



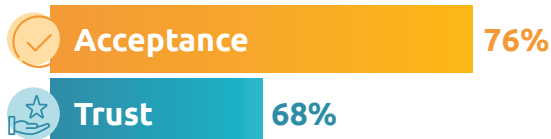
Rural industries growing in their importance to Australians

Year Three Key Insights – August 2022

Rural industries (fishers, farmers and foresters) embarked on this research program in 2019 committed to the development of a deeper understanding of the role and drivers of community trust in their respective industries.

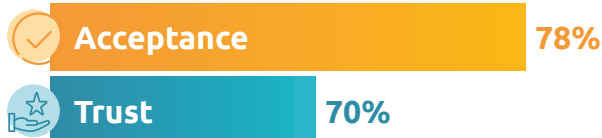
Strong community trust in rural industries

Year Three (early 2022)



88.2% of respondents agree rural industries are important to our way of life in this country.

Year Two (late 2020)



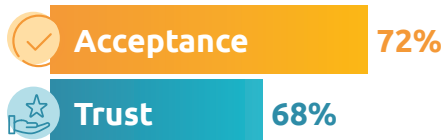
3/4 of respondents agreed that exporting rural industries products is good for Australia.

Year One (May 2020: COVID-19 Pulse)



85% of respondents agree that strong regional communities are important for producing safe, high-quality food and fibre products in Australia.

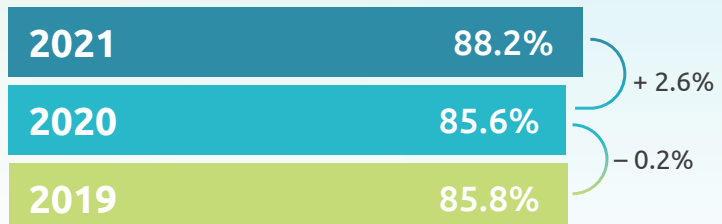
Year One (late 2019)



82.6% of respondents agree that rural industries generate significant local jobs in regional areas.



Rural industries are important to our way of life in Australia

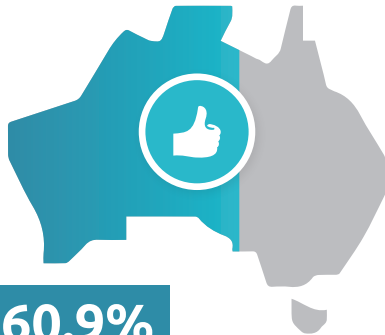


Percent of sample supporting statement

Rural industries are seen as responsible stewards of the land and sea



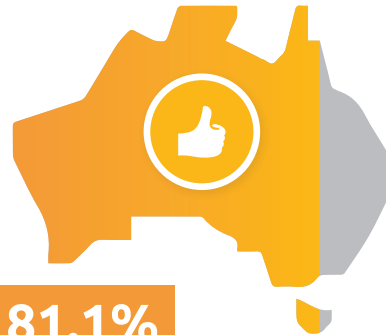
Environmental responsibility and industry responsiveness are the chief drivers of trust in rural industries.



60.9%

agree that farmers, fishers and foresters are responsible stewards of the land and sea

(consistent with Year two and up from 56.4% in Year one).



81.1%

believe environmental management is a shared responsibility across all rural industries

(consistently averaged around 80% across all three years).



85%

of respondents agreed that "Fishers' and farmers' business suffers if they don't look after their local environment."

Attitudes have shifted in the last three years



Support for the view that "Water should only be used by agricultural industries after ensuring the environment has enough" **decreased by almost 5% in 2021.**

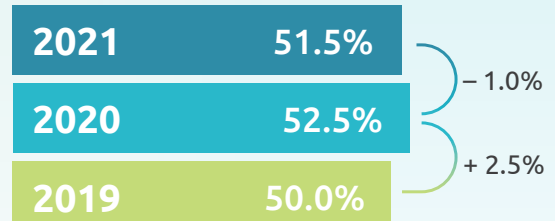


The view that "Protecting the environment is more important than protecting people's jobs" **declined by almost 10% since 2019.**

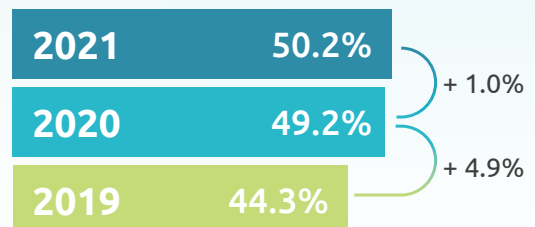
Responsiveness of rural industries to community concerns remains high



Rural industries in Australia listen to and respect community opinion



Rural industries in Australia are prepared to change their practices in response to community concerns



Percent of sample supporting statement

Food safety and chemical use



Confidence that food produced in Australia adheres to strict food safety standards has **declined by more than 9%, to 75.2%, since 2019.**



42% of respondents are more concerned about chemicals in food, which impacts their support for the potential benefits of using chemicals for soil health objectives.



Support for the use of agvet chemicals such as glyphosate was strong where it **enabled better soil health (49% agreement)**, but there was less support regarding its use for increasing production (31%).

