



THE PRINCE'S
COUNTRYSIDE
FUND

The Prince's Farm Resilience Programme

Helping farmers increase their resilience,
profitability and confidence



This publication is based upon an independent study commissioned by
The Prince's Countryside Fund from ADAS.
The full report can be read at princescountrysidefund.org.uk/research.



Commissioning editor: Ellie Jesson. Editors Julie Pybus and Emma Pybus. Design: VCCP



“The programme helps farms to prepare for change and build resilience in their programmes for the future. It puts farmers back in control of their business and builds their confidence to make the changes which are appropriate for their unique situation.”

*HRH The Prince of Wales
September 2020*



Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Allan Wilkinson, Chair of The Prince's Farm Resilience Programme, and the whole Steering Group who have been so instrumental in leading the delivery of this programme.

Secondly, we would like to thank Professor Michael Winter OBE, friend of The Prince's Countryside Fund, who has so generously offered his time and expertise to support the evaluation of the programme.

We are extremely grateful to the 300 participating farmers who gave up their time to contribute to this evaluation and provided such thoughtful feedback.

Finally, we could not have delivered this programme without the tremendous support of our sponsors and corporate partners.





Contents

- 4 Introduction by Keith Halstead**
Executive Director of The Prince's Countryside Fund
- 6 The key findings**
What benefits has the programme brought for farmers?
- 8 About The Prince's Farm Resilience Programme**
How we have supported nearly 1,000 farmers
- 10 Measuring our impact**
How has the programme been evaluated?
- 12 Economic impacts**
What economic benefits did the programme bring for farmers?
- 16 Social impacts**
What were the social benefits of taking part in the programme?
- 20 Environmental impacts**
How is the programme helping farmers to improve their environmental management?
- 22 Fit for the future**
How does the programme leave a legacy of support?
- 25 About The Prince's Countryside Fund**
More about our work

Introduction

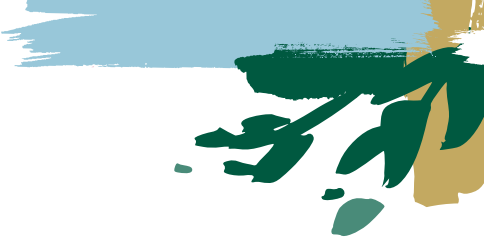
In 2016, The Prince's Countryside Fund commissioned the University of Exeter to carry out research into the viability of the small family farm, which reported that, with the correct type of support, there is no reason that these businesses cannot be viable. Furthermore, family farm businesses bring tremendous social and cultural value to the communities in which they exist. As a result of this research, and in line with our Patron, HRH The Prince of Wales's vision for thriving rural communities with farming at their heart, we founded The Prince's Farm Resilience Programme.

Now in its fifth year, the programme has been successful in assisting nearly 1,000 "hard-to-reach" farming families throughout the UK understand their businesses better. The Prince's Farm Resilience Programme encourages all the family to become involved; in turn, this encourages open and honest discussion about the future of their farm. Farmers who have participated in the programme have given really good feedback on their experience, and we are delighted that, through ADAS, we have now had the opportunity to independently evaluate the programme's impact and inform the direction of our future support for farm businesses at this critical time of change for the countryside.

ADAS concluded that the programme had considerable economic, social and environmental benefits for individual farms and, in particular, a significantly higher percentage of beneficiaries reported cost savings and increases in profitability as a result of taking part when compared with a control group of similar farm businesses, who did not. As we progress through the agricultural transition across all parts of the UK – and manage the uncertainty that goes with this – it is clear that farmers want the type of support offered by The Prince's Farm Resilience Programme to continue. We have also learned that through the development of our local networks, significant value is added.



“It was estimated that for every £1 invested in farming families through the programme, £3 of value was created for them.”



Of particular merit, it was estimated that for every £1 invested in farming families through the programme, £3 of value was created for them. We anticipate that this benefit will only increase over time. This demonstrates the exceptional value for money offered by The Prince's Farm Resilience Programme; with many farm businesses struggling to make a profit from their farming activities alone, we are delighted to have evidence that our intervention derives real cost benefits. The Prince's Farm Resilience Programme is unique among farming advice services in its approach of providing a series of workshops and continuous one-to-one support for farmers, alongside bringing farmers together to form long-term networks through which they can co-operate and take part in peer-to-peer learning. Other farm advisory services usually show a zero cost benefit ratio and only offer one-off or short-term group support.

