Our vision is that all people living in rural Aotearoa New Zealand will achieve optimal health and wellbeing through access to safe, effective and acceptable health services which honour the Treaty of Waitangi.

“Collectively, the rural population of 600,000 people would make up New Zealand’s second largest city yet spread from Cape Reinga to Bluff, many live in geographically and socially isolated areas.”

“In 2015-2016, $40 billion, or 19% of GDP was generated directly or indirectly by the agri-food sector. If the spending power of these people is taken into account, then the contribution of the agri-food sector is $53 billion, or $1 in every $4 spent in the economy.”

“Government aims to double the value of primary industry exports by 2025.”

“Government and tourism are the powerhouses of our economy. Each year, 2.5 million tourists visit rural New Zealand.”

REFERENCES
Census data 2006, Statistics New Zealand
Rural Health Challenges of Distance Opportunities for Innovation, National Health Committee, January 2010
Ministry of Health, 2016, closed books, unpublished data.
Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners – workforce data

Growing healthy rural communities in Aotearoa New Zealand

Rural Aotearoa New Zealand is the heart of our nation. It plays a vital role in our economy, the future of much of our leisure activities, and those of a huge international visitors every year. We all depend on a common way of life and well-being, and sustainability of rural communities, whether we are living and working on farms, visiting or just passing through.

Our rural population, at approximately 2.5 million people, live with unique challenges from all around the country. The rural environment is often rugged, remote, and isolated. Our rural people face physical and mental health challenges, and lack access to necessary health services and social services. 

Rural communities have been impacted by many factors such as: 

- Dramatic weather and climatic events
- Environmental compliance requirements
- Flooding and drought
- Fluctuating international markets
- Increased business and personal costs of living

Our total rural population, the equivalent of New Zealand's second largest city, lives in Aotearoa New Zealand. This is a unique platform from which rural people can be connected to each other, their local communities, and the rest of the country. 

We are calling Government to put the wellbeing, and vibrancy of rural communities at the centre of all Government and policy decisions. This will include providing rural people with the supports, and tools needed to ensure that rural people can live healthy, and productive lives in the rural areas they love.

Rural people are connected to their health and wellbeing in many ways. This includes access to quality health and social services, enhanced rural lifestyle, improved communication systems, and strong and vibrant communities.

We call on Government to support our rural communities in these ways:

1. RURAL WELLBEING

   - Ensuring that health and wellbeing services are available and accessible to all rural people
   - Ensuring that health and wellbeing services are sustainable and able to meet the needs of rural people

2. RURAL CONNECTIVITY

   - Creating a senor network that connects all rural areas and their communities
   - Ensuring that health and wellbeing services are connected to the internet

3. RURAL RESEARCH AND POLICY

   - Ensuring that data about rural populations is captured across Government in order to understand the needs of rural communities
   - Ensuring that data about focus populations is captured across Government in order to understand the needs of rural communities

4. RURAL HEALTH SERVICES

   - Ensuring that all rural health professionals and services have the necessary support to deliver high quality health and wellbeing services
   - Ensuring that all rural health professionals and services have the necessary support to deliver high quality health and wellbeing services

5. RURAL HEALTH WORKFORCE

   - Ensuring that all rural health professionals and services have the necessary support to deliver high quality health and wellbeing services
   - Ensuring that all rural health professionals and services have the necessary support to deliver high quality health and wellbeing services

We call on Government to act on these priorities by 2025. To achieve this goal we must work with rural people to ensure that rural communities can participate in decisions that impact their health and wellbeing. This will require Government to work with us to ensure that rural people have a voice in decisions that impact their health and wellbeing.

We are calling Government to put the wellbeing, and vibrancy of rural communities at the centre of all Government and policy decisions. This will include providing rural people with the supports, and tools needed to ensure that rural people can live healthy, and productive lives in the rural areas they love.