



RURAL HEPBURN 2043: Agricultural Land Study and Rural Settlement Strategy

COMMUNITY SURVEY REPORT

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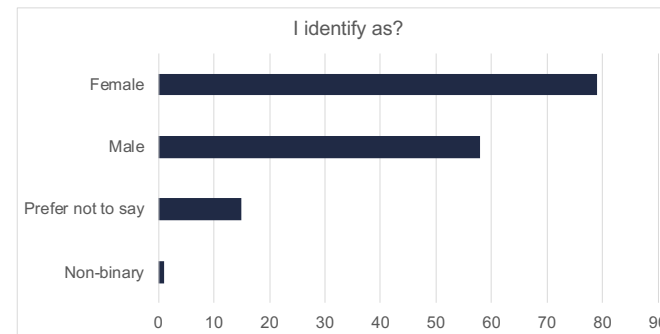
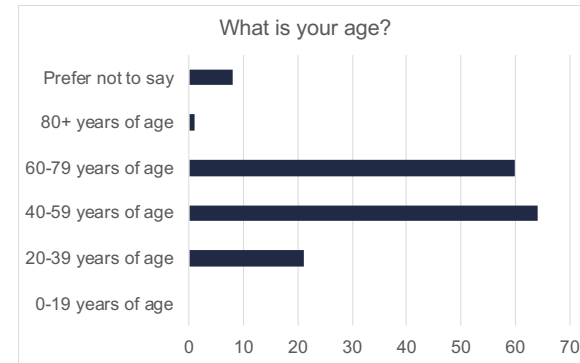
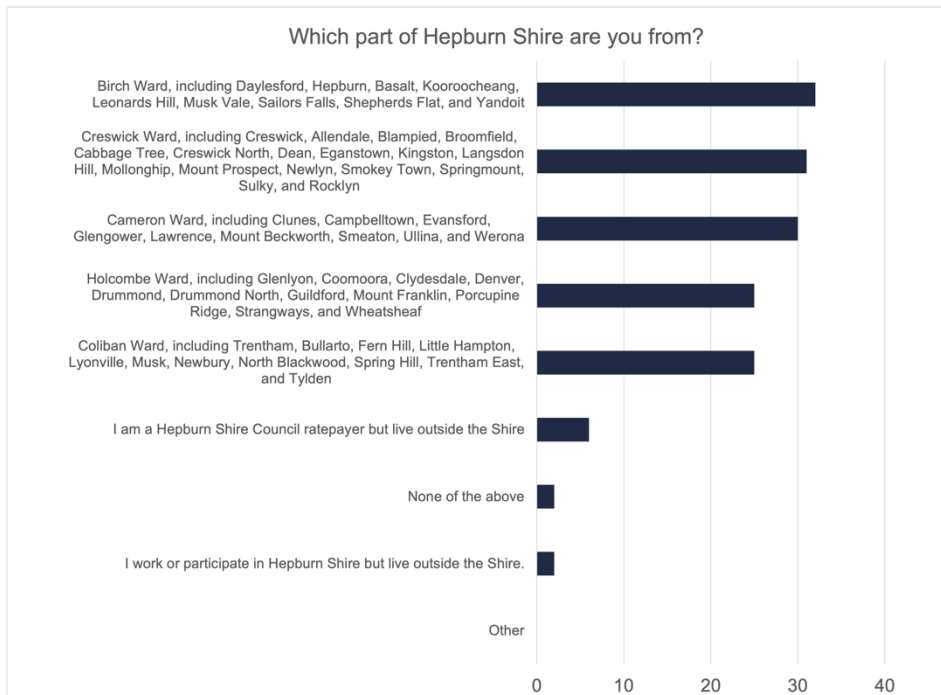
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1 Introduction

The Rural Hepburn 2043: Agricultural Land and Rural Settlement Strategy survey was live from April 13 to May 13. The webpage was viewed 1,624 times and 154 people completed the survey. The survey questions were grouped under three themes:

- What do you value
- Housing in rural areas
- Business in our rural areas.

Survey respondents were evenly distributed across the Shire and were generally aged between 20 and 79 years of age and identified as either male or female.



