group based learning
- Health assessments
- Follow-up over time
- Information tailored specifically to the farming context
- Presenters skilled in engaging with a farming audience
- Participants attending with their spouse or other family members
- Cross-sector approach including DPI, WDHS, local health agencies and industry groups

These aspects could also be recommended to other organisations implementing rural health promotion.

## Program reach

- Continue to assess the methods used for recruiting farmers to workshops, ensuring that there are good follow-up processes to inform farmers about workshops. As recommended in the 2009 Impact Evaluation, improved engagement with industry partners will also support good recruitment and retention of farmers.
- Investigate the reach of the program across the Victorian farming population. Depending on whether the characteristics of the workshop group (e.g. age, etc) are an accurate reflection of the total farming population, strategies for reaching younger farmers and/or farmers from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds<sup>1</sup> could be developed.

## The health outcomes study

The data collected against physical and mental health indicators from participating farmers over the three workshops have been analysed to a draft stage by WDHS (2011), with a focus on average outcomes for the total workshop population and farmers categorised as at risk for health problems (based on baseline results).

We have a number of suggestions for further analysis:

- Present the *distribution* of the results across the workshop population, as well as the average values. For example, chart each indicator against frequency (number or percentage of farmers) for the three data series (baseline, 12 months, 24 months). This would give an idea of the spread of poor or good health across the participating farmers, as well as show where the improvements were made.
- Particular case studies could also go some way to breaking up the average picture presented. These could remain unidentified, and be selected as examples of particularly striking impacts, or cases that were indicative of the rate of change experienced by the majority of participants.
- Present figures for numbers of people that moved out of (or in the case of negative results, into) the at-risk category for different indicators. E.g. “X% of men or women who were classified as at risk for hypertension had moved into the healthy blood pressure range after 2 years.”
- Show change over time in indicators of body pain, health interfering with work, and psychological distress. Currently only baseline values (taken either in the first or second workshop) are present in the draft report.

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<sup>1</sup> Two workshops were held with farmer groups from particular cultural/linguistic backgrounds, however the total participant population was almost entirely born in Australia (93.6%) and only 2% spoke a language other than English at

Further research to contextualise the findings of this study could also include:

- Comparison of the workshop population statistics to rural population or whole population data; to establish how the farmers' results relate to these broader populations
- Comparison of the results achieved with those of other relevant health promotion programs, to establish whether the changes observed and the rate of change are above or below the expected impact for this type of initiative
- Linkage of the health statistics with geographic areas or different farming industries.
- Research into the availability and accessibility of health services across the state, and, if practical, linkage of the health statistics with these regions of service provision.

### **Influencing rural health promotion**

The SFF program is a high quality example of health promotion for the farming community, that can contribute to knowledge and practice about what works and why in this area.

- Continue to build the capacity of health professionals to understand and work with farmers and their particular needs; through their participation as deliverers of SFF workshops, and through the ongoing training activities available at the National Centre for Farmer Health.
- Continue and, where appropriate, increase existing strategies for influencing rural health policy and practice more widely; for example through presenting at conferences, academic publications, or publications of guidelines and practical materials.

### **Linkages between agricultural productivity and farmer health**

Healthy farmers are better able to make decisions, manage risks, work safely and productively and respond to changing and challenging circumstances.

It is in the interests of the Department of Primary Industries to understand the role of farmer health and adaptive capacity in farm productivity, and to promote this; either directly or through supporting other programs and agencies.

Previous evaluation reports demonstrate the value of the partnership between DPI and WDHS, in bringing together health and agricultural or farm business expertise to create workshops that tap into farmer interests.

- Continue to explore opportunities for connections between extension and health related initiatives for farmers.
- Continue to explore opportunities for cross-sectoral partnerships between industry, agricultural extension, and health services, to promote farmer health, wellbeing, safety and management capability.

## Background

### The DPI-supported Sustainable Farm Families program

The Sustainable Farm Families™ program is an initiative of Western District Health Service (WDHS), Hamilton, and is delivered in partnership with the Department of Primary Industries Victoria (DPI). The program aims to improve the health, well-being and safety of the farming population in Victoria, through a three year program (2007 – 2010) of health education workshops for up to 1000 farmers in fifty locations across the state.

In each location, local health agencies are engaged as partners in the workshop delivery, and local health professionals present much of the workshop content. Local industry groups are enlisted to help with promotion of the workshops and recruitment of farmers. The DPI provides facilitators to assist in the workshop delivery.

Farmers in each location attend three workshops; one per year. The program aims to involve both farm men and women, and encourages participants to attend with their spouse. At the workshops farmers are presented with information and advice about key health issues, including cardiovascular disease, cancer, farm safety, diabetes, stress, depression and anxiety, men's and women's health, nutrition, diet and alcohol, physical activity, and farm business. Participants are asked to make action plans for their health and report back on these to their workshop group each year.

At each annual workshop the participants undergo an individual health assessment, where health, well-being and safety issues are identified, and referrals to health professionals are made as required. The data collected from the examinations are collated as part of the research accompanying the program; to build a picture of farmer health and track it over time.

## Methodology

The impact evaluation of the Sustainable Farm Families™ program comprises qualitative research conducted by Roberts Evaluation, brought together with the health outcome data collected by the Western District Health Service over the three years of workshops.

### Follow-up to the 2009 Impact Evaluation

This study completes the Impact Evaluation which commenced in 2009, after the second year of SFF DPI funded workshops. Roberts Evaluation gathered the perspectives of 153 farmers through interviews, focus groups and case studies. At the time, only the baseline (2008) health outcome data were available for discussion alongside the data collected of farmer perspectives.

This study is a follow-up to complete and complement the 2009 report, and the data presented here should be read in conjunction with the 2009 Impact Evaluation.

### Farmer perspectives

In September 2010, Roberts Evaluation interviewed 45 Victorian farmers who had participated in Sustainable Farm Families™ workshops, from 44 of the 50 workshop locations funded by the Department of Primary Industries (2008 – 2010). The interviews focused on farmers' experience of the SFF program, of making lifestyle changes, and whether they had seen any impacts on their health, wellbeing, and farm safety and management practices.

