

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

Seafood Industry trends:

The Seafood industry is poised for growth, with rising export demand driven by global economic recovery post-COVID-19 and a focus on Aquaculture by government.

Seafood Workforce trends:

Both the seafood production and seafood processing sectors are forecast to increase by at least 3% and 10% respectively by 2032. The forecasts show significantly higher required increases (21%- 35%) for higher skill role types that will require increased levels of training (MPI forecast).

While the sector generally engages in workplace-based delivery, it will need a substantially higher level of investment to attain the level of skills required.

The workforce has low new entrant retention rates and low levels of industry tenure which drive a need for training of replacements. The sector utilizes those on temporary & work visas to supplement the workforce, making the industry vulnerable to changes in immigration trends and policy shifts.

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
- Food Safety
- Sustainability

Furthermore, the industry has reported occupation gaps for:

- Seafood land-based processing roles
- Oyster farming
- Hygiene/cleaning shifts
- Salmon veterinarians
- Vessel crew (deck hands, mates, skippers)
- Engineers (marine & land-based)

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: Seafood related qualifications and credentials

- We are reviewing the seafood qualification suite. Until the new qualifications and new programmes are available, however, we welcome any increase in enrolments in the existing qualification set. Except for a few qualifications set out below, we are not in a position to determine the quantum of any increases for most of the existing qualifications.

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 Seafood 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 seafood qualification suite. Our expectation is that new micro-credentials listed in this table will be available in 2025.

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: Seafood 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)
Introduction to Aquaculture (Micro-credential) (Level 2) [5036]	The purpose of this micro-credential is to provide formal recognition of the entry level skills and knowledge required to enter a career in the seafood industry and/or employment in the aquaculture sector in Aotearoa New Zealand.	Recently developed		
Introduction to Commercial Fishing (Micro-credential) (Level 2) [5052]	The purpose of this micro-credential is to provide formal recognition of the entry level skills and knowledge required to enter a career in the commercial fishing sector in Aotearoa New Zealand. The micro-credential provides a training framework for new or potential entrants into the commercial fishing industry, including seasonal workers, career changers and those not yet engaged in education, employment or training.	Recently developed		
Introduction to Seafood Processing (Micro-Credential) (Level 2) [5035]	The purpose of this micro-credential is to provide formal recognition of the entry level skills and knowledge required to enter a career in the seafood industry and/or employment as a seafood processing operator on land or at sea in Aotearoa New Zealand. The micro-credential is part of a training framework for new or potential entrants into the seafood industry, including seasonal workers, career changers and those not yet engaged in education, employment or training.	Recently developed		

New Zealand Certificate in Seafood Processing (Level 3): Fish and Fish Products, Live Holding, Cleaning and Sanitation, and Seafood Logistics [3130]	The New Zealand Certificate in Seafood Processing (Level 3) provides the seafood processing sector with people who are able to work as operators carrying out routine operations involving either seafood processing, live holding, cleaning and sanitation, or logistics in a seafood processing operation on land or at sea.	10-15%		High Priority
New Zealand Certificate in Aquaculture (Level 3): Hatchery, Fish, and Shellfish [3135]	The purpose of this qualification is to provide the aquaculture sector with people who are able to work as technicians or farm assistants carrying out routine operations involving daily care, husbandry and monitoring of fish or shellfish in an aquaculture operation.			Medium Priority
New Zealand Certificate in Commercial Fishing (Level 3): Shellfish, Wet Fish, and Frozen Fish [3133]	The purpose of this qualification is to provide the commercial fishing sector with people who are able to work as operators undertaking fish and fish product handling activities in an in-shore or deep-water environment.			Medium Priority
New Zealand Certificate in Seafood Processing (Level 4) [3131]	The purpose of this qualification is to provide the seafood processing sector with people who are able to work as experienced senior operators involved with fish and fish product processing in a seafood processing operation on land or at sea.			Medium Priority
New Zealand Certificate in Commercial Fishing (Level 4) [3132]	The purpose of this qualification is to provide the commercial fishing sector with people who are able to work as experienced commercial fishing operators involved in commercial fishing operations including fish handling in an in-shore or deep-water environment.			Medium Priority
New Zealand Certificate in Aquaculture (Level 4): Hatchery, Fish, Shellfish, and Aquaculture Diving [3134]	The purpose of this qualification is to provide the aquaculture sector with people who are able to work as experienced operators in either aquaculture diving, hatchery, fish or shellfish operations involved with stock management and other aquaculture operations.			Medium Priority

New Zealand Certificate in Seafood (Level 5): Aquaculture, Seafood Processing, and Commercial Fishing [3129]	The purpose of this qualification is to provide the seafood sector with people who are able to work as specialists and in managerial positions in a seafood processing operation on land or at sea, or harvesting or fishing activities.			Medium Priority
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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. 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 Specialist Equipment, and Infrastructure [2215]	<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, machinery, and other specialist equipment; and maintain infrastructure.</p>	20-25%		High Priority
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>	Recently developed		
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</p>	10-15%		High priority

	<p>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 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.</p>			
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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.			
Seafood Core Subjects Micro-credential (Level 3)	This micro-credential covers the core component of the new Level 3 qualification, covering workplace safety, health and wellbeing, and application of te ao Māori principles to a seafood operation.			
Seafood Core Subjects Micro-credential (Level 4)	This micro-credential covers the core component of the new Level 4 qualification, covering managing self, supporting team members, and application of te ao Māori principles to facilitate a positive environment and the production of high-quality seafood.			
Seafood Biosecurity Micro-credential (Level 5)	This micro-credential will recognise practical skills and knowledge to effectively manage and mitigate			

	biosecurity risks, and enhance the protection of ecosystems, public health, and production systems from biosecurity threats.			
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