Key themes that recurred throughout the survey include:

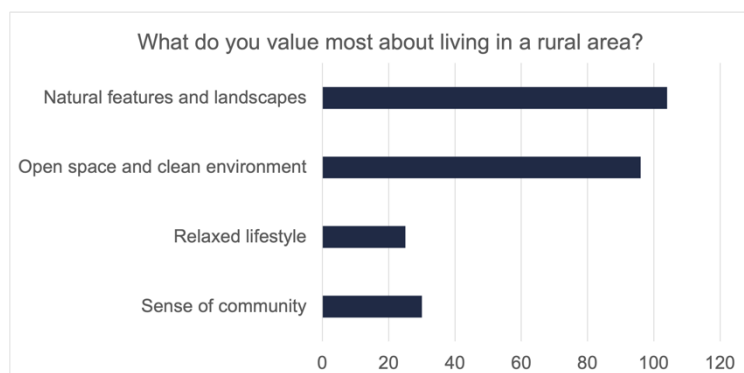
- Respondents highly value productive agricultural land and wish to see it preserved for agriculture in the long term.
- Biodiversity and rural landscapes are also highly valued and require protection.
- There is concern that further population growth and development in rural areas will have negative impacts on these important values as well as the capacity of the Shire's infrastructure to accommodate more people.
- There was general support for directing residential growth into established settlements as a balanced response to these issues as well as maximising efficient use of infrastructure.
- Other development such as rural tourism needs to be carefully managed to ensure that it does not negatively impact important values.

2 Results

2.1 WHAT DO YOU VALUE?

1. What do you value most about living in a rural area?

Most respondents identified Natural features and landscapes and Open space and clean environment as what they value most about living in a rural area. Respondents also nominated the ability to farm and relaxed lifestyle.



2. Listed below are some objectives that Council is looking to address through the Agricultural Land & Rural Settlement Strategy. Please rank the following from most important (1) to least important (8).

OBJECTIVE	RANK
Protecting productive agricultural land.	1
Identifying significant landscapes and environmental features.	2
Identifying areas for small scale agriculture.	3
Identifying if and where residential growth can occur.	4
Responding to the risks of climate change.	5
Protecting significant cultural heritage sites.	6
Recognising the role of Traditional Owners in land stewardship.	7

3. What value do you place on our rural landscapes and environmental features? Do they need to be protected?

The following word cloud is a visual representation of the most popular words and phrases based on frequency and relevance.

There is overwhelming support for protection of landscapes and environmental features.



4. Which places in our rural areas do you feel a strong connection with?

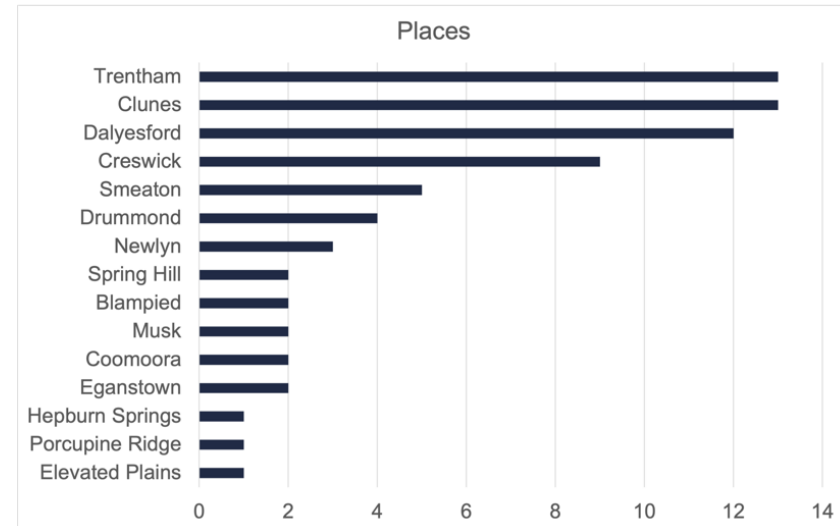
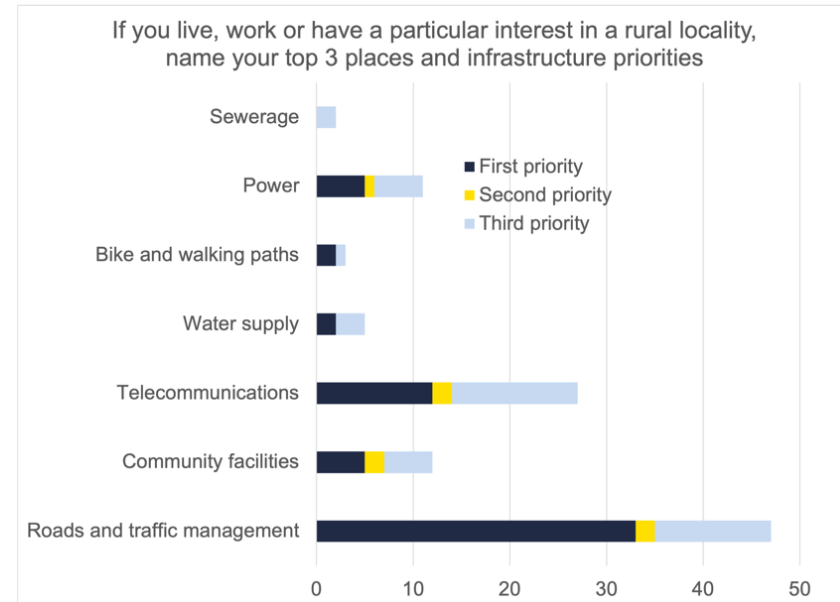
The following word cloud is a visual representation of the most popular words and phrases based on frequency and relevance.

