

2026 Investment Advice to TEC for the Forest 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 Forestry industry, as well as identified skills needs. We have used this information to determine how many places are needed for qualifications relevant to the Forestry industry.

Forest Industry trends:

The industry has seen challenging conditions with Covid and weather disruption but has stabilised and is increasingly adopting new technologies which is driving new skill requirements.

Forestry Workforce trends:

The workforce has been increasing over time but has high levels of seasonal variation (which affect how forecasts should be treated). The Forestry production workforce as a whole is forecast to increase by at least 12% by 2032 with increases 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.

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:

- Health and safety
- Machinery operation
- Leadership and people management skills
- Native tree planting
- Mātauranga Māori
- Interpersonal and soft skills

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: Forestry related qualifications and credentials

- We are currently reviewing all the forestry qualifications. Some new qualifications are already available, but in the meantime, we are still recommending increases in learner numbers across the full suite of qualifications (see below) so that you can see the relative size of required learners and to ensure that learners will continue to be funded to meet the workforce skills needs of industry. We know that industry value these qualifications and that they are well used.

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 Forestry learners are enrolling in these qualifications and welcome any insights from industry.

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

- We are reviewing the Forestry qualification suite.

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: Forestry 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 Forest Industry Foundation Skills (Level 2) [2325]	The New Zealand Certificate in Forest Industry Foundation Skills (Level 2) is designed to provide the forest industry with individuals who have skills and knowledge relevant to entry level roles in a forestry operation, with an emphasis on applying basic risk management, emergency procedures, and communication systems, when carrying out work within a forestry operation, as well as, working safely and effectively as part of a team to meet quality requirements within a forestry operation.	10-15%		High Priority
New Zealand Certificate in Forest Industry Foundation Skills (Level 2) [4918]	The New Zealand Certificate in Forest Industry Foundation Skills (Level 2) is a newly developed qualification, which will replace the 2325 qualification above. It is an entry-level qualification, containing all of the basic entry-level skills that industry asked for in the consultation phase of the qualification review. This includes the ability to apply introductory knowledge of environmental, general health and safety, cultural and employment requirements, including the relationship Māori have with the forest, to all aspects of required forestry work.	Currently no provision in place		High Priority

<p>Forestry Foundation Skills (Micro-credential) (Level 2) [4977]</p>	<p>The purpose of this micro-credential is to provide a formal credential for learners/ākonga applying core leadership skills effectively in a forestry leadership environment. This micro-credential is intended for learners/ākonga who currently hold leadership/management roles within the forestry industry, or who have some industry or other relevant experience and are ready to advance into a leadership role. Learners/ākonga will develop a broad range of skills and knowledge, including managing health and safety, leadership and team building, staff employment, soft-skill development, innovation and critical thinking, and the application of te ao Māori me ōna tikanga.</p>	<p>New development</p>		
<p>New Zealand Certificate in Forest Harvesting Operations (Level 3): Basic Machine Operation, Breaking Out - Cable, Landing Operations, and Tree Felling [2326]</p>	<p>The New Zealand Certificate in Forest Harvesting Operations (Level 3) builds the skills of health and safety responsibilities, risk management, emergency procedures, and communication systems to maintain safety during forest operations.</p>	<p>5-10%</p>		<p>High Priority</p>
<p>New Zealand Certificate in Forestry Operations (Level 3): Basic Machine Operations, Mensuration, Production Thinning, Planting, Pruning, and Thin to Waste [2334]</p>	<p>The New Zealand Certificate in Forestry Operations (Level 3) builds the skills of health and safety responsibilities, risk management, emergency procedures, and communication systems to maintain safety during forest operations.</p>	<p>5-10%</p>	<p>Work-place based</p>	<p>High Priority</p>