Consumer behaviour considered more powerful than government regulation



There is **declining confidence in government regulation** to ensure rural industries are made accountable for sound environmental and ethical practices.



The community feels there is **greater power in consumer spending/behaviour** to drive appropriate farming behaviour.



Australians also see the **responsibility for ethical choices** by rural industries being in part dependent on their own positions as **expressed through choices at the supermarket.**



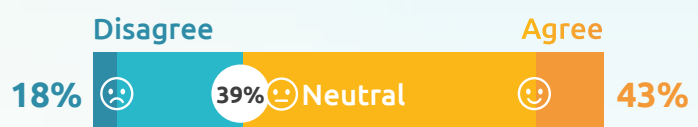
There is strong sentiment that **transparent and sustainable farming practices will deliver greater profits** for rural industries.



Demand from consumers for ethical produce means farmers are incentivised to act ethically



Government regulations mean the best business for rural industry in usually also the most ethical



Demand from consumers for ethical produce means ethical behaviour is profitable for farmers

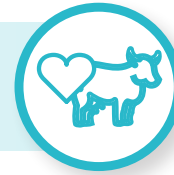


Animal welfare considered a complex issue



58.5% of respondents **believe farmers treat animals with dignity and respect**, while only 14% disagreed and 27.5% were neutral.

71% do not believe it is unrealistic to expect **cattle farmers to care about animal welfare**.

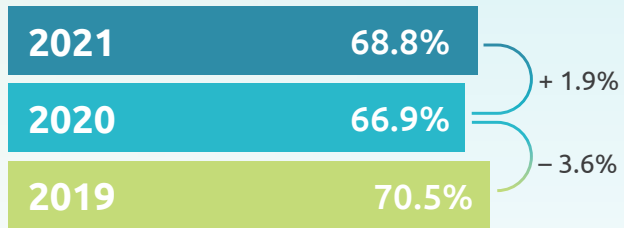


43% of Australians **think about fish and livestock differently** in the context of animal welfare.

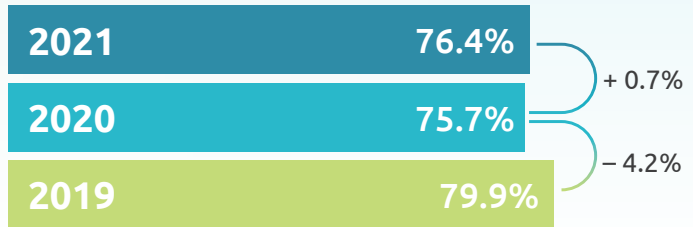
41% of respondents agreed **profitability will always push farmers to cut corners** around animal welfare.



Animal welfare in Australian rural industries is a complex issue



The welfare of animals is not just about the absence of harm to them



Percent of sample supporting statement

Knowledge of the challenges rural industries face



- ✓ **The more that community members indicate they understand the challenges rural industries face** (e.g. managing through drought, navigating the complexities of welfare management, balancing the need for fertiliser use with the potential consequences of runoff), **the more they trust rural industries**.
- ✓ The more people that **community members know personally** who work in rural industries, **the higher their level of self-reported understanding and trust**.

This research has shown that the risks and opportunities of community expectation in this relationship are not constrained by what crop or product is created, but by the capacity of rural industries to foster a collective approach to the issues that contribute to community sentiment where appropriate, and to develop industry-level strategies that clearly speak to this broader commitment.

Priorities for industry



Be **responsive** to community attitudes and communicate any changes.



Proactively engage on areas of community concern, and in turn **respond to breaking issues and crises quickly**.



Demonstrate responsiveness through action.



Respond productively and consistently.



Use **popular channels to communicate** action and **engage** directly with the community, particularly on issues of uncertainty.

How can industry do this?



Map industry practices and **critically review them against the key drivers of trust**.



Understand your industry's environmental impact and identify strategies and plans to mitigate those impacts.



Build a **regular process for listening to community concerns** around environmental impacts and other issues, acknowledging these concerns, and responding to them proactively rather than defensively.



Become more proactive in the areas the community identified they are uncertain about – fill the void with information.

About the program

The Community Trust in Rural Industries program is a cross-sector initiative involving eleven Rural Research and Development Corporations (RDCs), the National Farmers' Federation (NFF) and the NSW Department of Primary Industries to build the capacity of food and fibre industries to productively engage with the community.

Year Three of the Community Trust in Rural Industries program of work has delivered deeper insights into the pathways to community trust and acceptance for Australia's farmers, fishers, and foresters. With 4,969 surveys of Australian citizens included in the Year Three analyses and 19,194 participating in the three annual surveys since 2019, this program represents a significant dataset of community attitudes toward rural industries.

The nature of this program means we are able to see changes across time and make visible the perspectives and expectations of the Australian community as they evolve and respond to changes in the environment, industry engagement and social context (e.g. the onset of COVID-19).

Voconiq is an Australian data science company built on a platform of research developed by Australia's national science agency, CSIRO.

For further information
www.agrifutures.com.au/national-rural-issues/community-trust/