The majority of the farmers interviewed (38) had been interviewed previously by Roberts Evaluation for the Impact Evaluation conducted in 2009. Seven of the farmers interviewed had not been contacted previously by Roberts Evaluation. Thirty-three women and twelve men were interviewed<sup>2</sup>. The majority of farmers (27) had attended the final year workshop for their program, as well as either one or both of the two earlier workshops in the program. Eighteen of the farmers interviewed had not attended the 2010 workshop in their area.

### Health outcome data

In March 2011, Western District Health Service provided a draft report summarising the health outcome data collected across the three years of the program, for all participating farmers.

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<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately a more balanced sample between the genders was not achieved due to difficulty contacting farmers; especially as many were experiencing flood conditions at the time of the interviews.

This covered data analysed across a range of physical and mental health indicators, including body mass index, fasting blood glucose, fasting blood cholesterol, blood pressure, waist circumference, body fat percentage, and the Kessler scale of psychological distress.

## Evaluation questions

The evaluation objectives set by the DPI and WDHS are to:

1. Assess the contribution of the project to achieve its objective of 'Farmers better able to cope and recover through drought from improved physical and mental health and reduced risk of farm accidents
2. Summarise the outcomes shown in the physical health measurement data collected, collated and analysed by WDHS
3. Document any unintended outcomes of the project.

A set of questions were developed to guide the evaluation. The majority have been answered through previous reports. This follow-up study adds information to the data already collected against questions 1, 2 and 5.

1. What impact has the program had upon the participants; the farming couples who have attended workshops?
2. Have these impacts on individuals had flow-on effects to their families, their farm businesses, and/or their communities?
3. What other contextual factors impact upon farming families' health?
4. What impact has the program had upon the organisations and professionals involved?
5. How well has the program been delivered?
  - a. How well have the organisational partnerships worked between WDHS, DPI, local health agencies, and local industry groups?
  - b. What is the quality and appropriateness of the workshops for the audience and the program aims?
  - c. How could the program be improved to better achieve outcomes?

## Discussion and analysis

### Farmers' experience and opinions of the SFF workshops

The farmers interviewed for the final evaluation felt the SFF program had been “enjoyable” and “worthwhile”, and many said they would recommend it to others, or hoped that it would continue.

Farmers made various comments about the aspects of the program overall that they had found useful, including the presenters, the two-way learning, the health checks, the way the program tackled relevant health issues, and the information presented. One person commented on how valuable it was to learn about the bigger picture of farmer health:

*“Interesting about the statistics, which show people are unhealthier in country than in city. Those stats includes people in towns, I wonder about statistics for people actually living on farms, whether that information would look different in terms of health etc.”*

Some women specifically commented that the program had been especially “good for the men.”

*“It was a good program, not many women at ours. Surprised to see the men all back the second time. They must have got something out of it!”*

*“SFF came at a really good time for me. And I was pleased to get my husband there. Isolation is one of the biggest problems out here”*

### Value of the third and final workshop

Of the farmers interviewed in September 2010, 27 had attended the third and final workshop in their respective SFF program. Almost all of these farmers (23) said that they were happy with the final workshop, and felt they had gained something from attending. The reasons they gave were that the health assessments were valuable, the workshop was a good review of the program, it was good to meet again with the other farmers in their workshop group, and the information presented was useful.

The health assessments were commented on by 15 farmers, who had found them to be a useful check of their progress in prioritising and improving their health. Several farmers commented that they hoped the program would continue. One workshop group had elected to continue meeting outside of the program.

*“The main reason I went was for ongoing health check things. Wouldn't mind doing the health checks every year”*

*“We had another health assessment, now we'll have to organise that for ourselves in future!”*

*“We had the Diabetes test, had to get there at 8am, and fasted beforehand. That was great, my husband's blood sugar was quite high, they gave him a pathology slip to go and get a longer fasting test done. That would have been \$200.00!”*

Several farmers described the third year workshops as a review that had wrapped up the overall SFF program for them (13 comments). They found it valuable to have the information and goal setting of previous years refreshed.

*“By having an annual follow up, it keeps you on your toes that you do what you said, or they suggested.”*

*“It was very valuable. The follow up was terrific. Just to have it was a good reminder about health. You can become lackadaisical, and it reinforced it all. It would be great to have one every year”*

*“I think it was good to revisit things that had been left a bit.”*

*“It was good in summarising what we had done, tying it all up finishing off. I always found it quite useful, each workshop, getting the feedback, setting goals, and seeing how you went. The 3rd workshop sort of finished it all off nicely”*

Meeting again with other farmers in the workshop group was seen as important by ten of the farmers interviewed. They felt there had been useful discussion around health and safety, and that it had been a valuable opportunity to re-establish social contact with these people.

*“It’s really good, the discussions in the groups. You’re on your own out here.”*

*“It really helped my husband more, coming through drought, seeing you’re not the only one, just to talk about it. Talking is what we got out of it a lot. It’s been isolated round here. People need to talk about depression etc, you need to talk don’t you?”*

*“It was worthwhile for the follow-up. It was good to get together see how [the group] had fared with goals etc. Hearing what others are doing is good. You benchmark yourself against others and the workshops gave you that opportunity.”*

*“[The workshop facilitator] is the best speaker ever! He got the men talking, the way he explains things. I was surprised at what people have gone through, it gave me more understanding about people. It’s good to get the men there. I couldn’t get my husband to do those things, but he’s done [changed] things with his health now.”*

*“We all got back together, talked about what we’d done. Most had some improvement in their lifestyle; that gave us an incentive to keep going. You know, with the good habits.”*

The information presented in the final workshop was valued by eight of the farmers interviewed. They commented on the farm safety and OH&S updates, information about diabetes, changes in the farming sector, and mental health issues, including suicide, anxiety and depression.

*“In the general discussion, you realise the importance of certain issues. Diabetes, health issues, safety on farms, they talked about helmets, the right ones and where to get them. They gave us the name and place to get them, details.”*

*“They showed slides showed what others like us are going through, changes in our farming sector, very informative, a bit alarming.”*

Only three farmers felt that the final year workshop was not useful, commenting that “it was just going over stuff that we had already done”. One commented “We’d run out of steam I think. They had covered most of what they wanted to; we mightn’t have needed the third.”

In their general comments about SFF workshops, four farmers remarked that they thought the people who attended the workshops were already health conscious, and perhaps there were others in the farming community who could be encouraged to come.