People have strong connections to townships and forests.



5. If you live, work or have a particular interest in a rural locality, name your top 3 places and infrastructure priorities.

Roads, telecommunications, community facilities and reliable water supply were the top infrastructure priorities. Trentham, Clunes and Daylesford were the most nominated places. The responses to this question will be further analysed and fed into the development of the town structure plans.

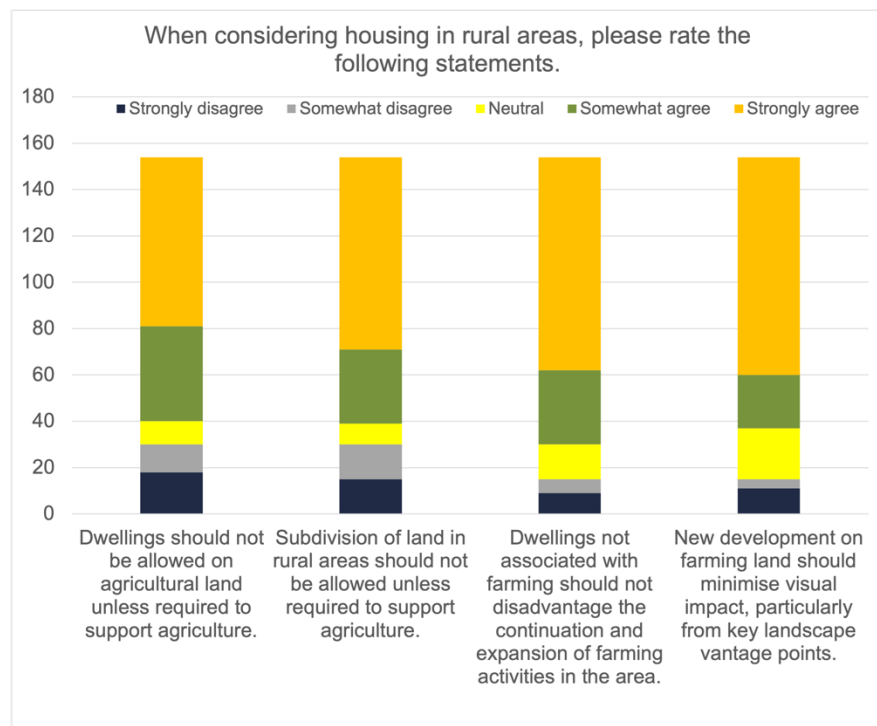


2.2 HOUSING IN OUR RURAL AREAS

6. When considering housing in farming areas, please rate the following statements from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Most respondents strongly agreed with all statements:

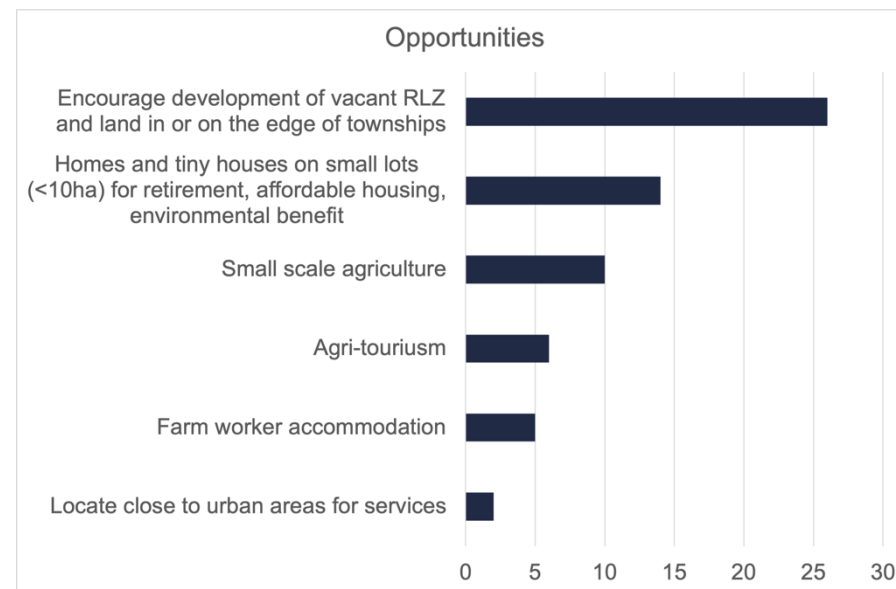
- Dwellings should not be allowed on agricultural land unless required to support agriculture
- Subdivision of land in rural areas should not be allowed unless required to support agriculture
- Dwellings not associated with farming should not disadvantage the continuation and expansion of farming activities in the area
- New development on farming land should minimise visual impact, particularly from key landscape vantage points.



