

SUMMARY REPORT NUMBER 4: FARMER WELLBEING

This report is one of a series of reports summarizing outcomes from a project completed for the Department of the Environment: "Graziers with better profitability, biodiversity and well-being", funded under the National Environmental Science Program.

Overview:

This project showed that regenerative management practices have potential to increase the health of Australia's grassy woodlands and at the same time improve financial and farmer wellbeing outcomes. This report summarizes farmer wellbeing findings. Substantial Land Health and Farm profit benefits were also measured on the 16 properties in the sample and are summarized in further reports.

Regenerative grazing managers in this study had the following characteristics:

- Significantly higher wellbeing than other similar farmers.
- Were much more satisfied with their health,
- Significantly more satisfied with their future security,
- Happier with what they were achieving in life and their personal relationships.
- Much less likely to report being in fair or poor health

Overall, the results show that Regenerative Managers had significantly higher wellbeing than comparison groups of graziers.

Background:

For some decades, regenerative land managers have claimed that their production practices have led to regeneration of ecological functions and biodiversity and this has enabled them to generate a strong and stable level of farm profit. Claims have been made that regenerative farming can also improve farmer wellbeing. This study tests these claims.

Wellbeing:

The wellbeing of farmers is important for several reasons. A person with high levels of wellbeing – broadly defined as a high quality of life and positive mental health – is better able to cope with challenges, more likely to embrace change, better able to contribute to their community, and less likely to access support services.

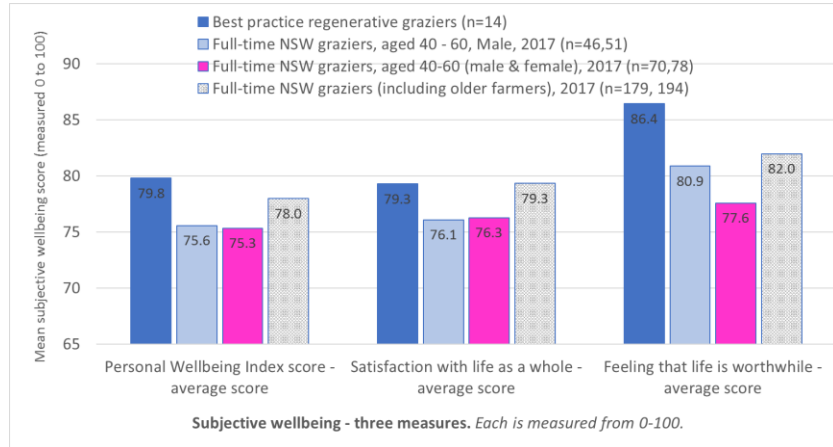
There is growing interest in strategies that can better protect the wellbeing of farmers and reduce the risk of poor mental health. Regenerative farming represents a system of land management that changes how farmers think and make decisions about land management. It has been linked by proponents to higher wellbeing.

Given the sample size in this project some caution with the interpretation of results is warranted.

Subjective health and wellbeing

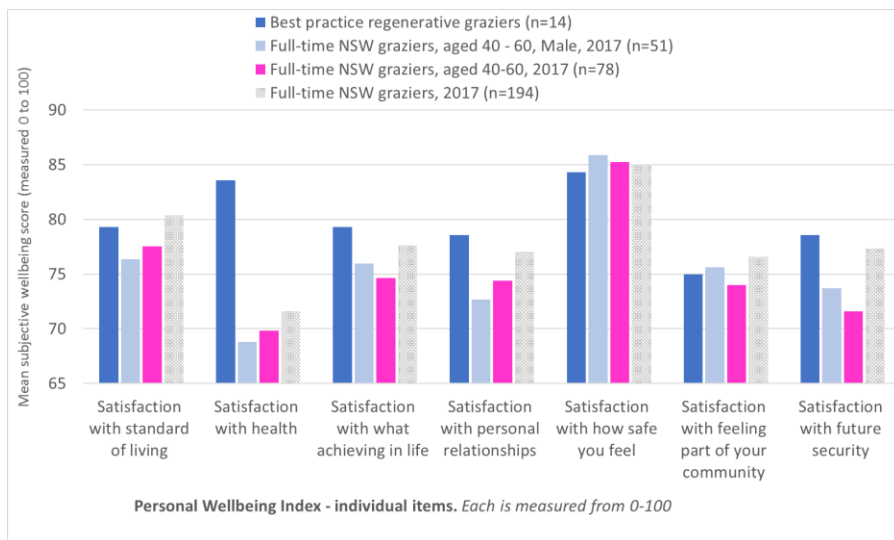
This section examines the wellbeing of regenerative graziers to comparable graziers. To do this, the subjective wellbeing was measured using identical measures to those used in the Regional Wellbeing Survey (RWS). This enabled the subjective wellbeing of the regenerative managers to be compared to similar graziers.