*“I think it [SFF] needs to [continue]. But it doesn’t reach those they needed it most. Often preaching to the converted.”*

*“They were preaching to the converted a bit. Others who may need it more may be afraid to hear negative things about their health.”*

### Reasons for not attending the final workshop

Most of the farmers who had not attended the final workshop (12 of 18 interviewed who had not attended) said this was due to clashing commitments, rather than any issues with the program.

A small number of farmers (5) interviewed had not received any information about whether the final workshop would run in their area.

*“They talked about it in other workshops, said they were going to follow through with a third, but that didn’t exist to us... whether they didn’t have enough response, I don’t know. We never heard anything about it.”*

*“I got a phone call four months ago to say there were not enough numbers, so they said they would arrange to come out and do the health checks, but I never heard anything from them.”*

Only one person indicated that they felt it was not worthwhile attending the final workshop; stating “I didn’t think was important enough with all the other things on.”

## Lifestyle changes reported by farmers

### Health and lifestyle behaviours

Almost all of the farmers interviewed said they were looking after their health more since being involved with the SFF workshops. This included improving their diet, exercising, getting their health checked, and managing the balance between work and leisure time. This is an excellent outcome for the project.

Many farmers (17) reported dietary changes or an increased consciousness of their diet. Changes mentioned included: trying to eat “less red meat”, “more fibre”, less “processed foods”, less “fatty foods”, brown bread instead of white, “more fruit and vegetables”, and “trying to control our alcohol”.

*“Main thing is the eating habits. Increase exercise, more conscious of food requirements for the day, types of sugar. And that filters down to kids’ lunchboxes, having regular meals. We were never aware of the sugar types before.”*

*“We have changed eating habits. My husband has Type 2 diabetes - we found out through the workshop. We bought a blood check machine. We are watching our food and alcohol.”*

*“We were already healthy, but now I try not to use processed food, white bread etc. The deep fryer was put away.”*

Ten farmers attributed their improved diet to improved attention to and ability to read food-packaging labels when purchasing groceries:

*“Most beneficial was the food labeling information. It made a big difference in our diet.”*

Farmers reported exercising more (15 comments) and were more conscious of the importance of exercise. Participants felt they had learned where and why their exercise habits were lacking, and were able to increase their level of fitness targeted exercise, as opposed to general farm work.

*“It was interesting how they [SFF presenters] said that you don’t have to go for an hour all at once; that ten minutes or so at a time makes a difference. I used to run up and down the driveway for ten minutes at a time, because I could leave the children for that long...I could see the house. That worked and I lost a lot of weight.”*

*“I got a pedometer, just to know for myself. I still use it to know how much exercise I’ve done. I do 10ks a day.”*

Since attending SFF workshops, several farmers (11) said they were going to the doctor for checkups, getting tests done and paying attention to the results:

*“We are both going more regularly to checkups, not before, nothing regular.”*

*“I had a heart operation three months ago. I believe going to the program meant I recognised that I was having a heart attack. I woke up in the middle of the night with pain, and I was in Melbourne in surgery next day. I’ve also had colonoscopy as they advised us to do.”*

One person reported an issue with their doctor responding to their referral from the SFF program:

*“My doctor said: “Who’s looking after your health them or me?! I’m not getting the same readings. I don’t understand why they are writing to me.” I’ve been going to her for 10 years.”*

Another farmer reported that several people in her workshop group went to a health check centre instead of the GP, and had positive experiences:

*“There was great feedback from that. They [the health check centre] were more thorough [than the GP]. A girlfriend went for general check-up. She had a sunspot that her GP had said “Just leave it.” At the check centre they removed it that arvo, because she was from the country, and it was hard for her to get back in.”*

Eight respondents had made changes related to the need “to manage farm related stress” and to “look after ourselves” and take holidays or breaks. A number of these farmers had been prompted to take their first holiday from their farm ever, as a result of what they had learned in the workshops.

*“We are more aware of having a bit of...of looking after ourselves so we’re not guilty when we go away a bit. We’ve only done that a couple of times, but it’s been good. Before we would feel, we can’t possibly leave. Overall we found that very helpful, being aware of that, and not letting the business dominate us.”*

*“When we looked we realised we were working seven days three hundred and forty days a year...with no holiday in four years...But now we will go next year, and I now employ help for the harder jobs, so for the last five months of the season we can have a night off per week.”*

Three of the farmers interviewed had decided to cease farming during the SFF program. They felt the SFF program discussions on stress and looking after oneself really supported and vindicated the decisions they had made:

*We had had enough [around the time of the second workshop], with the drought on, milk prices dropped, we just thought - that’s enough. [The workshop] showed you what stress could do to you. So, our way out of that stress was to get rid of the cows.*

Three people said that while they had not really made changes, the workshops had reinforced what they were already doing with regard to their health and lifestyle behaviours.

## Farm safety practices

Most farmers reported increased consciousness of farm safety, and several farmers had made practical changes, such as purchasing or modifying equipment. The 12 month data collected in the workshops shows an increase in use of personal protective equipment by farmers for chemical use, machinery use, or exposure to UV.

Many of the farmers interviewed (18) felt that they were more aware and conscious of safety as a result of their participation in the SFF program. They variously mentioned safe work practices around chemicals, machinery and on-farm OH&S requirements. The perception from many of these farmers was that wearing appropriate clothing (PPE) for risky tasks, using sunscreen, and wearing helmets on motorbikes etc, came under the heading of increased awareness rather than of practice change.

*“Our farm safety awareness changed - now wearing helmets on farm, there are many little dangers around; they didn’t register until they pointed out little things.”*

*“Changes cost money, so there were not many practical changes. Wearing a helmet, we make that happen more”*

*“On the farm, we’re more aware of safety, more so than actual changes - we haven’t had to...but we weren’t using crash helmets, so we got them, and got goggles.”*

*“We’re a fair bit more stringent on OH&S”*

Ten farmers had purchased new equipment or repaired existing equipment in the interests of improved safety. Some also mentioned they were more likely to get farm equipment checked and kept in good repair, since attending the SFF workshops.

*“My husband put up the things so you can operate silos from the bottom, and don’t need to climb up. We wear ear muffs more, masks, more aware of windmills - not taking as many risks; not going up in windy weather, thinking a bit more. We wear fencing goggles, sun protection, hats. It comes back to communication - seeing films of what can happen...”*

*“We’ve put on a new crane attachment, to help lift things. We serviced the bike, and we will get helmets.”*

Among those who had made little or no changes to their farm safety practices (8 of those interviewed), the self-perception was commonly that they were already “up to speed” with safety on their farms, and did not need to make any changes.

