

2026 Investment Advice to TEC for the Apiculture Industry

Muka Tangata is the Workforce Development Council (WDC) for the food and fibre sector. We work on ways to enhance vocational education and training (VET) to meet the needs of industry, iwi and hapū Māori, ākongā (learners), and kaimahi (workers), and support them to flourish.

Alongside our work on qualifications, standards, and quality assurance, we advise government, based on engagement with industry, on what qualifications they should support and fund. This takes the form of our annual Investment Advice to the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC). This focuses on the current set of qualifications (as TEC can only purchase programmes for existing qualifications).

This document sets out industry and workforce trends for the Apiculture industry, as well as identified skills needs. We have used this information to determine how many places are needed for qualifications relevant to the Apiculture industry.

Apiculture Industry trends:

The industry has been through a significant and rapid growth period and is now going through a period of consolidation and increasing focus on professionalisation and commercial discipline.

Apiculture Workforce trends:

The 'Pork, Poultry, Bees and Other Sector' workforces are forecast to increase by at least 11% by 2032 with increases being particularly concentrated in higher skill role types that will require increased levels of training (MPI forecast).

The workforce currently has low levels of formal qualifications and would need a substantially higher than requested level of investment to reach industry benchmark parity. The workforce has low levels of industry tenure which drive a need for training of replacements.

Industry skill needs identified from engagement

Our industry engagement analysis and review of key industry documents has highlighted the following skill needs across all qualification levels:

- hive health (preventing the spread of varroa mite or American Foulbrood Disease)
- skills necessary to supervise and oversee a viable apiculture business

Current qualifications and priorities

Below are three tables outlining qualifications and priorities. Where possible, each table outlines how these qualifications may fill skills needs, the scale of change we are seeking in our advice, the preferred mode of delivery, and the level of priority for this change.

Table 1: Apiculture related qualifications and credentials

Table 2: Pan-sector qualifications and credentials

- These qualifications provide skills that are relevant to a number of industries across our sector. We are unsure if apiculture learners are enrolling in these qualifications and welcome any insights from industry.

Table 3: Related qualifications or credentials in development (or planned for)

- To be offered in 2026 or earlier.

Mode

We have not been specific about mode at a qualification level. However, in general, we recommend a preference for workplace training as part of the mix of the provision across all of our industries. This could include both work-based training and campus-based learning that include a strong component of practical 'on job' experience in a workplace setting.

What are we looking for?

For these three tables, we are seeking feedback on the following:

- Are industry using these qualifications?
- What is the preferred mode of delivery? (e.g. workplace-based, extramural, etc.)
- Do you agree with our prioritisation or have any recommendations for qualifications where we have not given a level of priority (low, medium, high)?
- What sort of level change do you anticipate? How many more trained people do you need?

Table 1: Apiculture related qualifications and credentials

Qualification or credential	What skills does this qualification provide	Scale of change you are seeking for 2026	Mode of delivery	Priority level (for this advice)
New Zealand Certificate in Apiculture (Level 3) [2223]	This qualification is for people who are either intending to work, or are working in, the apiculture industry. This includes being able to apply knowledge of pest and disease control methods to carry out beehive disease management plans. This qualification is the only apiculture-specific 'entry-level' qualification, and it seems to mainly serve 'hobbyist' apiarists.	0-5%	Any increase should focus on work-place based training	Low Priority
New Zealand Certificate in Apiculture (Level 4) [2224]	This qualification is industry focused and provides the apiculture industry with individuals who have the knowledge and skills to supervise and oversee a viable apiculture business.	20-25%		High Priority

Table 2: Pan-sector qualifications and credentials

Qualification or credential	What skills does this qualification provide	Scale of change you are seeking for 2026	Mode of delivery	Priority level (for this advice)
New Zealand Certificate in Primary Industry Skills (Level 2): Optional strand in Self-Management and Employability Skills [2218]	<p>The New Zealand Certificate in Primary Industry Skills is designed to meet the needs of industries by enabling workers to carry out practical tasks associated with an entry level role in a primary industry context; including using safe work practices and self-management skills. It is targeted at new or potential entrants into the primary sector including seasonal workers, career changers and those not yet engaged in education, employment or training.</p> <p>A repeated concern from across nearly all of our industries has been the need for a strong set of basic skills for workers in the food and fibre sector, especially for those who are not familiar with those work settings.</p> <p>From our engagement with the food and fibre sector, industries have particularly identified health and safety, self-management and 'employability' skills as key gaps in their workforces (in fact these form the most often cited skills gaps by industries), especially for new entrants.</p>	15%		High Priority
New Zealand Certificate in Primary Industry Operational Skills (Level 3): Optional strands in	The New Zealand Certificate in Primary Industry Operational Skills is one of the sector's central cross-sector qualifications designed to provide primary industry workplaces with individuals who can safely and effectively carry out operational	20-25%		High Priority

Specialist Equipment, and Infrastructure [2215]	<p>activities which involve vehicles, machinery and specialist equipment, and infrastructure.</p> <p>Industries from across our sector have identified the need to strengthen a core set of capabilities for workers, both those entering the industry and the existing workforce. In particular, industries want people who can (safely) operate vehicles, machinery, and other specialist equipment; and maintain infrastructure.</p>			
Emerging Leadership in People, Food and Fibre Industries (Micro-credential) (Level 4) [5044]	<p>The purpose of this micro-credential is to provide a formal credential to recognise the skills and knowledge attained by learners/ākonga as they enter leadership roles across a range of People, Food and Fibre industries in Aotearoa New Zealand. The micro-credential provides a training scaffold to support and upskill potential, new, or existing leaders, including seasonal workers and career changers, and workers in supporting industries, into leadership roles.</p>	New development		
New Zealand Diploma in Primary Industry Business Management (Level 5) [2221]	<p>The New Zealand Diploma in Primary Industry Management is a pan-sector qualification that builds financial management, business planning and general business decision-making skills. It also contains skills around leadership, including for staff employment and work allocation, and applying interpersonal and leadership skills to monitor staff performance, health, safety, and well-being requirements in a primary industry business. It enables a graduate to plan, implement and review the environmental sustainability requirements of a primary industry business.</p> <p>MPI workforce forecasting indicates the need for more skilled workers, with both technical and</p>	10-15%		High priority

	business/managerial skills needs rising. Most of our industries have also highlighted leadership as a pressing skills gap, alongside a need for business planning and financial management. Environmental sustainability - and the skills required to respond to a changing environment - is an emerging issue for the sector.			
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Table 3: Related qualifications or credentials in development (or planned for)				
Qualification or credential	What skills does this qualification provide	Scale of change you are seeking for 2026	Mode of delivery	Priority level (for this advice)
Entry Level Qualification Development Project: including stackable micro-credentials	We are planning to build flexible, sustainable, and enduring learning pathways for learners as they enter the primary industry sector.			