Farm Fitness Checklist




# Partners

This Farm Fitness Checklist has been developed by Dairy Australia in collaboration with the NSW Department

of Primary Industries and Agriculture Victoria. It will be used to support the roll out of the Farm Business Resilience Program, a key initiative of the Australian Government’s Future Drought Fund.



The checklist is designed to assist all Australian farmers to be more prepared and better planned, ultimately making them more resilient and able to meet challenges and grasp opportunities.

Dairy Australia would like to acknowledge the support of the Gardiner Dairy Foundation and DairyNZ.

The Gardiner Dairy Foundation has supported the development and roll out of the Our Farm, Our Plan program to all dairy farmers, reinforcing the value

of the dairy industry working together. DairyNZ kindly gave permission to Dairy Australia to adapt their Farm Fitness Checklist for use in the Our Farm, Our Plan program, another example of Trans‑Tasman collaboration

providing benefit to Australasian dairy farmers.



**Farm Business Resilience Program**

# Farm Fitness Checklist

## WHERE ARE YOU AND YOUR FARM AT NOW?

A fit and healthy farm business provides the platform needed to achieve your goals (business and personal), and be profitable and resilient

in the long term.

How well do you and your partners know your farm

and your business, and its fitness for the future?

Use this checklist to assess where you’re at now

and to help identify opportunities for improvement. It also suggests where to go to get the information, resources and support you need to make it happen.

## NOW, WHERE, HOW?

Completing the checklist will give you a good sense about where you and your business are at now.

This is an important step in the planning process, followed by clearly identifying your ‘where and how’ and, preferably, getting it down on paper.

Review

Do It !

Now

How

**s**

Where


# How to use this checklist

This process will help you to focus on what’s achievable — none of us

can do everything at once.

After completing each section think about how you’ve rated yourself and list some goals and actions that you reckon will make the biggest difference in improving what you do.

Each section of this checklist is designed to prompt your thinking about different aspects of your farm business. It’s a ‘self‑assessment’ and there are

no right or wrong answers. Your job is to identify areas that might be a priority for you by ticking the box that best describes where you are

at for each question.

Yes, we’ve nailed it



|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Ok, but we could do better | No, and we should do somethingabout it | No, and it’s notrelevant to us |
|  |  |  |

Try scanning through the checklist before you start ticking so that you have an idea of what’s included. The aim is to identify and focus on a small number

of areas that will move you forward significantly.

**Our People**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Yes, we’ve nailed it | Ok, but we could do better | No, and we should do something about it | No, and it’s notrelevant to us |
| We know who our neighbours are and we help them in times of need |  |  |  |
| We really enjoy what we are doing |  |  |  |
| We know what we want our life to look like in 5 years’ time |  |  |  |
| We have considered our retirement needs and what it will take to get there |  |  |  |
| We have a plan to develop our skills(e.g. communication, people management, financial) |  |  |  |
| We have enough time to spend with family and friends |  |  |  |
| Most days I am happy to go to work |  |  |  |
| We have a healthy lifestyle |  |  |  |
| Our team understands our business purpose and their role in achieving that purpose |  |  |  |
| Our employees / contractors have been inducted and the induction process is recorded |  |  |  |
| We are compliant with our legal obligations when employing staff |  |  |  |
| We have regular team meetings |  |  |  |
| We are involved in local groups and activities that strengthen the local community |  |  |  |
| We have an emergency management plan in place |  |  |  |



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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Things to think about (goals / actions) | Who is responsible | Priority level | Timeframe |
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Notes

**Our Farm**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Yes, we’ve nailed it | Ok, but we could do better | No, and we should do something about it | No, and it’s notrelevant to us |
| The farm housing is suitable (e.g. family home and staff accommodation) |  |  |  |
| We have a plan to improve our farm infrastructure to meet future needs |  |  |  |
| Farm fencing is adequate for livestock and we have sound boundary fences |  |  |  |
| Our grain and fodder storage capacity is sufficient |  |  |  |
| We had sufficient on farm stock water supplyin the last drought |  |  |  |
| We had enough house water to get us through the last drought |  |  |  |
| Our investment in farm machinery and technology is well planned and suitably matched to the needs and scale of the operation |  |  |  |
| We monitor and record farm information on a regular basis |  |  |  |



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| Things to think about (goals / actions) | Who is responsible | Priority level | Timeframe |
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Notes