7. What opportunities and issues do you see for residential land use in rural areas?

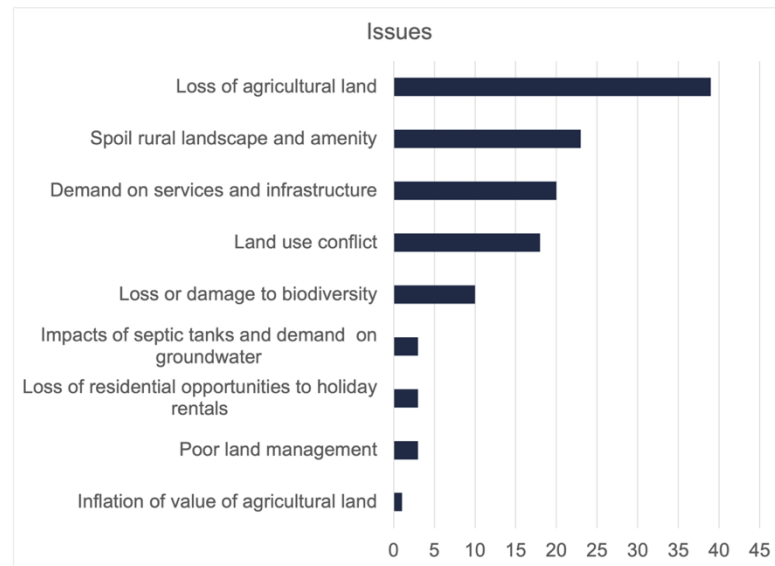
Opportunities most identified by respondents included:

- Encourage residential development on vacant Rural Living Zone (RLZ) land or vacant land within or on the edge of townships
- Residential development for retirement, affordable housing, farm succession or environmental benefit.



The top five issues with residential development in rural areas most commonly identified were:

1. Loss of agricultural land
2. Negative impacts on the landscape and amenity
3. Demand on services and infrastructure.
4. Land use conflict
5. Loss or damage to biodiversity

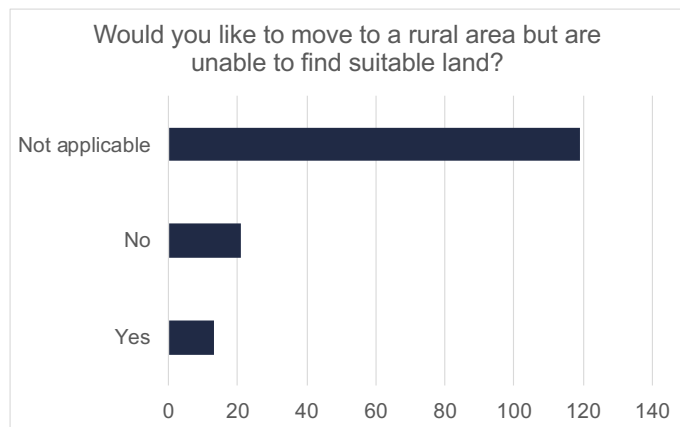


8. With an increase in demand for housing in rural areas what priorities should Council consider in its future planning for rural settlements? Please rank the following from most important (1) to least important (8).

Most people ranked Protect agricultural land as a priority as priority 1 followed by Protect biodiversity and natural assets within our environment.

