



FACT SHEET | MAY 2024

# Building resilience to climate extremes

## Part 3: Personal and social risks and resilience



### About the Building Resilience Series

The five-part series from the Soil Wealth ICP project presents a risk-based approach to assessing resilience to climate extremes and impacts for vegetable and melon businesses. The series encourages growers to complete their own risk assessment and action plan for improving resilience as required. It presents a model of farm resilience that focuses on four interlinked areas of a business:

- Overview: Getting ready for changing conditions
- Part 1: Financial risk and resilience
- Part 2: Farm management risk and resilience
- Part 3: Personal and social risk and resilience
- Part 4: Environmental risk and resilience

Links to additional resources are provided in each fact sheet.

The Building Resilience Series has been produced to help Australian vegetable and melon growers to:

- Look at risk and resilience across multiple connected areas of the business
- Create a useful action plan for addressing individual risks and improving overall adaptability to climate extremes

- Find other helpful sources of information and support on the areas of risk and resilience.

Part 3 of the Building Resilience Series focuses on the personal and social risks and resilience of a vegetable or melon business

### KEY MESSAGES

- Resilience means being prepared and able to cope and adapt when unexpected and extreme events happen.
- Building financial resilience by addressing business capacity and liabilities increases the ability of a business to respond to shocks, take advantage of opportunities, and recover effectively when needed.
- This guide provides resources and suggestions on assessing and improving business resilience through risk-based planning and actions.



## What is climate resilience and why does it matter?

**Resilience measures the ability of a system, such as a business, to absorb, respond to and recover from shocks<sup>1</sup>.**

In agriculture, this is influenced by the degree of a farm's overall risk, the ability to reduce risks and to adapt to change in the medium to long-term.

## Personal and social risks and resilience

Extreme weather events and prolonged uncertainty cause significant stress and can negatively impact health and wellbeing of all people in the business. Mental health is one key aspect of personal and social resilience. The disruptions caused by climatic events, whether that's crop failure, social isolation, reduced resources, financial hardship or longer work hours, can trigger conditions like depression and anxiety in all people<sup>2</sup>. Research has shown that many farmers are masters of coping positively and that family support, sharing the hardship with others and a sense of community belonging contribute to their resilience<sup>3</sup>.

### Health, wellbeing and support are paramount to responding effectively to change

- Community, family and personal health and wellbeing
- Connection to support networks
- Farm safety for family and staff
- Succession or transition planning
- Positive business culture
- Community leadership
- Education and training



**Figure 1:** Personal and social risk and resilience are key parts of the bigger picture of farm business resilience

1 Hughes, N, Burns, K, Ying Soh, W and Lawson, K 2020, Measuring drought risk: the exposure and sensitivity of Australian farms to drought, Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES), Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment

2 Luong, TT, Handley, T, Austin, EK, Kiem, AS, Rich, JL and Kelly, B 2021, New Insights Into the Relationship Between Drought and Mental Health Emerging from the Australian Rural Mental Health Study, *Frontiers in Psychiatry* volume 12

3 Caldwell, K and Boyd, CP 2009, Coping and resilience in farming families affected by drought, *Rural and Remote Health* volume 9



**Table 1:** Example questions and strategies to consider when assessing personal and social and resilience.

Potential areas of risk	Key questions to ask	Possible actions
Personal and family health and wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the state of personal health and support?</li> <li>• What is the state of family member health and support?</li> <li>• What is the state of employee health and support?</li> <li>• Do family members communicate well?</li> <li>• Do you regularly communicate with staff and family members in the business?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake a health and wellbeing assessment with support from a GP</li> <li>• Locate health support services in the local area</li> <li>• Seek mental health support through a counsellor, psychologist or another support service (see a list at <a href="http://farmerhealth.org.au/support">farmerhealth.org.au/support</a>)</li> <li>• Assess dietary health, e.g., through the <a href="#">CSIRO Healthy Diet Score</a> or contact a local GP</li> <li>• Make time to talk to your people and not only about work</li> </ul>
Support networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there ways to get involved in addressing community needs?</li> <li>• Is there regular community interaction?</li> <li>• Can essential services be accessed?</li> <li>• Can the business support community initiatives such as food banks?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Join community networks for support, e.g., <a href="#">National Rural Women's Coalition</a>, <a href="#">Australian Men's Shed Association</a>, <a href="#">Landcare</a>, <a href="#">Australian Women in Agriculture</a>, <a href="#">Farmers for Climate Action</a>, or other local groups.</li> <li>• Consider joining a local volunteer group to assist and connect with community. Groups can be located through the Go Volunteer directory.</li> <li>• Find support services through a regional or national directory, or an Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation</li> </ul>
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could physical and mental safety be improved for workers and family on the farm?</li> <li>• Does the farm have a supportive culture, especially in tough times?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn about improving farm safety (see resources in table 2 on page 5)</li> <li>• Implement plans to improve farm safety as required to comply with relevant legislation</li> <li>• Assess psychosocial safety as well as physical safety on the farm</li> </ul>



