



Aquaculture and fisheries industries continue to grow in their importance to Australians

Year Three Key Insights – September 2022



Rural industries (fishers, aquaculture producers, farmers and foresters) have collaborated to develop a pathway to proactive, transparent, long-term engagement with the community via a three-year research program into the drivers of community trust.

When Australians feel that Australian rural industry products are of high quality and serve an important function in our lives, they trust rural industries more. In addition, these products serve an additional purpose for many Australians, helping them to feel connected to the people that made them; as this sense of connection increases, so does trust in rural industries.

The community trusts fishers and aquaculture producers



Fishers play an important role in Australian society

2021	82.5%	+ 0.7%
2020	81.9%	
2019	80.2%	+ 1.6%

Key drivers of trust

CONSISTENT ACROSS THE THREE YEARS

ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

Rural industries operate sustainably and manage resources like water responsibly.



RESPONSIVENESS

Industry listens to community and takes action based on their concerns.



PRODUCTS OF RURAL INDUSTRIES

Food, fibre and forestry products connect Australians to the people that produce them.



DISTRIBUTIONAL FAIRNESS

Benefits of rural industries are shared fairly (especially with regional communities).



CHEMICAL USE

Concern around chemical use and food safety.



ANIMAL WELFARE

Animals treated with respect and dignity.



ANIMALS TREATED WITH RESPECT AND DIGNITY

Industries held accountable by government regulations and standards.



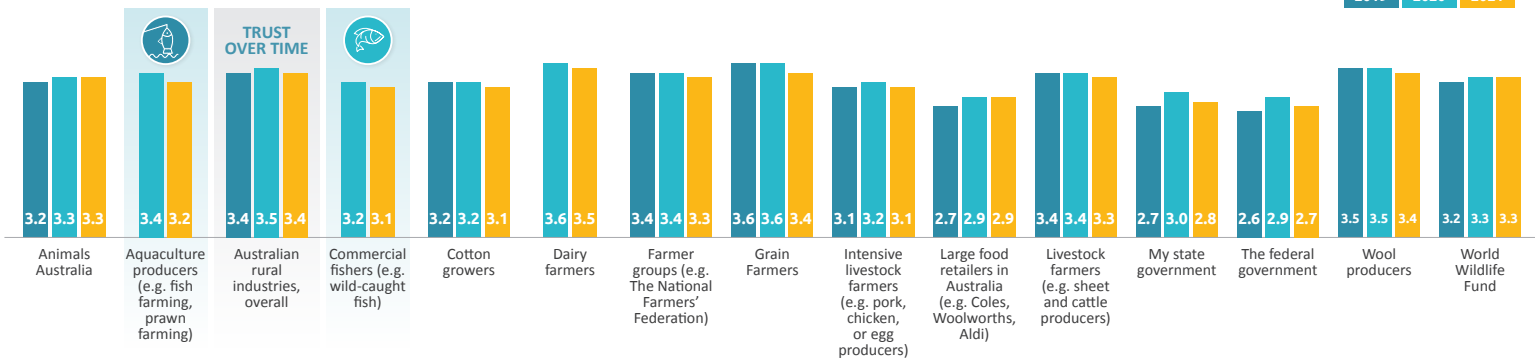
KNOWLEDGE OF CHALLENGES FACED

Community understanding of challenges faced by rural industries.



Trust in fishing and aquaculture compared to other groups and rural industries

2019 2020 2021

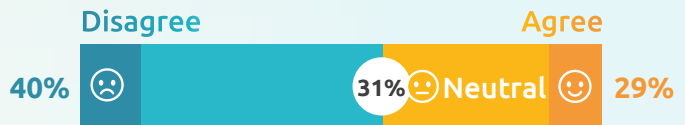


New insights for Year Three

Fishers have a strong financial incentive to avoid catching protected species that they can't sell



We should eat less fish rather than farm them intensively in any form



I am ok with farming fish like salmon intensively so long as it happens in a closed system on land rather than in the open oceans or inshore coastal areas



I am concerned that fish I buy are often not actually the species on the label

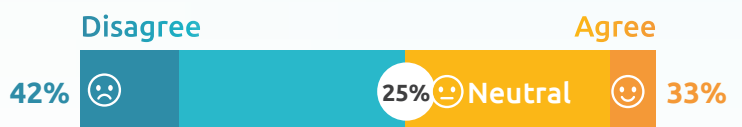


"I find it interesting, other than pink salmon I would not really know if the fish I buy is actually the fish species as advertised. We certainly put a lot of trust in our fishing industry to do the right and honest thing for all Aussies."