**Our Business**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Yes, we’ve nailed it | Ok, but we could do better | No, and we should do something about it | No, and it’s notrelevant to us |
| We have a written business plan and a list of goals that we are working towards |  |  |  |
| I feel we are in control of our business |  |  |  |
| We have measures and targets for our farm production |  |  |  |
| We are aware of our financial performance measured by profitability and net worth over time |  |  |  |
| We know our cash flow position and ability to paythe bills on a monthly basis |  |  |  |
| We have a good handle of our costs of productionand profit‑making commodity price targets |  |  |  |
| We develop an annual plan and budget and update it throughout the year |  |  |  |
| We look at other businesses for ways we can improve what we do |  |  |  |
| We have a documented succession plan which is regularly reviewed and discussed with family members |  |  |  |
| We have good relationships with our accountant, our bank and other service providers |  |  |  |
| We have off farm income streams(e.g. rental income, day job, contracting) |  |  |  |
| We understand what the likely affects of climate change will be on our farm business and have plans (short / long) to adapt accordingly |  |  |  |



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| Things to think about (goals / actions) | Who is responsible | Priority level | Timeframe |
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**Our Landscape**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Yes, we’ve nailed it | Ok, but we could do better | No, and we should do something about it | No, and it’s notrelevant to us |
| We have a whole farm plan and map identifying environmental risks (e.g. water ways, wells, bridges, culverts, infrastructure, erosion areas) |  |  |  |
| We apply sprays responsibly and fully understand the spray set up and environmental conditions required to avoid drift, run off and off target damage |  |  |  |
| Stock are excluded from waterways |  |  |  |
| We are on track to leave an improved natural resource base for the next generation |  |  |  |
| Our farm management strategies optimise soil water retention |  |  |  |
| We monitor our soil health and our management strategies enhance our soil capability(e.g. ground cover preservation, reduced tillage) |  |  |  |
| We know our soils and what’s needed to manage any constraints |  |  |  |
| We strategically use and plant trees for multiple purposes (e.g. stock shelter, erosion, salinity, timber capturing carbon and / or biodiversity) |  |  |  |
| Our community works together to improve / enhance the local landscape |  |  |  |



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| Things to think about (goals / actions) | Who is responsible | Priority level | Timeframe |
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Notes

**Our Risks**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Yes, we’ve nailed it | Ok, but we could do better | No, and we should do something about it | No, and it’s notrelevant to us |
| Our business is robust and can withstand various ‘shocks’ (e.g. commodity price drops, interest rate hikes, drought, floods, staff vacancies) |  |  |  |
| In the event of these shocks, we have recovery plans and know where to access support information |  |  |  |
| We have an appropriate business structure in place (e.g. sole trader, partnership, company or trust) |  |  |  |
| We have effective insurance coverage (e.g. farm and life insurance) |  |  |  |
| We have identified the major risks associated with ourbusiness and have risk mitigation strategies in place |  |  |  |
| We have access to finance that allows us to investin development work or opportunities when they arise |  |  |  |
| We have identified and documented the hazards on farm which are effectively managed to keep ourselves, our team and our visitors safe |  |  |  |
| In the last drought we had enough livestock feed on farm |  |  |  |
| We have a plan for managing the farm and animals during extreme weather(e.g. droughts, fire, floods, storms) |  |  |  |
| We have a biosecurity plan in place |  |  |  |
| We are confident that all our animals are healthyand well fed, and meet animal welfare expectations |  |  |  |
| We are effectively managing chemical resistance for pests of crops and animals |  |  |  |
| Our team has health and safety front of mind, the safety risks are identified and systems are in place to isolate or minimise these |  |  |  |
| We use short and long term seasonal forecasts to make informed decisions and adapt our management practices and business plans |  |  |  |



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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Things to think about (goals / actions) | Who is responsible | Priority level | Timeframe |
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Notes

**SWOT Analysis**

Considering your business **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities and **T**hreats (**SWOT**) after completing Checklist questions can assist with your next move and priorities.

**Strengths**

“Build on…”

**INTERNAL**

**Weaknesses**

“Correct or avoid…”

**FACTORS**

**Opportunities**

“Take advantage of…”.

**EXTERNAL**

**Threats**

“Mitigate…”

**FACTORS**



Developing strategies will help you achieve your goals and objectives. Use your strengths to take advantage

of opportunities, and work to mitigate your weaknesses and minimize threats. Remember that creating

a **SWOT** plan is an ongoing process. You should continually assess your **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities

and **T**hreats, and adjust your plan accordingly to stay ahead of the curve.

|  |
| --- |
| Strategies to build on |
| Ways to build on STRENGTHS |  |
| Ways to take advantage of OPPORTUNITIES |  |
| Ways to reduce the effects of WEAKNESSES |  |
| Ways to reduce the effects of THREATS |  |

**Your Farm Business Plan**

Putting your goals and actions on in a plan will help you to focus on the things that matter the most.