This report also demonstrates how The Prince's Farm Resilience Programme increases the confidence of farming families in Britain. Confidence in their decision-making allows farmers to make their businesses more adaptable and helps build their resilience to change. This is more important now than ever, as farm businesses are adapting their business plans to make the most of new environmental opportunities on offer.

We are delighted to share this summary of the findings of ADAS' independent evaluation of The Prince's Farm Resilience Programme, and look forward to implementing them to help provide even greater support to British farming families, as The Prince's Countryside Fund creates a real future for rural Britain.



Keith Halstead
Executive Director
The Prince's Countryside Fund

The key findings

“It is clear from the evidence gathered in this work that The Prince’s Farm Resilience Programme is having a considerable economic, social and environmental impact for individual farms.”

ADAS Researchers



58% of farmers reported increases in profitability.

32% of farmers reported cost savings.

73% of farmers reported improved business skills.

46% of farmers improved their succession planning.

173 farmers reported an increase in farm investment, with a median value of £7,500.



The Prince's Farm Resilience Programme is cost efficient and good value for money, with a return for farmers of around £3 for every £1 invested by the programme – not including ongoing benefits to farmers which continue after they have completed the programme.



Farmers rated the programme workshops highly, with an average score of between 3.6 and 4.2 out of 5.



Participating farms saw economic benefits of up to £9,800 per year.



Many farmers said they have gained more awareness of environmental issues with 36% having taken part in government agri-environment schemes.



Farmers said that 60% to 80% of improvements in productivity were due to their participation in the programme.



Farmers said they had more confidence in managing their business, stronger connections with their communities and better well-being in comparison with those who hadn't taken part in the programme.

About The Prince's Farm Resilience Programme

From 2016 to 2020, nearly 1,000 farmers have received support through The Prince's Farm Resilience Programme, which offers free business skills training to family farms across the UK.

The programme helps farmers to maximise their profit and resilience through one-to-one support and a series of workshops which focus on topics including business planning, finance, and environmental management.

Group activities provide participants with the opportunity to learn from each other, meet other local farmers, and help to reduce feelings of isolation, while our Farm Resilience Network gives access to additional training and an ongoing system of local support.

At a time of change, The Prince's Farm Resilience Programme helps farmers to build resilience, take advantage of opportunities and create a sustainable and profitable farming business which is fit for the future.





Farmers' journey through The Prince's Farm Resilience Programme



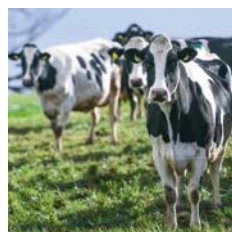
Measuring our impact

In 2020, The Prince's Countryside Fund commissioned agricultural research consultancy ADAS to independently evaluate the impact that The Prince's Farm Resilience Programme had between 2016 and 2020.

We know that more and more farmers are experiencing financial difficulty, and falling product prices mean that half of all farmers aren't making a living from farming outputs alone.

It's also a time of unprecedented change, with the UK's exit from the EU, the Agriculture Act 2020 and the Environment Bill in England and new agricultural policies in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales all posing new challenges for farmers.

Farms make vital contributions to their local communities and to the agricultural sector, and as economic pressures on farmers increase, we wanted to make sure that The Prince's Farm Resilience Programme is effective in its aims of helping farmers adapt to change and make their businesses more profitable and sustainable.





ADAS carried out the following research:

- Phone and online surveys: 300 surveys were carried out with programme beneficiaries, and 67 with non-beneficiaries, gathering data on farm investment, economic performance, succession planning, and other key areas.
- In-depth interviews: 23 in-depth interviews gave more detailed financial data and a better understanding of the impacts of taking part in the programme.
- Comparison with national trends: An analysis of national trends provided a benchmark against which to measure the progress of farms that have taken part in the programme.