<p>New Zealand Certificate in Tree Felling and Clearing (Non-Production) (Level 3): Optional strand in Hazardous Tree Felling [2336]</p>	<p>The New Zealand Certificate in Tree Felling and Clearing (Non-Production) (Level 3) is intended for people who are in the Department of Conservation, the Army, rural fire fighting, forestry (supervisors or security), road construction and maintenance, and track construction and maintenance. It provides the skills to operate safely and effectively in roles outside of the forest industry (non-production) that involve the felling and clearing of trees.</p>	<p>10%</p>		<p>Medium Priority</p>
<p>New Zealand Certificate in Log Stock Management (Level 3) [4173]</p>	<p>The purpose of this qualification is to provide the forest industry with individuals who have the skills and knowledge required to effectively manage log stocks and contribute to the planning and day to day management of the log yard operation, while operating safely and efficiently under limited supervision. The qualification includes strands which represent log scaling and log marshalling activities within a log stock management operation.</p>	<p>Currently no provision in place</p>		
<p>Core Construction of Forestry Roads (Micro-Credential) (Level 3) [4980]</p>	<p>The purpose of this micro-credential is to provide ākonga/learners with formal recognition and credentialisation of the skills and knowledge required for core construction of forestry roads in a forestry earthworks context in Aotearoa New Zealand.</p>	<p>New development</p>		
<p>Forestry Deadman Installation (Micro-credential) (Level 3) [4981]</p>	<p>The purpose of this micro-credential is to provide ākonga/learners with formal recognition and credentialisation of the skills and knowledge required to safely install a forestry deadman and effectively in Aotearoa New Zealand. The micro-credential will cater to ākonga/learners already experienced in installing a forestry deadman who wish to have their skills formally recognised. This</p>	<p>New development</p>		

	micro-credential is part of a training framework endorsed by the industry, and provides a training opportunity for those in other primary industries who would like to upskill in this area.			
Forestry Earthworks Plant Operation (Micro-Credential) (Level 3) [4975]	The purpose of this micro-credential is to provide ākonga/learners with formal recognition and credentialisation of the skills and knowledge required for plant operation workers using either a wheeled loader, hydraulic excavator, motor scraper, self-propelled roller, bulldozer or motor grader in the forestry industry.	New development		
Forestry River Crossing Construction (Micro-credential) (Level 3) [4974]	The purpose of this micro-credential is to provide ākonga/learners with formal recognition and credentialisation of the skills and knowledge required to construct forestry river crossings safely and effectively in Aotearoa New Zealand.	New development		
Forestry Road Pavement (Micro-Credential) (Level 3) [4973]	The purpose of this micro-credential is to provide ākonga/learners with formal recognition and credentialisation of the skills and knowledge required to apply pavement for a forestry road safely and effectively in Aotearoa New Zealand.	New development		
Geotextile Installation in Forestry Infrastructure (micro-credential) (Level 3) [4982]	The purpose of this micro-credential is to provide ākonga/learners with formal recognition and credentialisation of the skills and knowledge required to install geotextiles in forestry infrastructure safely and effectively in Aotearoa New Zealand.	New development		
Maintenance and Rehabilitation of Forestry Roads (Micro-Credential) (Level 3) [4976]	The purpose of this micro-credential is to provide ākonga/learners with formal recognition and credentialisation of the skills and knowledge required to maintain and rehabilitate forestry roading safely and effectively in a forestry earthworks context in Aotearoa New Zealand.	New development		

<p>New Zealand Certificate in Forest Harvesting Operations (Level 4): Cable Extraction, Ground Based Extraction, Mobile Cable Yarder, Head Breaker Out, Loading, Log Making, Mechanised Felling, Mechanised Processing, Spotting, Swing Yarder Extraction, and Tree Felling [2327]</p>	<p>The New Zealand Certificate in Forest Harvesting Operations (Level 4) provides the forest industry with individuals who have the skills and knowledge required to be employed in a production role in a harvesting operation. They will hold a senior position within the crew and will be able to contribute to the planning of a harvesting operation. They will be able to make decisions regarding their area of specialisation.</p>	<p>5%</p>		<p>High Priority</p>
<p>New Zealand Certificate in Forest Industry Operations (Planning and Monitoring) (Level 4): Harvesting, and Silviculture [2330]</p>	<p>The New Zealand Certificate in Forest Industry Operations (Planning and Monitoring) (Level 4) provides graduates of this qualification will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan, communicate and supervise work within a forestry or harvesting operational team. • Manage health and safety systems within a forestry or harvesting operational team. • Carry out safe behavioural audits within a forest operation. 	<p>10-15%</p>	<p>Work-place based</p>	<p>High Priority</p>
<p>New Zealand Certificate in Forest Operations (Level 4): Mechanised Land Preparation, and Mechanised Thinning [4174]</p>	<p>The New Zealand Certificate in Forest Operations (Level 4): Mechanised Land Preparation, and Mechanised Thinning enables graduates to operate mechanised plant and equipment safely and efficiently without supervision and maintain plant equipment while retaining productivity within the operation.</p>	<p>15-20 learners</p>		<p>High Priority</p>