It means you have taken the plans

in your head and put them on paper, which also means you get the full picture of the things you’d like

to achieve next in one place.

This gives all of the decision makers in your business the chance to see the plan and to make sure you’re

all on the same page.

Importantly it allows you to:

* be confident that you have

a shared view of what’s next

* communicate your plan with other people, either inside or outside your business
* refer back to your plans and track your progress

**Farm business planning resources and information**

The following resources and information will support you with farm business planning.

Author

Producer name:

Business farm details

Business / Property name:

Farm address:

Town:

Enterprise(s): Sheep Mixed Horticulture

and achievements.

**Climate Services for Agriculture**

The Climate Services for Agriculture (CSA) tool helps farmers understand the historical, seasonal and future climate at their location to help them make informed decisions

for their farm business.

It provides farmers with historical data (1961‑2021), seasonal forecasts (1‑3 months) as well as future climate projections based on the 15 years before and after 2030, 2050 and 2070, for a given location.

The CSA tool can also be accessed on the Farm Business Resilience Program webpage: **agriculture.vic.gov.au/FBRP**

**Farm Fitness Checklist**

The Farm Fitness Checklist helps farmers assess where their business is at currently, and to identify areas and opportunities

to strengthen their farm business.

It covers subjects including people management, skills and training, business planning and financial performance, emergency management, infrastructure, water supply, natural resource management, risk management, succession planning, off‑farm activities and more.

Completing the Checklist helps farmers identify areas to prioritise in their farm business plan.

The Checklist can be accessed on the Farm Business Resilience Program webpage: **agriculture.vic.gov.au/FBRP**

Beef

Other:

Dairy

Grains

Farm size (Ha):

Farm business vision statement

**Goal Setting**

A key benefit of setting goals is to describe what you want to achieve. Once a goal

is set, the resources and skills required can be identified. Importantly, priorities can also be set.

To make sure your goals are clear and achievable, each one should be **S.M.A.R.T**:

* **S**pecific (simple, sensible, significant).
* **M**easurable (meaningful, motivating).
* **A**chievable (agreed, attainable).
* **R**elevant (reasonable, realistic and resourced, results‑based).
* **T**ime bound (time‑based, time limited, time / cost limited, timely, time‑sensitive).

**SWOT Analysis**

**SWOT** (**S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities and **T**hreats) analysis can be used to assess and plan for your short, medium or longer term goals for your farm business.

It can assist with decision making in a wide variety of circumstances, such as climate risks (e.g. drought, fire, flood, frost), holding or selling stock, farm finances, managing people on farm, and pasture

/ crop management practices.

Where do you want your farm business to be?

**Action Plan**

2

**SWOT** Analysis of:

**1**

[EXAMPLE my business finances or climate risk]

3

Set **S.M.A.R.T.** Goals for:

[EXAMPLE my business finances or climate risk]

An analysis of your current enterprise(s) in comparison with other enterprise possibilities. The analysis of your **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities and **T**hreats (**SWOT**) can be a useful decision making tool for both small and large scale decisions.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Issue or opportunity identified | Priority (1‑5) | Farm management action proposed | Time frame | Information or support required | Outcome | Review date |
| S H O R T – T E R M |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| M E D I U M – T E R M |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| L O N G – T E R M |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
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| --- |
| Strengths Weaknesses |
|  |  |
| Opportunities Threats |
|  |  |

To make sure your goals are clear and achievable, each one should be **S.M.A.R.T.** (**S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**elevant, **T**ime bound.) **S.M.A.R.T.** goals are also easy to use by anyone, anywhere, without the need for specialist tools or training.

**PRIORITY:** 1 = High | 3 = Medium | 5 = Low

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|  |
| --- |
| Strategies to build on |
| Ways to build on STRENGTHS |  |
| Ways to take advantage of OPPORTUNITIES |  |
| Ways to reduce the effects of WEAKNESSES |  |
| Ways to reduce the effects of THREATS |  |

**The Farm Business Resilience Program is supporting farmers to build stronger, more productive agricultural businesses. Visit: agriculture.vic.gov.au/FBRP**

The Farm Business Resilience Program is jointly funded through the Australian Government’s Future Drought Fund and the Victorian Government’s Future Agriculture Skills Capacity Fund. 4

Goal 1:

Overview

1 year

5 years

10 years

Goal 2:

Overview

1 year

5 years

10 years

[EXAMPLE my business finances]

[EXAMPLE climate risk]

5

You can find the Farm Business Plan template and other resources on the Farm Business Resilience Program webpage: agriculture.vic.gov.au / FBRP

16

Scan for more



Notes

Notes

18



Notes

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