ADAS talked to participants from the first four years of the programme, and farmers from England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

How have farmers benefited?

Economic impacts

1. Achieving business objectives

When starting The Prince's Farm Resilience Programme, farmers are asked to list up to three objectives they'd like to achieve. These range from improving their understanding of finances to making connections with other local farmers.



“Working out what enterprise is profitable and what isn't.”

83% of participants say that they fully or partly achieved their objectives. 37 farmers were also able to give an estimate of the economic benefits that resulted from achieving their objectives – the average was £9,800 per year.

“Have our minds opened to see different opportunities.”



“Be further down the route to achieving diversification.”

2. Building better business performance

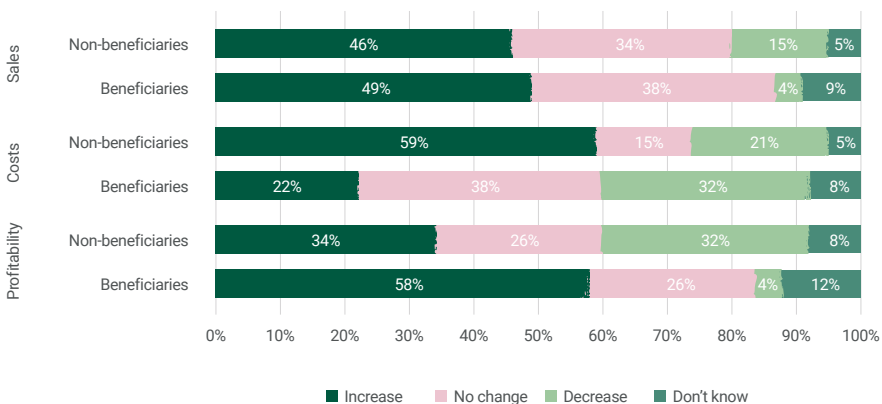
Comparisons between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of The Prince's Farm Resilience Programme suggest that, on the whole, farms that took part in the programme demonstrated better business performance:

58% of farmers reported increases in profitability

49% reported increases in farm sales

32% reported decreases in farm costs

Farmers said that 60% to 80% of improvements in productivity were due to their participation in the programme.



Changes in sales, costs and profits, comparing beneficiaries of The Prince's Farm Resilience Programme with non-beneficiaries

Case study

Making changes to increase profit

During their in-depth interview with the researchers, one farmer described how they had **increased their profit by around £4,000** a year after taking part in the programme.

The programme gave them the confidence and financial knowledge to make changes to their business, including the size of their flock, improving the percentage of lambing, and lambing a month later, which led to reduced feeding costs and maximised grass usage. The introduction of strip grazing also allowed for better grass recovery.



3. Improving skills

Farmers who took part in the programme said that they saw an improvement in a range of areas including business skills, business administration, information sources used in decision-making, and succession planning.



4. Becoming more resilient

Farmers reported they had made changes to their businesses after taking part in the programme, in order to become more resilient and adaptable to future change:

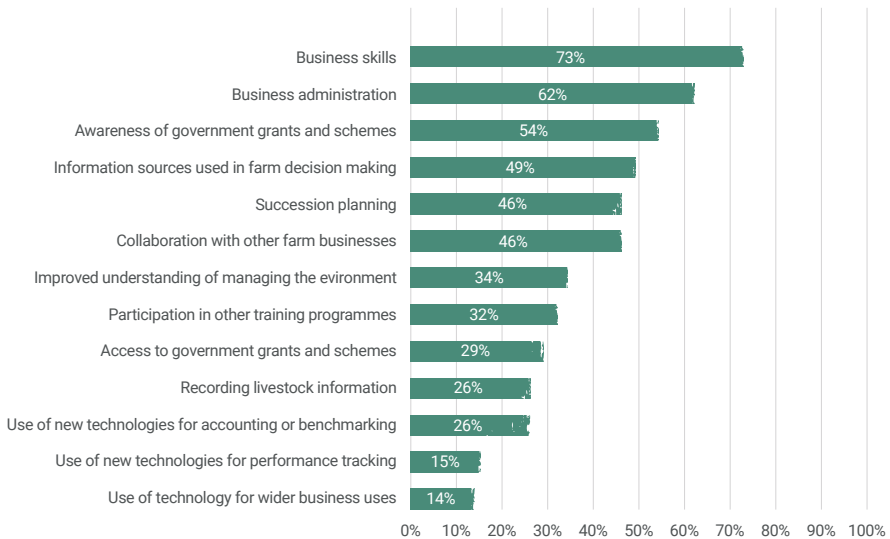
58% made organisational changes

23% made changes relating to succession planning

23% diversified their business



Percentage of farmers reporting an improvement in various aspects of their farm business





How have farmers benefited?