Potential areas of risk	Key questions to ask	Possible actions
Education and training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What education and training are available (individual, family, staff)?</li> <li>• What time or capacity can be committed to further training and what would be the payoff?</li> <li>• How/where to access further training and education?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact a VegNet Regional Development Officer (RDO)</li> <li>• Explore options for training and education, e.g., through Farm Table's <a href="#">ag courses database</a> or <a href="#">Open Universities Australia</a></li> <li>• Contact local TAFE colleges, which may host courses on request; this includes short courses and courses delivered on farm such as forklift training or ChemCert</li> <li>• Contact the local National Resource Management (NRM) organisation to ask about opportunities</li> <li>• Ask others in the community for ideas</li> <li>• Take part in extension and training events by projects from the vegetable levy</li> </ul>

## CASE STUDY: BUILDING FINANCIAL RESILIENCE

Three farmers in South Australia's Yorke Peninsula started the Fat Farmers Rural Health Initiative after the realisation that their fitness had dropped drastically in their 40s when they stopped playing footy.



Greg Hean, Ben Wundersitz and Scott Hoyle started a social gym group to improve their health and wellbeing through physical activity. Their group has since expanded to a movement with over 20 individual groups in South Australia and Victoria now listed on the [Fat Farmers website](#). The goal of the groups is to organise community-led, weekly fitness classes, which range from morning walks to gym or personal training sessions.

Founder and chairman Ben Wundersitz said, *"The benefits of fitness and just simply getting together with mates is brilliant. We help new groups get going with initial funding and then find the groups pretty much run themselves."*

The Fat Farmers website encourages anyone living in rural Australia to get involved, with options to join an existing group, start a new one, or even join in 'from anywhere'.

**Sources:** [Fat Farmers Rural Health Initiative](#) and [Australia Rural and Regional News](#)



## Further resources

**Table 2:** Further resources for financial risk and resilience

Source	Resource
AgHealth Australia	Free farm safety resources for farmers – <a href="https://aghealth.sydney.edu.au/resources/resources-for-farmers/">aghealth.sydney.edu.au/resources/resources-for-farmers/</a>
Better Health	Advice on safe manual handling for farms – <a href="https://betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/farm-safety-manual-handling">betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/farm-safety-manual-handling</a>
Farmsafe Australia	Farm safety talks, podcasts, library and tools – <a href="https://farmsafe.org.au/resources">farmsafe.org.au/resources</a>
Farmsafe Australia	Improving workplace culture and psychosocial safety on your farm – <a href="https://farmsafe.org.au/resources">farmsafe.org.au/resources</a>
National Centre for Farmer Health	Farmer Wellbeing Toolkit – <a href="https://farmerhealth.org.au/farmer-wellbeing-toolkit">farmerhealth.org.au/farmer-wellbeing-toolkit</a>
National Centre for Farmer Health	Links to social and emotional wellbeing support – <a href="https://farmerhealth.org.au/support">farmerhealth.org.au/support</a>
National Farmers Federation	National Farmer’s Federation Leadership programs – <a href="https://nff.org.au/programs/leadership/">nff.org.au/programs/leadership/</a>
SafeWork NSW	The A-Z of Farm Safety – <a href="https://safework.nsw.gov.au">safework.nsw.gov.au</a>
University of Western Australia	Review of the social impacts of drought – <a href="https://gsdc.wa.gov.au/app/uploads/2022/07/Understanding-the-Social-Impacts-of-Drought-UWA.pdf">gsdc.wa.gov.au/app/uploads/2022/07/Understanding-the-Social-Impacts-of-Drought-UWA.pdf</a>