*“I’ve got 2 boys, who’ve worked off farm, they are very aware of all this... safety conscious. I did a few things.”*

*“On a practical level we are safety conscious anyway, don’t use a lot of chemicals, so not huge change in way we managed the business, not much difference.”*

## Farmers' experience of making change

### Factors supporting lifestyle change

Farmers identified a number of factors that had supported or enabled them to make lifestyle changes. These included that:

- The workshops had given them clear understanding of the reasons for making change. Fifteen farmers said that having the relevant “education” and a “rationale” behind the need for change, as well as understanding the seriousness of the risks, meant that they had to take action:

*“You knew why you were making the changes. We believe and understand that it is reasonable to prioritise your own health.”*

*“Just knowing the potential for so much trauma. Knowing about what things that will impact on me being the breadwinner. The fact that the kids can go out to farm and feel safer”*

*“Talks we had [at the workshops], specific about heart health, diabetes... Made sense to be more careful with what we eat and do.”*

The workshops had been a reminder, prompt or motivation to make change (5 farmers)

*“Silos are a big thing. Years ago my hubby got stuck in one and nearly died. So not a lot of convincing needed there, just a reminder to get them around to doing it. The workshops got us talking about it more.”*

*Knew all along what we needed to do, but the workshops emphasised the need to do them, and it didn't take a great deal, just putting your mind to it. The workshops gave us the push that we needed.”*

*“We had everything there; it was just making sure you did it, not being lazy... The workshops prompted us to do these checks, told us what needed checking. Made you think you can't put your head in the sand. They gave us some health contacts.”*

- They had made a commitment to change. Four respondents believed that a positive “attitude” and “mindset” about changes had been the main factor: “It's just commitment. Deciding to do it.”
- They had attended the workshop with their spouse (or other family members) and therefore planned and made change together. Three farmers made comments to this effect:

*“Because we both went, it was less fuss about bringing this sort of thing in, he didn't say “why have we got to eat this?!”*

*“We went as husband and wife, so I could say “Well you know...that's what they said [at the workshops]... it's about creating the environment for change.”*

- Other family members had been supportive. This was mentioned by three farmers, who had found it was particularly helpful to them in making changes to their workload:

*“Our kids are very supportive, encouraged us to take time out. One time we went away and one came and kept an eye on stock etc. That made it easier, took a load off our shoulders.”*

*“Friends and family helped with the dam. We organised a weekend. If not for them, my husband would still be doing it!”*

Other comments were that one farmer had an excellent “bush nurse centre” available to him, which helped with getting regular health checks; good weather helped one woman with exercising; and one farmer trying to change her family’s eating habits said, “I look after the food and [the family] just got it and had no alternatives.”

Two couldn’t think of anything that supported them in trying to make changes.

Eight respondents said they had made no changes or not enough changes to answer the question

## Challenges in making change

Farmers reported various difficulties with change, mostly revolving around finding and/or prioritising time in the case of exercise, dietary and other lifestyle changes. With infrastructure or equipment changes and efforts to take more holidays, expense was a factor for many farmers. Others commented on the difficulty of overcoming habits or accessing health services for medical treatment, and several felt that the unpredictable nature of farming throws up its own challenges when adhering to plans and routines.

Seven of the farmers interviewed said that “making the effort”, “prioritising”, and “finding the time” was the main challenge when trying to instigate change.

*‘Just making the effort to do it so many other things to do. You have to think - I really could do this - rather than thinking that you couldn’t.’*

*‘Finding the time. Farming being the monster it is, even this year... we thought we’d be ahead, but in the last month it got surprisingly wet. So then you’ve got to do a lot before you go away on holidays.’*

*“Busy social roles, time and money. But you can get caught up in that cycle - you can always find something to be busy with, ‘til something goes wrong, or someone says something, and then you realise you have to make time for some things.”*

*“Probably just the exercise. The last thing you want after a day’s physical work is to do exercise.”*

Six farmers felt that “finding the money” to make changes in lifestyle or in farm practices, was a significant challenge.

*“The expense of holidays”*

*“General consensus in group was its more expensive to eat healthy! And in the country you can’t just go to Vic Market and get your fresh veg; you just have to rely on what’s available at the supermarket.”*

Five respondents had found “ingrained” behaviour and habit a stumbling block when introducing changes.

*“[Behaviour can be] very ingrained. It’s a generational farm. We came back as a married couple, with a baby...my husband saw his father never take a holiday. It’s an attitude, a mindset.”*

Two people commented that they had had difficulties with getting medical checkups outside of the SFF health checkup. They had found it hard to get appointments, or needed to travel long distances.

*“It took three weeks to get an appointment. Our doctor is old and sick himself, but there’s no one else to do it.”*

Other things people found difficult were cutting down on food they liked and exercising in bad weather. One person, who had decided to leave farming, commented that it was especially difficult “having to sell the farm that I’d put all my blood sweat and tears into.”

Three farmers said they had made no changes or not enough changes to answer the question.

Two said they had experienced no difficulty making their changes.

## Maintaining lifestyle changes

The majority of the farmers interviewed (31 of 45) felt that they would maintain the changes they had made. For some this was because they had found the change easy to make, others said it was because health was now a priority for them, they had incorporated the changes into their routine, they were seeing positive results which encouraged them to continue, or that it was important for the sake of their family and/or the farm.

Nine farmers felt their changes had been reasonably easy to make. For some this was because the changes “came naturally”, and respondents felt they were “already on the right track”. Other comments were that their goals are “achievable.”

*“With the health checks, it’s not a hassle, it’s easy here. Just need the will to do it”*

*“It was easy, we know it’s the right thing to do, we were already aware.”*

For five farmers, their health is or has become a priority and they are committed to the lifestyle changes they have introduced, and believe they will be healthier as a result.

*“You just have to. Weight is an issue, we’re in our mid 40s...if you want a healthy heart, and to keep diabetes away...”*

Four interviewees believe that having incorporated the changes into their routine, they will be able to maintain them.

*"We'll always be on the better side now I think. Now and again you might eat rubbish for a bit, but you feel bad and then get back into routine again."*

For four respondents, feeling good, and finding that changes were achieving the desired outcomes was the rationale for continuing.