Social impacts

1. Increasing farmers' confidence

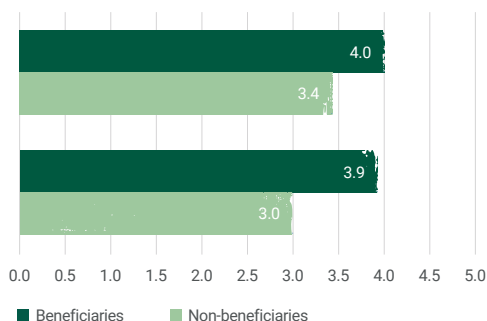
Farmers said they felt more confident in managing their business and in making decisions.

“Definitely more confidence and more positive in making decisions – it’s allowed me to focus on a way through.”

People who had taken part in the programme rated their confidence in making changes to their business more highly than those who hadn’t taken part, and 75% said they were ‘often or always experimenting with change to their business’.

Confidence in the management of your farm business

Confidence in making decisions

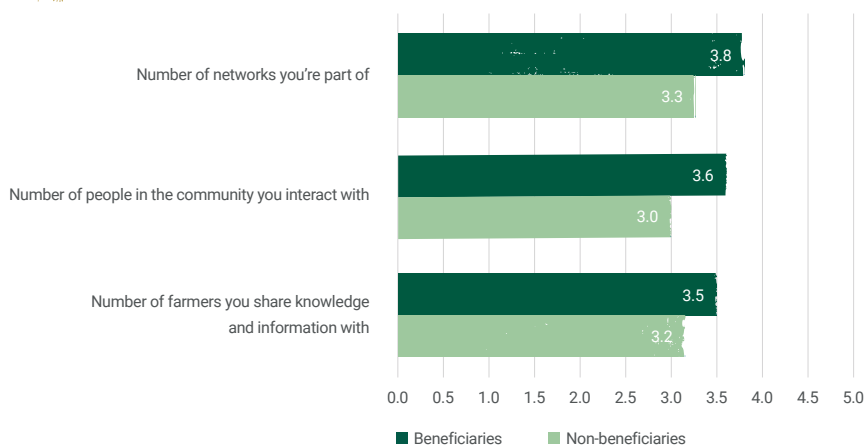


The impact of the programme on farmers' confidence vs non-participants (Farmers were asked to score their confidence on a scale of 1-5)



2. Strengthening networks

Farmers said they're part of more networks having taken part in The Prince's Farm Resilience Programme – they interact with more people from their local community, and they share knowledge with more farmers.



The impact of The Prince's Farm Resilience Programme on farmers' networks vs non-participants (Farmers were asked to score their networks on a scale of 1-5)

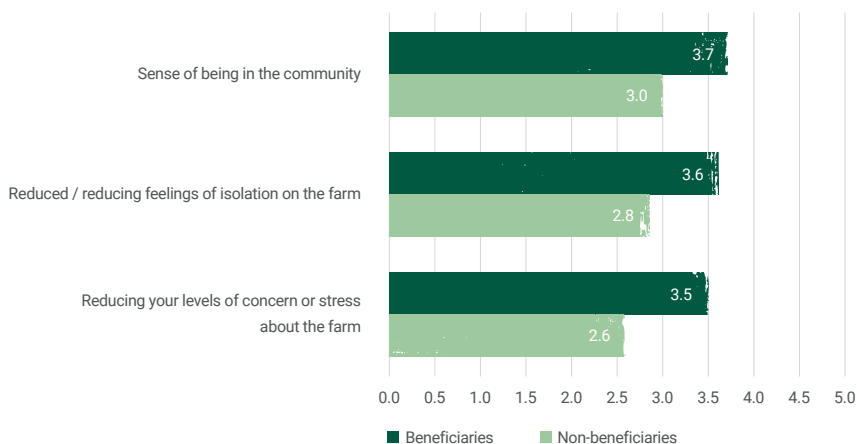
“We are a dairy group of six to eight farmers who formed a group and have looked round each other’s farms. A farmer’s wife, also a teacher, organises this now and it’s been running three years. We’ve had a Christmas lunch and three meetings a year on farm. It was initiated by the coordinator who organised us initially.”