<p>New Zealand Certificate in Forest Harvesting Operations (Level 4) [4175]</p>	<p>The New Zealand Certificate in Forest Harvesting Operations (Level 4) targets the skill development of the workforce in the semi-autonomous worker space, enabling workers to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • apply and coordinate workplace health and safety, risk management, emergency procedures, and communication within a team, while ensuring risks to the physical environment, areas of cultural and/or historical significance value are identified and protected in forest harvesting operations • apply technical skills and knowledge of a wide range of heavy equipment to carry out tasks specific to forest harvesting operations • apply technical skills and knowledge of systems and processes to achieve and maintain production levels in an operational role in a forest harvesting operation. • contribute to the planning and monitoring of a harvesting operation. 	<p>25-30%</p>		<p>High Priority</p>
<p>Forestry Operations: Log Scaling (Micro-credential) (Level 4) [4925]</p>	<p>The purpose of this micro-credential is to provide formal recognition and credentialisation of the skills and knowledge required to scale logs effectively, while operating safely and efficiently under limited supervision, as a log scaler within the forestry industry.</p>	<p>New development</p>		
<p>New Zealand Certificate in Forestry Leadership (Level 5) [4826]</p>	<p>The purpose of this qualification is to provide the New Zealand forestry industry with people who have knowledge and skills to provide leadership and supervise others. This qualification is targeted at people who have industry experience and wish to develop their leadership knowledge and skills.</p>	<p>Currently no provision in place</p>		

	<p>The forestry industry will benefit by having people with leadership capabilities to enhance operational performance.</p> <p>Graduates will apply leadership skills in a range of diverse scenarios within the forestry industry. The strands will support this.</p>			
<p>Business Forestry Leadership (Micro-Credential) (Level 5) [4979]</p>	<p>The purpose of this micro-credential is to provide a formal credential for learners/ākonga applying business leadership skills effectively in a forestry environment. This micro-credential will provide business skills and knowledge required for a leader in the forestry industry. It is intended for learners/ākonga who currently hold leadership/management roles within the forestry industry, or who have some leadership experience and are ready to advance into a leadership role within the forestry industry.</p>	<p>New development</p>		
<p>Core Forestry Leadership (Micro-Credential) (Level 5) [4977]</p>	<p>The purpose of this micro-credential is to provide a formal credential for learners/ākonga applying core leadership skills effectively in a forestry leadership environment. This micro-credential is intended for learners/ākonga who currently hold leadership/management roles within the forestry industry, or who have some industry or other relevant experience and are ready to advance into a leadership role. Learners/ākonga will develop a broad range of skills and knowledge, including managing health and safety, leadership and team building, staff employment, soft-skill development, innovation and critical thinking, and the application of te ao Māori me ōna tikanga.</p>	<p>New development</p>		

Operational Forestry Leadership (Micro-Credential) (Level 5) [4978]	The purpose of this micro-credential is to provide a formal credential for learners/ākonga applying operational leadership skills effectively in a forestry environment.	New development		
New Zealand Diploma in Forest Management (Level 6) [2329]	The New Zealand Diploma in Forest Management (Level 6) provides the forest industry with individuals who have the skills and knowledge required to carry out a technical or management role within the forest growing and harvesting sectors.	20 learners		High Priority
New Zealand Certificate in Log Stock Management (Level 3): Log Marshalling, and Log Scaling [4173]	The purpose of this qualification is to provide the forest industry with individuals who have the skills and knowledge required to effectively manage log stocks and contribute to the planning and day to day management of the log yard operation, while operating safely and efficiently under limited supervision. The qualification includes strands which represent log scaling and log marshalling activities within a log stock management operation.			Medium 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	The New Zealand Certificate in Primary Industry Skills is designed to meet the needs of industries by	15%		High Priority

<p>(Level 2): Optional strand in Self-Management and Employability Skills [2218]</p>	<p>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>			
<p>New Zealand Certificate in Primary Industry Operational Skills (Level 3): Optional strands in Specialist Equipment, and Infrastructure [2215]</p>	<p>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 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,</p>	<p>20-25%</p>		<p>High Priority</p>

	machinery, and other specialist equipment; and maintain infrastructure.			
Emerging Leadership in People, Food and Fibre Industries (Micro-credential) (Level 4) [5044]	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.	New development		
New Zealand Diploma in Primary Industry Business Management (Level 5) [2221]	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. MPI workforce forecasting indicates the need for more skilled workers, with both technical and 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.	10-15%		High priority

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.			

DRAFT