*"I feel better. Only little things like walking, but feel better. They emphasised quality time for me. So exercise is my time. Workshops stressed looking after yourself, to look after the kids. Didn't realise that before."*

*"It's been quite good. With fruit I make a mixture, it looks good. For me it's a bit of effort but it worked."*

Two said it was important to maintain their changes to the farm, "for the safety for all". One person was motivated by her children: "I need to be healthy for them. Also, I'm a role model for them"

Fourteen people felt they needed no further assistance, or could not think of anything that would help them to maintain their changes. Six farmers said they had made no changes or not enough changes to answer the question.

Some farmers commented that maybe they would be jolted into doing so if they or someone they knew were to have a health scare, or that they would be able to maintain healthy lifestyle behaviours if only they were able to find more time. Four respondents made comments about a health scare being a motivator for them to make change:

*"...to see what can happen...you think 'this won't happen to us' then you see statistics you think well...it shocks you into getting things done."*

*"We didn't make any changes, but if something were to happen to someone else. That would shake up my husband; he didn't go to the workshops."*

Three people said having more time would help them maintain changes:

*"Everything just seems to be busier that it was 10 years ago. Life in general, not just on the farm, everything seems busier. There's hardly any labour around to get in to help you. We have a mine close to here that's taken a slice of the casual workers."*

*"More time... I want to be home when my kids come home from school, I want to bake and look after them."*

One person suggested "another series" of SFF workshops would be a supporting factor in maintaining change.

## The role of family, friends or peers

Specifically in response to a question about the role played by family, friends or peers in their making or maintaining change, many farmers had found that their family members were supportive of change. In particular, women in households were instrumental in supporting dietary change. In some cases adult children encouraged their parents in health behaviours, and in others it was the parent/s returning from the workshops who implemented positive changes in their children's lives (e.g. in diet and physical activity). A number of farmers also commented once again on the value of attending the workshops with farming peers, and had found it valuable to share experiences of making change with people who were in a similar situation.

Nineteen farmers said family had played a role in making and maintaining change, through encouragement and/or support. In some cases, other family members with poor health gave added impetus to some pay more attention to their own health.

*"People were able to go as family, and so you got more out of it than if you went on your own. Even going with adult children, from health and farm point of view...we could all discuss it, we were all in agreement."*

*"One of the few gatherings you can go as a couple, that's great, backing each other at home."*

*"My husband's parents are in their 80's. One has Alzheimer's. My father-in-law was coming to the farm for years and now has to stop and look after his wife. Now with that different state of affairs, he has slowed down so much, and we can see – you use it or lose it appears to apply. Having them around reminds me of what can happen..."*

Six respondents said the "contacts and networks" with other farmers at the workshops encouraged them and gave them added impetus to act.

*"It helps you bench mark, to see others doing a certain thing, you think: I should be able to do that."*

*"Talking to some farmers in group, hearing what they did, how they do look at things; that helps. Farmers are the minority in the town."*

Three people were supported and encouraged by friends.

Six farmers said they had made no changes or not enough changes to answer the question

## The role of process or routine

Farmers were specifically asked to comment on whether having a process or routine played a role in their making and/or maintenance of change. Just over a third (17) said that it either had, or would in theory be of assistance. Some farmers (7) had implemented routines that specifically fitted in with their farm work; for example replacing driving with walking. A third of farmers interviewed (15) did

not think that having a process or routine had been of help to them. Five farmers commented that the farming lifestyle is too unpredictable for a routine to work.

Seventeen people felt that routine had or would help with introducing and maintaining change.

*"You need to have structure of routine to achieve a change; like you have to set aside time to do it...I'm referring to exercise here. More aware that you have to annually prioritise health checks. You Structure it."*

*"It does, it's a key. If you don't have a plan you won't achieve what you want."*

Seven people had instigated routines that could specifically flow and fit in with the duties of the farm:

*"Just the pedometer. I will walk instead of take the car. In the beginning it was a set routine, now I manage it within what I do."*

*"In my experience, if I had to make extra time to go to the gym etc, it wouldn't happen. So, instead of using the motorbike to get the cows I go walking. Also while waiting for the cows I do some stretching, step-ups etc. So, it's part of my day."*

Twenty farmers did not think process or routine had helped them with making or maintaining changes. Five of these specifically believed that while routine could help in some circumstances, farming lifestyles are very unpredictable and as a result it is difficult and impractical to maintain set routines.

*"It would [help], but the way we run the orchard, routine can be thrown out because things change on the farm. For example, we had some unexpected rain, we had to get out and spray etc. My exercise routine was thrown out. It's not like a 9-5 job. It's not predictable."*

*"I have tried to use routines, but routines change with farming so they can't plan. It's true, but it's also a bit of an excuse for farmers. They hide behind it. To be a farmer you have to accept the unpredictable, but that sort of personality is also less inclined to want to stick to a routine!"*

Six farmers said they had made no changes or not enough changes to answer the question.

## Impact on farmer health and wellbeing

### Impact on individuals

Almost every person interviewed felt the workshops had had a positive overall impact on their health and wellbeing. This included that it had increased their awareness of health and the importance of looking after themselves, connected them to other farm families, enabled them to see the link between their health and their ability to run their farm, increased their awareness of safety, and/or assisted them to re-prioritise their lifestyle.

Thirty-four of the forty-five respondents believed the SFF workshops increased their awareness of health and of “the need to look after yourself.” Many said they now prioritise their health more and are more inclined to take preventative action around their long-term health.

*“There’s more self awareness, about the importance of my role in a farming family, so my health has to be good. I’m looking after the food for my family, I’m part of the farming industry. I’m an important cog in this business!”*

*“More aware of myself and what can go wrong, I do more preventative things with health, so it doesn’t go wrong.”*

*“I have lower back problems. The workshop convinced me to lose a lot of weight. Our son also went and he lost over 20kgs.”*

Ten respondents felt the experience had connected them to other farming families in the community, and showed them there were others like them, with similar issues.

*“We were brought together through the commonalities of farming families, we didn’t need to explain anything, they know. I think for city or town people it’s hard to understand what it’s like for farming families. Other farming families just ‘get’ each other.”*

For seven people, the main impact had been in learning or being reminded that better health will make you more productive in your role on the farm, or better able to run your farm. They are more focused now on the fact that their farm operation requires them to be healthy.