3. Boosting well-being

Farmers reported that taking part in the programme boosted their well-being, with a better sense of being part of the local community, reduced feelings of isolation on the farm and lower levels of stress.



The impact of The Prince's Farm Resilience Programme on well-being vs non-participants (Farmers were asked to score their well-being on a scale of 1-5)

How have farmers benefited?

Environmental impacts

In the last year, a workshop on environmental assets has been added to The Prince's Farm Resilience Programme, and an increase in farmers' awareness of environmental management has already been reported, especially through signposting to grants and advice on agri-environmental schemes (54% of participants mentioned this as a benefit).

36% of farmers said they've taken part in government agri-environment schemes as a result of the programme.

28% said they hadn't yet taken part in an agri-environmental scheme, but plan to in the future.

Farmers were asked if they felt the programme had increased their awareness of the environment. An average score of 4 (where 1 = strong negative impact and 5 = strong positive impact) was given.

“We were able to move into Higher Level Stewardship as a result of the programme which we would not have been able to do without it. We took a lot of wet and shaded areas out of production.”





Fit for the future

It's clear that The Prince's Farm Resilience Programme is having a significant economic, social and environmental impact on UK farmers, helping them become fit for the future.

The research also shows that it's good value for money, with a return for farmers of around £3 for every £1 invested by the programme – not including ongoing benefits to farmers which continue after they've completed the programme.

Farmers rated all the workshops highly, with an average score of between 3.6 and 4.2 out of 5. Furthermore, the programme's Farm Resilience Network gives farmers access to ongoing peer learning, and a programme of training and events.



“Really good
and welcoming,
very well organised
and set up”



At a time of change, and with pressure and uncertainty for farmers only likely to increase over the next five to ten years, this kind of programme is more important than ever in helping family farms to thrive.



“The programme has made us think about what we need to do, to look further than one day at a time and to plan for the future, to have a goal to aim for and know what we want to achieve.”



Find out more about The Prince's Farm Resilience Programme, how to participate in it, and read the full evaluation report at www.princescountrysidefund.org.uk.





About The Prince's Countryside Fund

Founded by HRH The Prince of Wales in 2010, The Prince's Countryside Fund is the only UK-wide charity that empowers family farms and rural communities to ensure their future.

The countryside is our most valuable asset, and farmers and rural communities are the lifeblood of the British countryside. They maintain our iconic landscapes – 70% of the land in the UK is under the stewardship of farmers. The countryside forms a vital part of our heritage and the very fabric of our British identity. It is farmers who created this harmony between humanity and nature, and who look after our countryside to ensure it is there for future generations to enjoy.

The countryside, what it does, what it produces and what it offers, has an impact on us all. The Prince's Countryside Fund wishes to see a thriving countryside – a living, breathing, working place that it is there for everyone. Our work coalesces around three pillars: enabling family farms to thrive, building confident rural communities, and inspiring support. We achieve these aims through our programmes and initiatives, from providing free business skills and environmental management training to farming families, to investing in essential rural services.

We have significant ambitions for the next three years: extending our reach to help 10,000 family farms, increasing our work with rural communities to assist them in becoming more self-sufficient and viable through community-led solutions, investing at least £500,000 each year through our grant programmes, and strengthening our networks of support.



A real future for rural Britain

The Prince's Countryside Fund
105 Victoria Street, Westminster, London, SW1E 6QT

www.princescountrysidefund.org.uk

The Prince's Countryside Fund Charity No. England and Wales 1136077
and Scotland SC048055. Company No. 7240359