

Learning from farmers

HAMILTON

By **ALEXANDRA WEAVER**

IT'S no wonder farmers are stressed.

Faced with deluges and dry spells, dangerous working environments and a volatile Australian dollar, this sector often does it tough.

One south-west academic has made it her mission to investigate strategies used by farmers during hard times and will present preliminary findings from a study in Hamilton next month.

Deakin University's Pro Vice-Chancellor (Rural and Regional) Professor Sue Kilpatrick is the lead researcher in a project that includes fishing, mixed farming, cotton, grains and sugar.

She is hopeful that farmers' means of coping will provide support for their peers. "No one has ever researched this before," she said.

"Research has looked at the people who are ill but there is very little literature on preventative behaviours that farmers use to help themselves through challenging times."

Professor Kilpatrick will be among presenters at the inaugural National Centre for Farmer Health conference to be held in Hamilton from October 11 to 13.

She said study findings showed farmers were committed to achieving and maintaining good health. A final report is to be released next year.

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