RANK	PRIORITY	FREQUENCY
Priority 1	Protect agricultural land as a priority.	85
Priority 2	Protect biodiversity and natural assets within our environment.	54
Priority 3	Encourage growth in areas where physical and community growth already exist.	51
Priority 4	Create new rural residential lifestyle lots.	48
Priority 5	Provide housing that responds to our changing demographics.	43
Priority 6	Expand township boundaries to accommodate more rural housing.	37
Priority 7	Provide transport connections between townships.	34

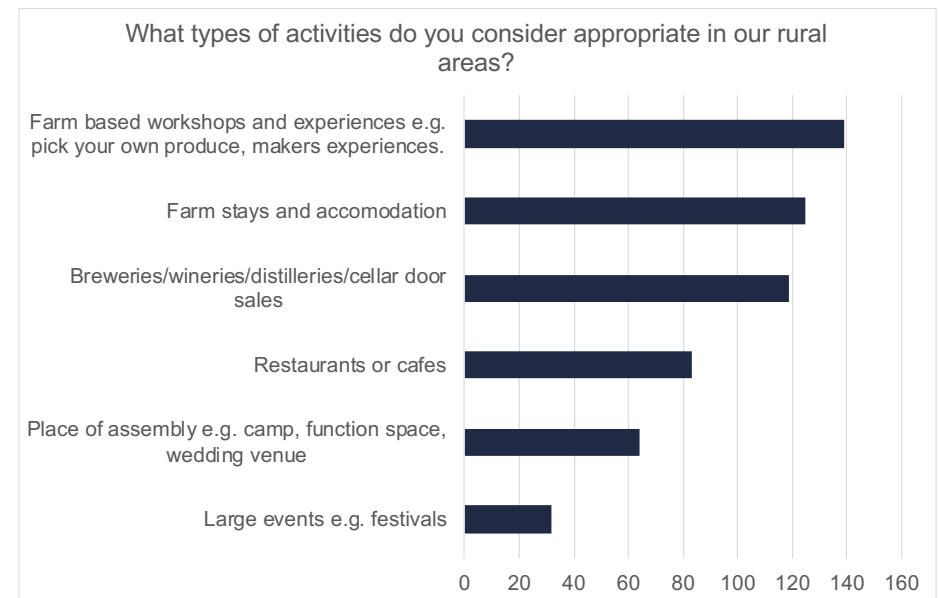
9. Would you like to move to a rural area but are unable to find suitable land?



2.3 BUSINESS IN OUR RURAL AREAS

10. What types of activities do you consider appropriate in our rural areas? Choose as many as appropriate.

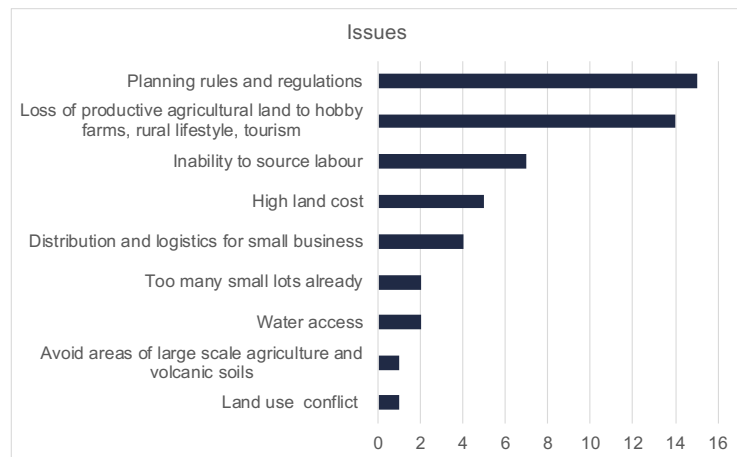
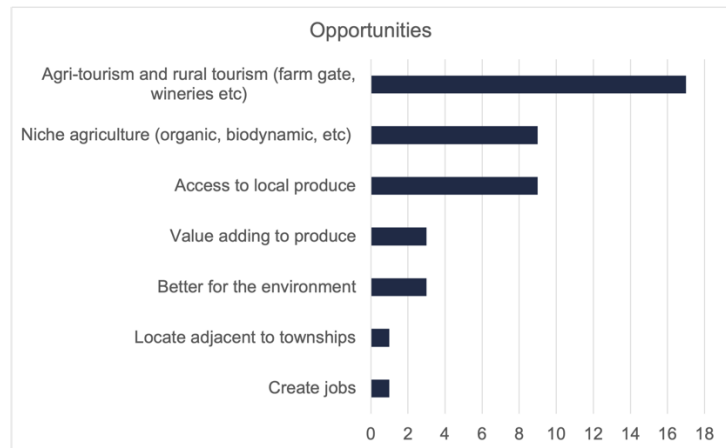
Most respondents nominated farm based workshops and experiences followed by Farm stays and accommodation as being appropriate for rural areas.