The group of regenerative farmers in this study had significantly higher wellbeing than other similar farmers.



Subjective wellbeing of best practice regenerative graziers compared to other graziers

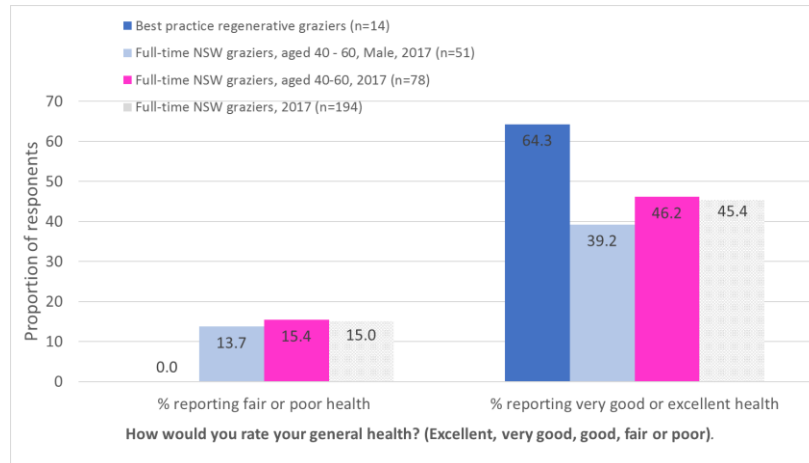
The regenerative farmers were also much more satisfied with their health, and significantly more satisfied with their future security, what they were achieving in life, and their personal relationships. They were also slightly more satisfied with their standard of living.



Personal Wellbeing Index comparison of best practice regenerative graziers and other graziers

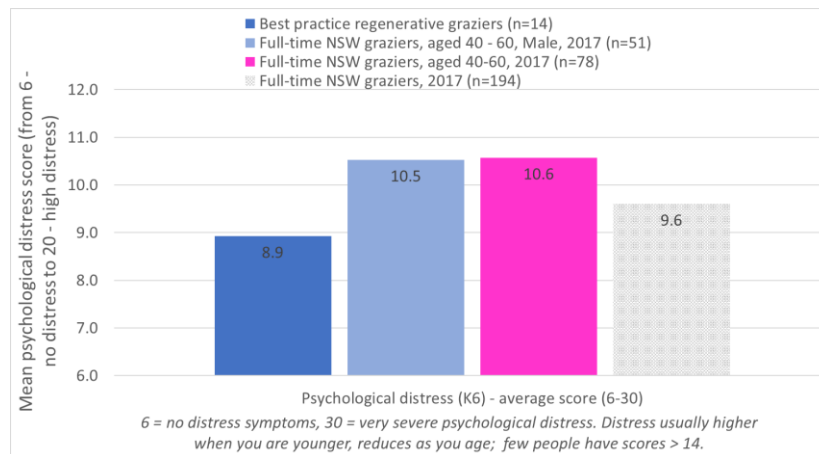
To further examine the large difference in satisfaction with health, we examined the 'general health' measure. This measure asks participants to self-rate their health as being excellent, very good, good, fair or poor. It has been shown to be a robust predictor of objectively measured health outcomes.

Regenerative farmers were much less likely to report being in fair or poor health and much more likely to report being in very good or excellent health than average. This again suggests better health amongst regenerative managers compared to other graziers of similar age.



General health of best practice regenerative graziers compared to other graziers

The project also compared psychological distress levels. Psychological distress is a measure of what is sometimes termed 'illbeing'. Regenerative managers reported slightly but not significantly lower levels of distress compared to other groups.



Psychological distress of best practice regenerative graziers compared to other graziers

Overall, the results show that Regenerative Managers had significantly higher wellbeing than comparison groups of graziers, consistent with the argument made by proponents that engaging in regenerative grazing is positive for their wellbeing.

Further information, more project summaries or to obtain a copy of the full 91 page report please contact us. A workshop is being prepared that presents the projects findings, this will be available from November 2018.

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