

Ngā Karepe me te Waina

Grapes and Wine



Key challenges

- Labour shortages
- Attracting skilled people
- Supply cost challenges
- Lack of clear pathways

Industry overview

- The **largest grape growing region** in New Zealand is **Marlborough**, and sauvignon blanc is the primary varietal.¹
- **30%** of the Grapes and Wine **workforce are in Marlborough**.
- Over the past few years, grape growers have faced a **volatile operating environment** due to changes in rainfall, input costs, grape output volumes and wine grape prices, all of which have affected the industry's performance.²

Insights

Industry

- A massive harvest in 2022 and high export prices led to a sharp **increase in export revenue** for the year ending June 2023. While 2024 has seen a slight decrease, this is expected to balance out again by 2025.³
- Winemakers are projected to expand production to meet **rising demand** from the European Union following a new free trade agreement.
- Increased demand and favourable harvests have **amplified revenue and profitability** for grape growers, even amid labour shortages and supply cost challenges.

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Workforce

- Out of all Muka Tangata industries, Grapes and Wine has the **highest percentage of the workforce who leave to go overseas** (14%).
- There are **two distinct seasonal peaks** for labour – pruning in winter and the harvest or vintage in late summer to early autumn; the seasonal nature of the work means that employment opportunities are often on a short-term basis.
- To help mitigate labour costs, growers are looking to **increase the mechanisation of pruning and harvesting activities**.

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Learners and Providers

- Employers tend to favour **experience over qualifications**.
- **Formal training options do not take seasonal work into consideration**, often requiring on-job assessments to be carried out during peak times. This is a barrier to learners completing qualifications.
- People who are in the workforce as part of the **Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme are limited** in the qualifications they can gain.

[Read more >](#)

1 - New Zealand Wine, 'New Zealand Winegrowers Inc Annual Report 2023', (Marlborough, New Zealand, 2023)

2 - IBISWorld, 'Grape Growing in New Zealand', Industry Report (New Zealand: IBISWorld (access is by subscription only), October 2023)

3 - Ministry for Primary Industries, 'Situation and Outlook for Primary Industries June 2024', (New Zealand: Ministry for Primary Industries, 2024)

Opportunities

Qualifications

The Grape and Wine industry generally favours experience over qualifications.

- There is a lack of appreciation for qualifications across the industry.
- Employers tend to focus on people's experience rather than their qualifications.

Delivery and Assessment

The seasonal requirements of the industry do not always align with the delivery and assessment of qualifications.

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

Attraction and Retention

Some regions experience different attraction and retention issues in both permanent and seasonal roles.

- Some of the regional locations of the industry and industry roles experience greater attraction and retention issues than others.
- This is in part due to competition for a limited number of skilled people and because the information available on pathways into and through the industry and the associated qualifications is unclear or can be difficult to find.

Roadmap Actions

Action

What is the problem?

What are we doing about it?

Explore the development of relevant micro-credentials

The industry has significant seasonal peaks, which can place pressure on undertaking qualifications. The industry has said it wants shorter, more flexible, training.

We will explore if developing micro-credentials is part of the solution to this.

Work with industry to identify the value of qualifications

Our engagement with industry reveals that while the industry strongly values skills, it looks to experience rather than qualifications for evidence of this. Partly this is due to not knowing what qualifications are available and what those qualifications mean for what someone can do.

We will work to improve access to information on qualifications and work with both industry and providers to raise awareness of qualifications and what value they have for both employers and employees. In addition, we are undertaking pan-sector research that examines the value of qualifications.

Action	What is the problem?	What are we doing about it?
Investigate how Recognised Seasonal Employers can gain relevant qualifications	Recognised Seasonal Employers (RSEs) are a significant component of the current industry workforce. However, they are limited in the qualifications they can gain.	We will investigate, alongside other stakeholders, how RSEs can gain new, transferable, recognition for the skills they acquire.
Support the industry's own workforce development plans	Both NZ Wine and Wine Marlborough have developed complementary workforce development plans.	We will support the implementation of these plans.
Better data for understanding the workforce and skills needs	The industry has highlighted in their Workforce Development Plans the need for better data to understand their workforce and skill needs.	As part of our research and analysis work, we will assist industry to access the information needed.
Work with industry and providers to improve programme effectiveness	Delivery of content can also be out of alignment with the seasons, such as pest and disease modules being delivered during winter (quiet times) when there are no obvious pests present. This has been identified by industry as a barrier to employees completing on the job qualifications.	We will work to bring industry and providers together to improve programme effectiveness, such as delivering the most relevant content in sync with the industry seasonal calendar.
Support new programme development and monitor uptake of new qualifications	Horticulture qualifications were updated to specifically include strands in wine growing. To date only a few programmes have been developed to deliver these new qualifications.	Horticulture qualifications have been updated to specifically include strands in wine growing. To date only a few programmes have been developed to deliver these new qualifications. Learner numbers are updated annually, in the second quarter of the year, when we will review to see if there has been improved uptake or if there is further action we can take.

***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.