11. When thinking about size, location and types of farming, artisan agriculture and rural industries what opportunities and issues exist for these businesses in the Hepburn Shire?

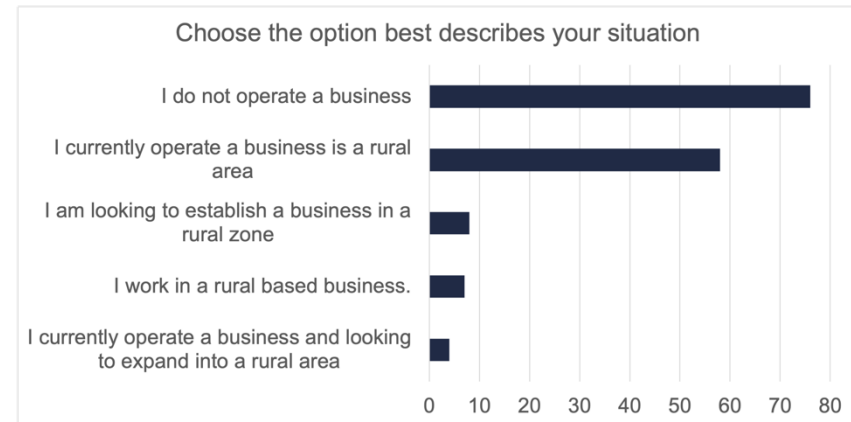
Most respondents nominated Agri-tourism or rural tourism, Niche agricultural production systems and Access to local produce as the opportunities for artisan agriculture and rural industries.

Planning rules and regulations and Loss of productive agricultural land to hobby farms, rural lifestyle and tourism as the main issues.



12. Choose the option best describes your situation:

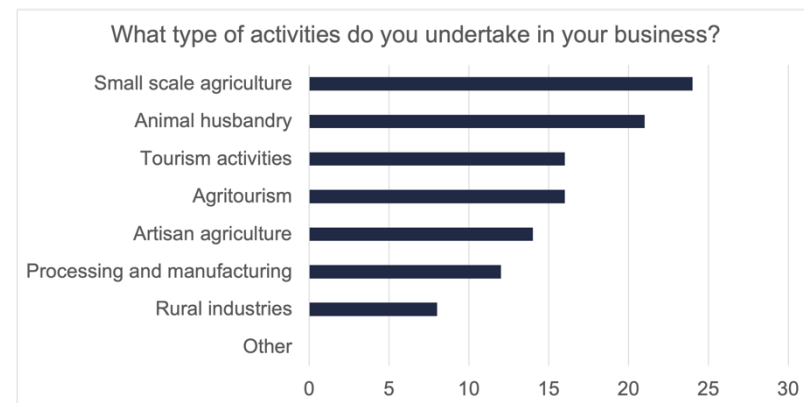
Most people who responded to the survey do not operate a business. While the second largest cohort was those who do.



The following questions were completed if the respondent operates or works in a rural based business.

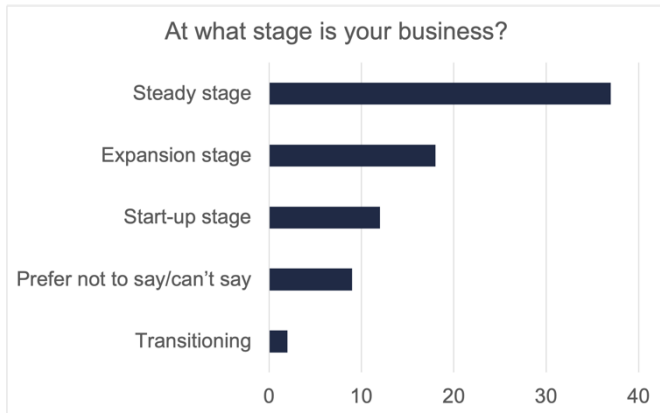
13. What type of activities do you undertake in your business? Circle the options

Of those that do operate a rural based business, most operated small scale agricultural or animal husbandry.



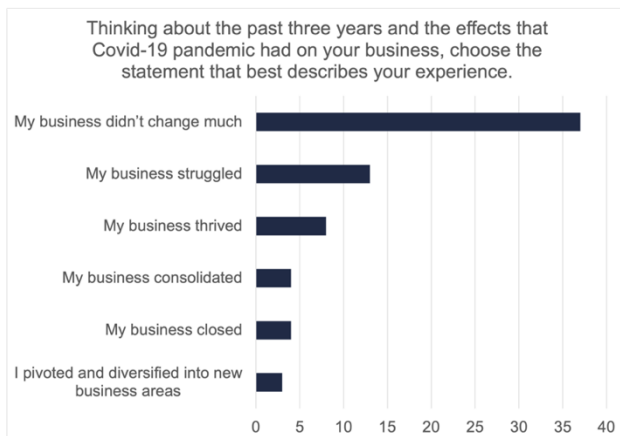
14. At what stage is your business?