*“Fitness, losing weight, will make us more productive on the farm,”*

*“The statistics highlighted fatigue as causing accidents, and also making you less productive without rest.”*

*“I prioritise my health and safety more, if you go down the farm doesn’t continue, you know?”*

Seven interviewees said they were more aware of safety and OH&S as a result of the SFF program.

Five people felt the main effect upon them was realising the importance of time off and holidays. For some this had been a profound re-examination of their lifestyle.

*“To understand that there is more to life than work.”*

*“It made me review my lifestyle, things can just roll along. You have to stop and have a look at what you’re doing. That’s with safety as well.”*

## Perception of personal health

After being asked to define what ‘good health’ means to them and then to comment on whether they saw themselves as healthy, most farmers described themselves as being healthy. It was clear from many farmers’ descriptions that this feeling of good health is attributable to the changes they have made in lifestyle and farm practices.

Thirty-one respondents characterised ‘good health’ in terms of length and quality of life, together with the experience or feeling of being healthy. This included feeling physically and mentally well, enjoying life, laughing, eating well, and seeing the kids grow up. Some also commented that health meant no pain or injuries.

*“To be physically fit, not having to rely on drugs, blood pressure tablets etc. Mainly physical fitness. The workshops emphasised that – the need to exercise. Farmers think “I’ve worked all day in the paddock...”, but they need to do proper exercise.”*

*“If you are healthy you can live a lot happier life.”*

Sixteen interviewees felt that an important component of good health was to be able to do whatever they need or want to do.

*“Being able to do everything in daily life with ease.”*

*“Feeling well, able to partake in activities of my choice.”*

Seven respondents believe health is a fundamental component of life, that it “is everything.”

*“It’s the backbone of life, without health there’s no life.”*

*“You can’t do anything without health.”*

Eighteen of the interviewees described themselves as healthy, without detailed explanation (largely referring back to the definition of good health they had given in the previous question). Five respondents specifically commented that they felt healthier now than before the SFF workshops.

*“I do feel healthy actually. I lost 10-12 kilos in the second year of the program...And I’ve kept it off.”*

Six farmers said they thought they were “not too bad”, or reasonably healthy.

*“Probably sixty-five percent. I never feel one hundred percent ...don’t know why...”*

*“Reasonably healthy. Looking forward to being healthier with the gym and watching our food, getting over injuries. In general about eighty percent”.*

Twelve respondents felt moderately healthy despite specific ailments or ongoing conditions such as back problems, high blood pressure, or being overweight.

*“I do except for weight. I used to be ok now I feel it’s impacting on me. If I could lose twenty kilos...but that’s hard!”*

*“As [healthy as] I can be. I try to eat well, and exercise, for someone with a chronic illness I’m ok! I would like to lose more weight, I’m going to!”*

Only three people interviewed characterised themselves as unhealthy, due to being overweight or having injury.

## Impact on families

There is also evidence that the program has positively impacted other family members in terms of improved diet and a more active lifestyle, improved safety practices and taking holidays. Most commonly this was spouses, but children were also positively affected.

Twenty-seven respondents said their spouses and other members of the family were more aware of health, eating well for health, getting fitter, losing weight and getting checkups. Of these, three felt the program had positively impacted upon their children’s diet and health awareness.

*“Health wise, it’s made a difference with my husband, who will quite easily eat a block of chocolate. I take skin off chicken now for him. The first year our girls were home from uni... They would have eaten badly but we said what we had learnt and were doing things differently.”*

*“Since the workshops, my youngest go to the supermarket and they read labels! They are learning about good food. I hope I’m teaching them healthy choices.”*

Six said their spouse and/or family were undertaking safer practices around the farm:

*“Husband didn’t used to wear goggles when using chainsaw etc. now wears sunglasses that wrap around his face.”*

*“Kids don’t like us making them put on helmets!”*

Three felt they and their family now took more breaks, and “don’t think of work all the time”.

*“Definitely, my husband...tries to put in some leisure time. We have had a bit of time off. It’s getting someone to look after things while we’re away though...”*

## Change in physical and mental health indicators

WDHS gathered health data from participating farmers at each of the three workshops conducted over the program. This was done through one-on-one health assessments, and covered indicators such as body mass index (BMI), waist circumference, fasting blood glucose levels, fasting blood cholesterol levels, blood pressure. Tests for respiratory conditions, scans of skin condition for identification of possible skin cancers, questions about sexual health, and standard tests of psychological distress, and family history risk factor questionnaires were also conducted. The summary presented below is drawn from the WDHS report of March 2011 (WDHS 2011).

### Baseline

The baseline data collected from 964 Victorian farmers in the 2007-08 workshop series illustrates that while the majority of participating farmers (91.6%) rated their health as good to excellent, that many in fact had poor health across a number of indicators.

The average farmer was classified overweight (average body mass index (BMI) for men was 27.43 kg/m<sup>2</sup> and for women was 27.03 kg/m<sup>2</sup>, where the ideal range is 20 – 24.9 kg/m<sup>2</sup>). Over a third (35.9%) of farmers reported experiencing moderate to very severe body pain in the four weeks prior to the workshop.

A large proportion of workshop attendees were classified as 'at-risk' across the indicators:

- 73% of men and 61% of women were overweight (BMI  $\geq$  25 kg/m<sup>2</sup>)
- 32% of men and 29% of women had high fasting glucose levels ( $\geq$ 5.5. mmol/L), indicating risk of diabetes
- 15% of men and 17% of women had high fasting cholesterol levels ( $\geq$  5.5 mmol/L), indicating risk of cardiovascular disease
- 33% of men and 21% of women had high systolic blood pressure ( $\geq$  140 mm/Hg) and 25% of men and 16% of women had high diastolic blood pressure ( $\geq$  90 mm/Hg)
- 33% of men and 47% of women had a high waist circumference (> 102 cm for men, and > 88 cm for women)

The majority of participants (69%) were referred for further medical attention following the workshops; most commonly for cardiovascular disease, diabetes or pre-diabetes assessment, skin conditions and potential skin cancers, urological and sexual/reproductive concerns, and respiratory conditions.

Farmers' personal action plans, made in the workshop, focused on weight management, farm safety, fitness, diet, health check-up, stress management and increasing leisure time, farm management, and drug and alcohol use.