Comment from 2021 survey participant



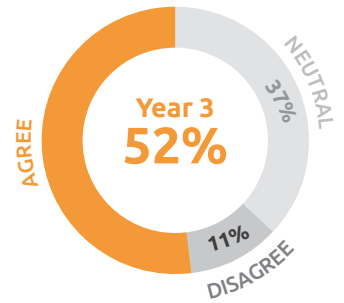
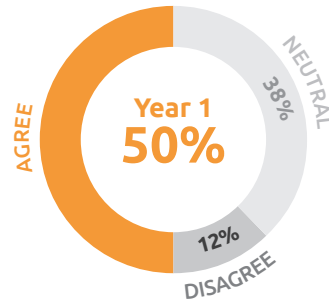
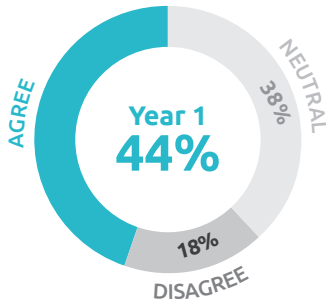
I don't really worry about the welfare of fish like I would cows or pigs



Community sees the welfare of fish differently to other livestock species.

Responsiveness by rural industries to community concerns remains high

Broadening and deepening conversations with the community demonstrates industry responsiveness. This is a key, enduring driver of community trust in rural industries.



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

*"Rural industries in Australia listen to and respect community opinions."**

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 producer practices.



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 production 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 is usually also the most ethical



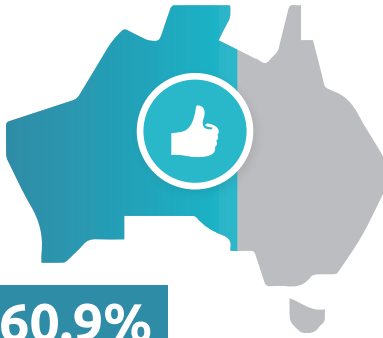
Demand from consumers for ethical produce means ethical behaviour is profitable for farmers



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

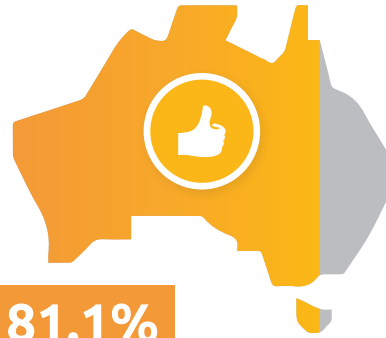


Environmental responsibility and industry responsiveness are the chief drivers of trust in rural industries.



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).



believe environmental management is a shared responsibility across all rural industries

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



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

People in the 18-24 and 25-34 age brackets had stronger opinions about environmental impacts of rural industries and animal welfare. People living in metropolitan areas were more negative in their views about profitability versus animal welfare.

What do these results mean for industry?



There is an opportunity for fishers and aquaculture producers to build on this already strong position by being proactive around the key drivers of trust.



Australians want fisheries and aquaculture industries to hold their own members to account when they do the wrong thing.



Fisheries and aquaculture industries must ensure that the significant benefits they generate are shared with the regional communities in which they operate.



Knowing someone who works in a rural industry has an important effect on attitudes toward rural industries – facilitating more of these connections will grow trust.

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.

** Responses were captured on a scale from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). Where the term 'agree' or 'disagree' is used, it refers to an aggregation of both 'agree' and 'strongly agree' responses and 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' responses respectively for each item reported.*

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/