Most respondents operating a rural based business said that their business was at a steady stage.



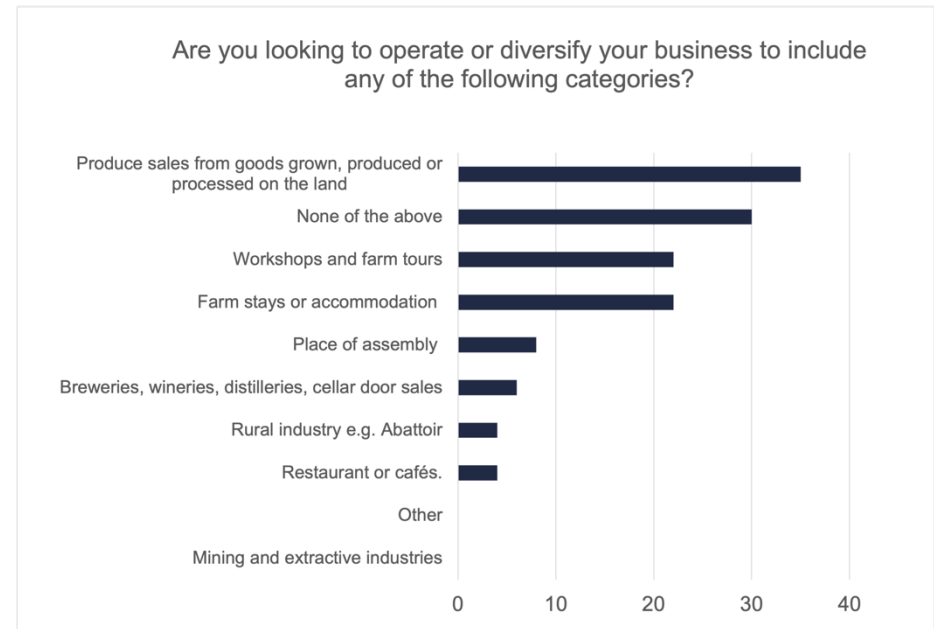
15. Thinking about the past three years and the effects that Covid-19 pandemic had on your business, choose the statement that best describes your experience.

Most respondents said that their business did not change much as a result of the pandemic. The next most represented cohort said that their businesses struggled.



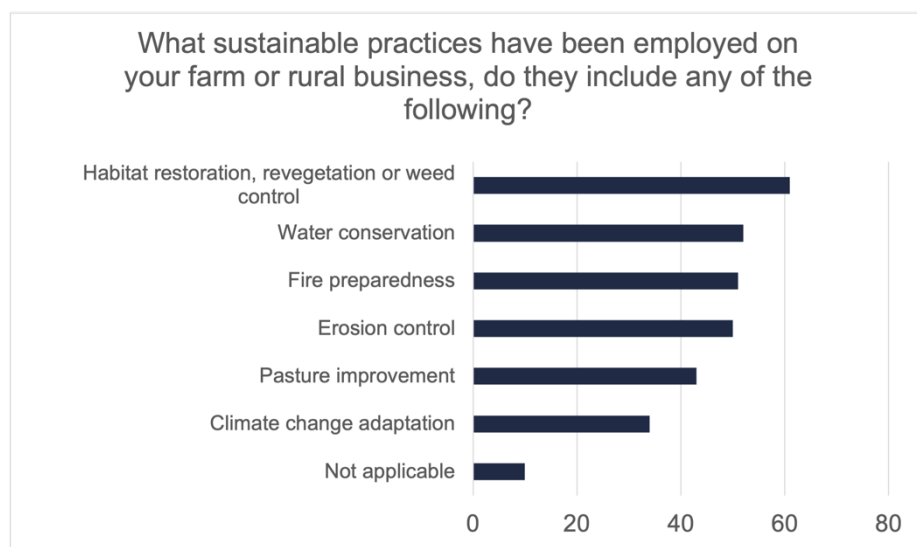
16. Are you looking to operate or diversify your business to include any of the following categories? Choose all that apply.

Of the people that are looking to diversify their business, most nominated produce sales and workshops and farm tours.



