

Whenua Whakatipu Kai Arable



Key challenges

- Legislation/compliance
- Skilled workers availability
- No clear pathway into the industry

Industry overview

- New Zealand arable systems are unique in that they **generally include livestock**.
- New Zealand's arable farmers produce **50% of the world's white clover seed** and **60% of the world's radish seed**.¹
- Ongoing government **legislation and compliance** to support farmers in the mitigation of on-farm emissions and climate change is difficult for some farmers to navigate, due to cost and complexity.
- Because farms are often family run, there is **not a clear pathway into the workforce**.

Insights

Industry

- Arable farming accounts for around **0.5% of the total export revenue** in the food and fibre sector.
- Tighter budgets, sufficient storage of feed and reductions in dairy cattle herd numbers may be contributing to **reduced demand for domestic grain and maize silage**.
- **Domestic grain prices remain above average** but have eased back from the high levels of early 2023.

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Workforce

- Over one-third of Arable workers are aged 55 and older, making it **one of the oldest workforces** across Muka Tangata industries (after Sheep, Beef, Deer and Wool).
- Most arable farms are **family run**, and many have been on the land for several generations.²
- The total **workforce size has been in decline** since 2017.

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Learners and Providers

- Ensuring that the industry has the skills and available training to adapt to a changing environment and adhere to **compliance and legislative requirements** remains a priority.
- **Non-formal learning** is filling a gap in this space to encourage farmers to be more proactive in applying new legislation to their business.
- There has been **little uptake for qualifications** specific to Arable.

[Read more >](#)

1 - Foundation for Arable Research, '[Arable Industry Profile](#)', 2022

2 - Edwards Simon, '[Federated Farmers Easy Guide to Arable](#)', October 19, 2021

Opportunities

Attraction and Retention

It is challenging to attract skilled people into the arable farming industry.

- Many Arable farms are family owned and operated, and people often begin learning Arable farming practices on the family farm.
- There isn't a clear career pathway in the industry and the industry struggles to attract people with the range of skills required to carry out all aspects of the job, and likewise people struggle to progress into these roles.

Regulatory Compliance

Legislation and compliance with on-farm emissions and climate change are a challenge.

- Ongoing government legislation and compliance to support farmers in the mitigation of on-farm emissions and climate change is difficult for some farmers to navigate, due to cost and complexity.
- Ensuring that the industry has the skills and available training to adapt to a changing environment and adhere to compliance and legislative requirements remains a priority.

Delivery and Assessment

The seasonal nature of the industry means that it is difficult to complete a qualification within the time frame of employment.

- The peak seasonal work requirements demand considerable focus and attention by workers, yet often the qualifications require assessments to be completed during these busy times.
- Delivery of content can be out of alignment with the seasons.

Roadmap Actions

Action

What is the problem?

What are we doing about it?

Work with industry to raise awareness of existing entry pathway options

Entry pathways for learners into the industry are not obvious and there is an apparent low uptake of existing initiatives that provide an entry point for learners into industries, such as the Trades Academy and Gateway programme at Primary ITO and the Te Pūkenga Pathways into Primary Industries Programme.

We will work with industry to make them aware of the options that are available.

Action	What is the problem?	What are we doing about it?
Better understand the role informal learning plays in the industry	Informal and non-formal learning plays an important role in skills acquisition for the arable farming industry. Formal education and training systems are not the only way in which people develop skills, with people gaining skills through work experience, informal and non-formal learning, and/or outside the country in which they work. The fact that these skills are invisible magnifies the challenge of skills under-utilization and mismatch and can lead to learners repeating unnecessary training.	Muka Tangata will work with stakeholders, including industry, providers and government, to identify and address barriers to recognising existing skills. Delivery and Assessment for the 21st Century is a joint project between Muka Tangata, Food and Fibre Centre of Vocational Excellence and Te Pūkenga.
Shorter, stackable, training	The industry wants shorter training that is better aligned to core skills components and is delivered in sync with the industry calendar.	Muka Tangata is working on how qualifications can be more flexible and transferable. Micro-credentials are one approach to creating shorter, stackable training. We will work with industry to investigate if micro-credentials are an appropriate method for meeting industry needs. As part of the Agriculture qualification development project, Muka Tangata will consult on the practical and technical aspects of the qualifications, and explore different options that ensure flexibility and transferability.
Encourage greater participation by Māori and underserved learners	Māori, Pacific peoples, and tāngata whaikaha are greatly underrepresented in the workforce.	We will work with industry and providers, including through our programme endorsement function, to identify potential barriers and encourage greater participation of these groups.
Support the use of more flexible assessment methods	The seasonal nature of the industry means that it is difficult to complete a qualification within the time frame of employment. Delivery of content can also be out of alignment with the seasons. This is a significant barrier to employees completing on job qualifications.	Muka Tangata is supporting providers to use assessment methods that are suitable to a wider range of learners. We are exploring how well assessment provisions can allow for other methods of presenting evidence that cater for different learning styles, such as videos, photographs and naturally occurring evidence. Delivery and Assessment for the 21st Century is a joint project between Muka Tangata, Food and Fibre Centre of Vocational Excellence and Te Pūkenga.

***Keep up to date with progress on our Workforce Development Plans**

This represents a snapshot in time of the workforce development plan. For the most up to date information, please visit: mukatangata.workforceskills.nz or [sign up to our mailing list](#) for updates.