### Twelve months (second year workshop)

In the second year workshops in 2008-09, twelve months after the baseline data were collected, some improvements were evident amongst the 706 returning farmers. The lifestyle changes reported by farmers in the qualitative evaluation of 2009 were successful at creating a small, statistically significant improvement in the average BMI ( $-0.08\text{kg/m}^2$ ) for the return cohort of 696 participants.

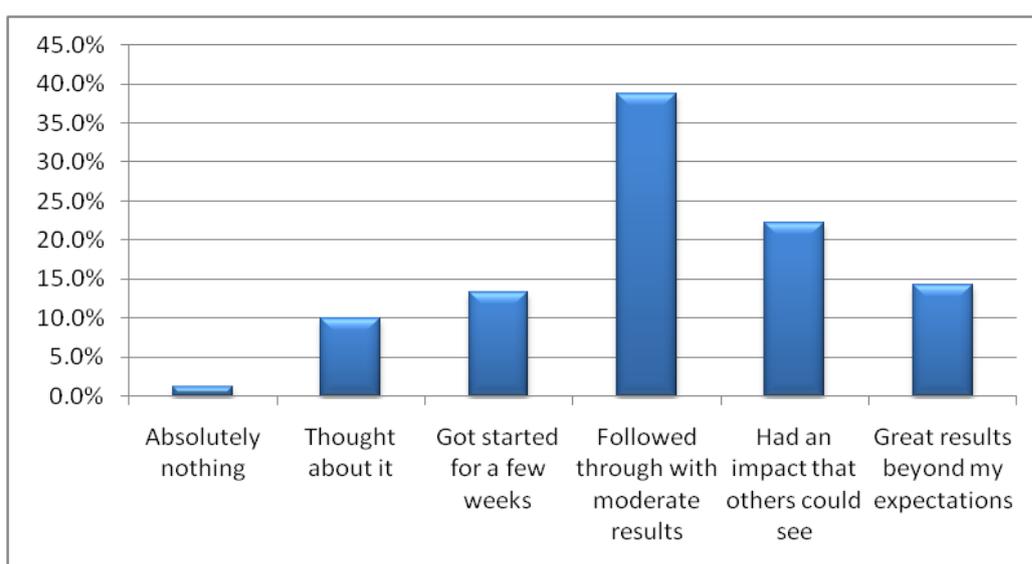
More noticeable changes were recorded in the group that had been classed as at-risk in the first workshop. Statistically significant improvements were recorded in the average values for at risk men's BMI, glucose, cholesterol, blood pressure and waist circumference, and for at risk women in all of the above except BMI (which reduced by  $0.12\text{ kg/m}^2$ , but was not statistically significant) (Table 1).

Many farmers who had recorded multiple risk factors for cardiovascular disease in the baseline had reduced their number of risk factors after 12 months. For example, all farmers who previously had five risk factors had managed to reduce this, and almost half of the farmers (46.9%) who had four risk factors had improved after the first year.

Farmers completed the Kessler K.10 scale of psychological distress in the 2008-09 workshops. 38.8% of men and 42.2% of women's results indicated that they were experiencing moderate to high levels of psychological stress. It is not clear whether any follow-up data were collected on this in the final year workshop.

Farmers reported back on the action plans that they had made in the first workshop, and the majority had been able to implement changes, as well as see results of these changes (Table 1).

**Table 1. 12 month follow-up on workshop 1 action plan of participants that had completed an action plan and returned for workshop 2 (n = 658) with 1438 responses (multiple responses) (WDHS 2011)**



Exact percentages not available from WDHS report.

Stress management featured most commonly in farmers' action planning at the second workshop, followed by weight management, fitness, farm safety, diet, health follow-ups, farm management and drug and alcohol use.

### Twenty-four months (third year workshop)

A total of 544 farmers attended all three workshops. The 2011 health outcome report (WDHS) contains data analysed only for the at-risk participants (n values vary between 79 and 328 farmers; depending on the particular indicators).

Amongst the at-risk participants who attended all three workshops, the improvements recorded in the 2008-09 workshops were not only maintained in 2009-10 data collection, but also continued to improve in many areas. Results for at-risk men showed statistically significant maintenance of effect in all health indicators and continued improvement in BMI, waist circumference, and blood pressure. Results for at-risk women show statistically significant maintenance of the 12 month reductions in glucose and cholesterol, and further improvements in waist circumference and blood pressure (Table 2).

Table 2. Mean change in clinical parameters from baseline, 12 month and 24 month for baseline at risk participants (WDHS 2011)

Participants at risk in baseline	Change from baseline to				
	12 month		24 month		
	Mean ( $\pm$ SE) Male	Mean ( $\pm$ SE) Female	Mean ( $\pm$ SE) Male	Mean ( $\pm$ SE) Female	
Body mass index (BMI) ( $\text{kg}/\text{m}^2$ ) (n=328)	-0.15 (0.06) * n=192	-0.10 (0.12) n=136	-0.27 (0.08) ** n=192	-0.06 (0.14) n=136	
Waist circumference (cm) (n=177) <sup>a</sup>	-1.07 (0.44) * n=76	-2.90 (1.10) ** n=101	-1.95 (0.46) *** n=76	-3.23 (1.10) ** n=101	
Fasting blood glucose (mmol/L) (n=148)	-0.30 (0.09) *** n=85	-0.47 (0.10) *** n=63	-0.24 (0.09) * n=85	-0.48 (0.10) *** n=63	
Fasting blood cholesterol (mmol/L) (n=79)	-0.70 (0.16) *** n=41	-0.82 (0.15) *** n=38	-0.55 (0.18) * n=41	-0.74 (0.19) ** n=38	
Blood pressure $\geq 140/90$ mmHg	Systolic (n=127) <sup>b</sup>	-8.70 (1.85) *** n=85	-10.2 (2.47) *** n=42	-9.26 (1.95) *** n=85	-15.4 (2.46) *** n=42
	Diastolic (n=95) <sup>c</sup>	-5.42 (1.28) *** n=61	-5.94 (1.74) * n=34	-9.37 (1.36) *** n=61	-10.9 (1.72) *** n=34

Significance values \*\*\* p  $\leq$  0.001, \*\* p  $\leq$  0.01, \* p  $\leq$  0.05

Based on two-tailed significance tests

<sup>a</sup> Waist circumference reading was not available for one participant at 12 months

<sup>b</sup> Blood pressure (systolic) readings were not available for eleven participants (1 from 12 month, 10 from 24 month)

<sup>c</sup> Blood pressure (diastolic) readings were not available for four participants (4 from 24 month)

## Impact on farm safety

The farmers' interviewed divided evenly in their responses between those who felt the program had not impacted on their farm safety, and those who had observed an impact; either increased awareness of safety around the farm, or practical changes.