17. What sustainable practices have been employed in your business, do they include the following? Choose options as appropriate or add your own comments.

Habitat restoration, revegetation and weed control, followed by water conservation and fire preparedness were the most common sustainable practices. Respondents also nominated use of renewable energy in the operation of their business.



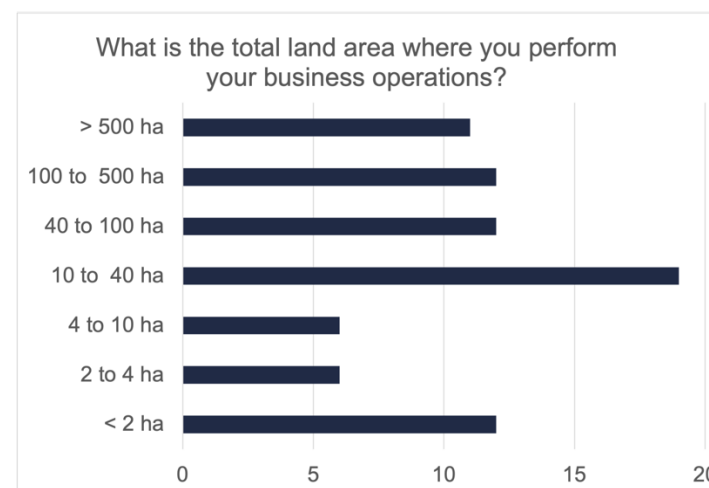
18. How long have you owned/lived at your property?

Most respondents identified intergenerational ownership followed by owning or living on the property for over 15 years.



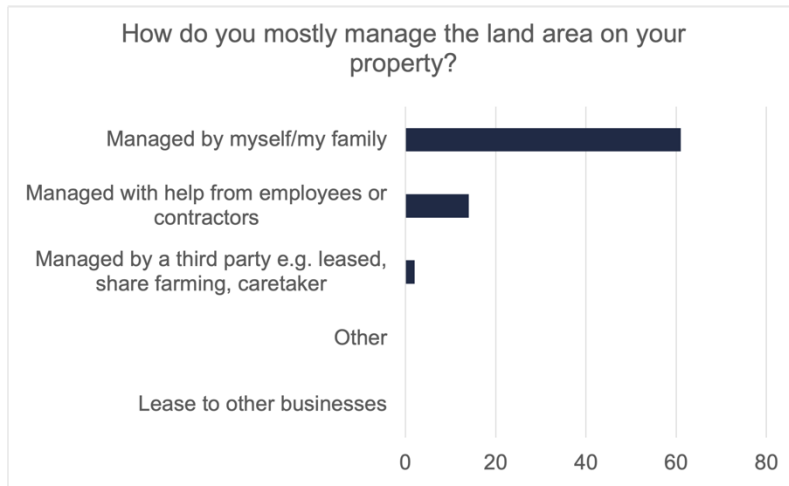
19. What is the total land area where you perform your business operations?

Most respondents operate a rural business on land between 10 hectares and 40 hectares in size.



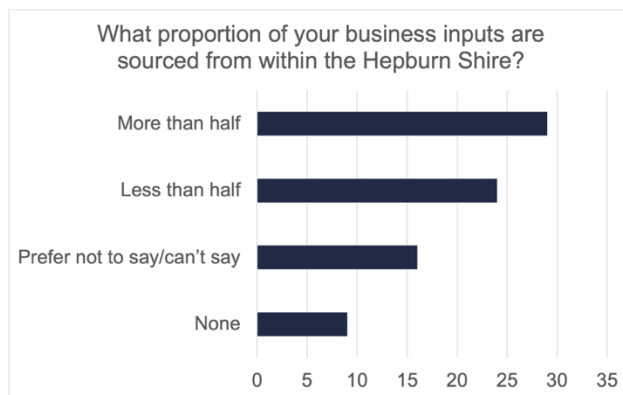
20. How do you mostly manage the land area on your property? (Choose the option best applies to your circumstances)

Most respondents manage their property by themselves or with family.



21. What proportion of your business inputs are sourced from within the Hepburn Shire?

Most respondents source more than half their inputs from within Hepburn Shire.



22. Do you have any other comments about issues and opportunities for agricultural and rural land within Hepburn Shire?

Key themes included:

- Protect productive agricultural land
- Balance population growth and protection of values (landscapes, biodiversity, agriculture)
- Impact of major infrastructure (transmission lines) on landscapes and agriculture
- Mixed views on small scale agriculture (some for it, some against)
- Mixed views on tourism (some for it, some against)

This report has been prepared by:

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