Whakatipu Hipi, Pīwhi, Tia hoki
Sheep, Beef, Deer and Wool Farming

Key challenges

- Environmental and sustainability challenges
- Aging workforce
- Lack of clear pathways
- Rising costs

Industry overview

- **Sheep farming decreased 1.7 million hectares** (29%) and **beef farming decreased 1.3 million hectares** (32%) between 2002 and 2019.[1]
- New Zealand farmers have grappled with **droughts** in recent years, along with **severe flooding** in early 2023, causing livestock losses and significant property damage.
- New **government regulations** are continuing to be introduced which seek to help farmers mitigate their climate change impact.

Insights

Industry

- Sheep and Beef cattle farming are experiencing **rising input costs and declining export prices** for sheep and beef, compounded by an expected drop in key meat export prices.
- The Wool industry is also struggling with rising costs, alongside a **decrease in the price of wool**.
- The **Deer industry has also been struggling in recent years with market challenges**, which have led to more of a reliance on rural professionals for guidance, support, and expert advice.

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Workforce

- On average, the Sheep, Beef, Deer, and Wool industries have a **higher percentage of workers who are 65 years or older** than any other Muka Tangata industry.
- In **Shearing Services**, there are an exceptionally **high number of people** in the workforce **who identify as Māori** and most of the workforce **are under 35 years old**.
- The **industry fluctuates with the seasons** depending on the work required, and seasonal work counts fluctuate with these changes.

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Learners and Providers

- The Sheep, Beef, Deer and Wool industry is facing the pressure of keeping up with **rapidly changing farming systems**, which require employees to gain new skills.
- Technology is changing rapidly, and **qualifications aren't keeping up**.
- There is an industry-wide desire for **smaller, more achievable qualifications**.

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1 - StatsNZ, 'Agricultural and Horticultural Land Use', April 15, 2021

Opportunities

Attraction and Retention
An aging workforce is contributing to a labour shortage across the industry.

- The Sheep, Beef and Deer industry have the highest percentage of employees aged 55 or over (43%) across the food and fibre sector.
- There is an opportunity for the industry to better understand how Māori agribusiness might support a changing workforce.

Pathways
Entry pathways for learners into the industry are not obvious.

- There is no clear pathway into the industry for new entrants who often end up in roles through word of mouth.
- Residential pre-employment training is one avenue that the industry places value on as a pathway.

Diversity and Inclusion
Employers need more support to help them better navigate working in an intergenerational environment.

- Feedback from our engagement has indicated that many employers struggle to be responsive to employees' pastoral care needs and development. They feel time poor and may not have the skills to respond to the needs of employees they see as being from another generation.
- There is an opportunity to harness the expertise of experienced farmers with the right skills who are reducing their on-farm time to support and mentor the next generation of farmers.

Qualifications
The vocational education system has not been flexible and nimble enough to meet industry need.

- The Sheep, Beef, Deer and Wool industry is facing the pressure of keeping up with rapidly changing farming systems, which require employees to gain new skills and puts pressure on qualifications to keep up.
- Due to existing vocational education options not being flexible enough to accommodate and keep up with the rate of change in the industry, non-formal and informal training has taken precedence, as it is easy to access, targets a specific area, and offers short and relevant learning.

Roadmap Actions

Action	What is the problem?	What are we doing about it?
Research and promulgate best practice for improving diversity	The Sheep, Beef, Deer and Wool industry has the highest percentage of employees aged 55 or over (43%) across the food and fibre sector, and 89% of the workforce identify as European.	We will research and share best practice for improving workforce diversity, including how to support different groups who are underrepresented in the industry currently.

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 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.
Research best practice and suitable models for training	There is no clear pathway into the industry for new entrants who often end up in roles through word of mouth, especially for those who are not from traditional farming backgrounds. Residential pre-employment training is one avenue that the industry places value on as a pathway.	The Food and Fibre Centre of Vocational Excellence is undertaking research into residential/group training. We will use this research to explore best practice and suitable models for pre-employment training. We will also explore with providers how we cater for learners that want to interact and have a face-to-face learning environment, when they are geographically dispersed.
Work with industry to raise awareness of existing entry pathway options	Entry pathways for learners into the industry are not obvious.	We will work with industry to make them aware of the options that are available, such as cadet farms, Growing Future Farmers, Trades Academy and Gateway programme at Primary ITO | Te Pūkenga, and the Te Pūkenga Pathways into Primary Industries Programme.
Support upskilling rural professionals servicing the Deer industry	The Deer industry is strongly reliant on rural professional services.	We will explore the upskilling of rural professionals across agriculture, as well as having qualifications available for employers/employees to enrol in nationally, to support the industry's growth strategy.
Work with industry and wider partners to identify workable formal solutions for Wool industry training	The Deer industry is strongly reliant on rural professional services.	We are already working with industry leaders and vocational education and training bodies to research, analyse and construct a workable solution for the industry. This work is informed by research undertaken by the Food and Fibre Centre of Vocational Excellence and work we are doing to map non-formal training delivery to formal qualification development.

Action	What is the problem?	What are we doing about it?
Support learners to succeed	We know that supporting the physical and emotional wellbeing of learners (pastoral care) is an important component of helping them to succeed.	Through our quality assurance processes we are increasing our focus on pastoral care as we look more holistically at providers' delivery and assessment. As part of our programme endorsement function, we will ensure appropriate support is available to learners. And we will continue to talk to providers about how they are implementing the Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice 2021. Research has already identified good practice and successful models, but there still appears to be a gap in implementation.
Work to make qualifications more flexible	The industry wants shorter, targeted, and flexible training.	Through the Entry Level and Agriculture qualification development projects, Muka Tangata will explore the role of micro-credentials in reshaping training for the Sheep, Beef and Deer industries. For example, we will investigate skills across industries and how to make the training more appealing to a wider audience and across sectors. We will also work with industry to develop shorter, targeted training, to address specific skill needs. We are engaging with industry to identify priority areas, which could include land use change; skills around agritech (behind the farm gate); planning, organising, and project management; grazing management; irrigation; biosecurity; and regenerative agriculture.
Work with employers to identify tools they can use to support their staff	There is no clear pathway into the industry for new entrants who often end up in roles through word of mouth, especially for those who are not from traditional farming backgrounds. Feedback from our engagement has indicated that many employers struggle to be responsive to employees' pastoral care needs and development. They feel time poor and may not have the skills to respond to the needs of employees they see as being from another generation.	We will work with employers to identify leadership upskilling, tools and practices they can use to support their staff.