Twenty-one of the farmers interviewed felt there had been little or no impact on their farm safety practices. The self perception of most was that they were already "up to speed" with safety on their farms, and did not need to make any changes. Three people had the perception that the SFF program had concentrated more on health than safety:

*"They didn't seem to push that side as much, to me. Tried to concentrate on health/well being more, sunscreen, hats etc."*

Eleven interviewees had spent money on farm safety, or made other practical changes around safety. People variously mentioned putting guards on equipment, sun protection, buying helmets for motorbikes, and keeping equipment in good condition. A number of farmers followed their comments by saying that they found these practices inconvenient or impractical.

*"We spend more on farm safety, silos, augers..."*

*"Making sure guards on equipment are in place. It's easier to remove a guard, but it's just flirting with death. And [we're] better with sun protection etc. I still don't wear a helmet!"*

*"I used to jump off the tractor before it stopped; now I don't. I make really sure to stop now. Next year I'll put silo holes in. Helmets for quad bike are not practical. Very cumbersome to wear as a hat etc. I'm also more careful feeding off the back of the ute. Got more guards in the dairy."*

Eleven other people said that while there had not been any practical changes on their farm, they were more aware of farm safety, chemicals, OH&S and sun protection since attending SFF workshops. One person said her husband was now more open to safety advice.

*"Awareness. With OH&S we always tried to stick to guidelines, but [workshop information] was extra ammo for helmet wearing. [Also] making sure about sunscreen."*

In the data collected in workshops, there was a significant increase from baseline to 12 months in the number of items of personal protective equipment that farmers reported they were using to work safely whilst using chemicals, outdoor tools, machinery and to protect themselves from exposure to UV radiation (WDHS 2011).

## Impact on farm management

A significant and exciting trend is the positive impact the SFF program has had on farmers' ability to manage their farms, and the links farmers are making between health and farm management.

Seventeen of the farmers interviewed made statements demonstrating that they clearly saw their farm management as dependent upon their health. They felt that the SFF program had positively impacted on their management in the sense that they had "more confidence" in the way they were doing things, were more "organised", and were able to manage mental and physical stress better. People also felt they were better able to run their farms when they were fit and well.

*"Helped with my organisation, every time I go to the farm now, I have specific things to do and get done. I set goals."*

*"My wife's most stressful time was with the new calves, I used to hear her get upset, but after the workshops, we decided to bring in help with that and with the milking. That's made a big difference."*

*"It helped that we are a bit healthier, we got through a very hard calving season, and are still fit and well."*

*"It's [the farm] more user friendly now, and that's ongoing. When you reprioritise that changes attitudes to things too. We live in area with the lowest life expectancy in the state. So, do you go for a drive on Sunday or stay and work your guts out on the farm?"*

*"It created more positivity. Sustainability – you can't work a farm if you're not healthy or in positive frame of mind. It made it easier to cope. We were going through difficult times, and the people in workshop started looking out for one another."*

The program has clearly influenced these farmers' understanding of the relationship between time away (holidays or breaks), monitoring workload, working safely, improvement in quality of life, wellness; and the resultant potential for improved management and farm productivity. Many farmers are acting on this by planning time away, and/or sourcing alternative labour as part of their farm management strategies.

However, the remaining farmers (28) did not directly link their health to farm management and productivity when asked if there had been any impacts in this area. They tended to refer to external factors such as weather, markets, and unpredictable events that occur in farming as having the largest impact on their farm management and productivity.

*"What manages a farm is the environment you work in. SFF was a lot about stress management, but they couldn't take financial pressure away. When prices collapse, telling people not to stress is like talking to a brick wall. I don't think SFF can do anything until farmers are paid at a realistic price and the market stabilised."*

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## Interview questions

### Phone interview questions for farmers after third year workshops

Gender: Female  Male

Age: 18 – 24      25-34      35-44      45-54      55-64      65+

Previous SFF workshops attended: Year 1      Year 2

Location of SFF workshop: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of farming enterprise you run: \_\_\_\_\_

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1. Can you tell me about your third SFF workshop? What was the value to you of attending this third workshop?
2. Over the last three years, what have you changed in your day to day life or farm practices as a result of your involvement in SFF?
  - a. What was easy about making these changes, or what supported you to implement them?
  - b. What was difficult about implementing these changes?
  - c. Can you see yourself maintaining these changes into the future? Why/why not?
  - d. What would help you to maintain the changes? What role do others play in you making or maintaining a change, e.g. Family/friends/peers?
  - e. What role does a process or routine play in helping you make or maintain a change?
3. Overall, what impact has SFF had upon:
  - a. You
  - b. Your spouse and/or family
  - c. Your farm safety practices and behaviours
  - d. The way you manage your farm / Your ability to manage your farm
4. What does good health mean to you? Do you feel that you are healthy?
5. Any other comments?

## Phone interview questions for farmers who did not attend third year workshops

Gender: Female  Male

Age: 18 – 24 25-34 35-44 45-54 55-64 65+

Previous SFF workshops attended: Year 1 Year 2

Location of SFF workshop: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of farming enterprise you run: \_\_\_\_\_

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1. I understand that you did not attend the third year workshop for Sustainable Farm Families in your area. Can you tell me what the reason was for this?
2. Over the last three years, what have you changed in your day to day life or farm practices as a result of your involvement in SFF workshops?
  - a. What was easy about making these changes, or what supported you to implement them?
  - b. What was difficult about implementing these changes?
  - c. Can you see yourself maintaining these changes into the future? Why/why not?
  - d. What would help you to maintain the changes?
  - e. What role do others play in you making or maintaining a change e.g. family/friends/peers?
  - f. What role does a process or routine play in helping you make or maintain a change?
3. Overall, what impact has SFF had upon:
  - a. You
  - b. Your spouse and/or family
  - c. Your farm safety practices and behaviours
  - d. The way you manage your farm / Your ability to manage your farm
4. What does good health mean to you? Do you feel that you are healthy?
5. Any other comments?