



How do we successfully manage multicultural teams in the agriculture sector?



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**“We need diversity of thought in the world to face the new challenges.”**

*—Berners-Lee, inventor of the Worldwide Web, 2012*

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## About the author

Born and bred on a traditional New Zealand dairy farm I have seen the agriculture sector change over the course of my lifetime. Farms, in general, have become larger in scale over the past two decades with staff being employed from across the globe to meet the sector's needs. The inspiration for this project came from my involvement in our two family dairy farms and as the partner of a migrant who is from Ireland on a visa to work in the sector. Having a school teaching background and working as a rural professional over the past seven years, two of which involved managing a team, I have always been passionate about people, how they operate and what can be done to help them succeed.

The aim of this report is to define what culture is, discuss cultural diversity in the workplace and how it impacts the agriculture sector both positively and negatively, and provide recommendations on how to effectively manage a multicultural team.

## **Executive Summary**

The agriculture industry has grown from early Maori, the first settlers in the 1800s through to our second largest export (pre COVID-19). Due to the growth in the industry, roles have been created that cannot be filled by New Zealanders because of a skill shortage. To solve this problem, many businesses now employ migrant staff, from all over the world, to help them run their operations.

New Zealand has a reputation for being naturally beautiful, a safe place to live and work and bring up a family. Ranking 11<sup>th</sup> in the 2019 Future Brand Country Index (FCI), which is done every five years, put New Zealand in an excellent position. Quality of life and wellbeing of citizens in New Zealand was a key factor in the ranking. We can live up to the reputation where New Zealand is seen to be a great place to both work and live by taking the time to understand people (and their cultures) who migrate here to work and making a conscious effort to acknowledge this when they start employment.

The focus of this report is to understand the management of multicultural teams in New Zealand agriculture. The history of New Zealand agriculture has been researched with key moments reflected upon to tell the story of where the industry has come from and what the current situation is. The contribution migrants make in terms of the workforce and benefits to the New Zealand economy will be mentioned. Reports based around migrant exploitation will be delved into with some examples from various sources added. With migrant employees now playing a critical role in the production of our agriculture products it is crucial that employers have the knowledge to manage multicultural teams effectively. Culture and cultural diversity will be discussed with cultural differences and management styles explored alongside a survey, undertaken for this report, to support the recommendations.

The main findings from this report include the need for migrant staff to be part of our teams to produce our food products for the world. The characteristics of migrant staff are discussed and multicultural teams in agricultural evaluated along with how to have strong multicultural teams. Each of these points are supported with examples from the surveys and interviews conducted as part of this report.

Recommendations from this report include sharing the story of New Zealand agriculture and the importance of migrant staff, being aware of the various reports around migrant employee exploitation and improving processes and practices to ensure everyone working in New Zealand has the same rights with those employers that do not do this being held accountable, providing employers with education to up-skill themselves on how to have culturally revealing conversations with their staff and continue to gather data around managing multicultural teams in the agriculture industry to provide further insight.

## **1.0 Introduction**

### **1.1 Overview**

Historically agriculture in New Zealand was smaller scale, less intensive and owner operated. Whether it is growing crops or raising animals, each individual sector of agriculture has had its challenges but as a whole it has grown and is now, due to COVID-19 and tourism loss, our largest export. The 2018 census reported 79.6% of total goods exported were from the agriculture sector and brought NZ \$46 billion into the economy. The Ministry for Primary Industries undertook an audit of the workforce in March 2019 and reported that the agricultural sector employed 350,560 people. As the sector continues to grow so does the need for skilled workers that includes on the ground staff “but also the related professions of scientists, agritech specialists, educators, and even robotics designers” (Horticulture New Zealand, 2017).

With the traditional owner operated model shifting to one where the business is owned by a company and staff are employed to run the day-to-day operations, the need for employees has increased, in particularly the dairy and horticulture sectors. These roles are not always filled by New Zealanders as there is a skill shortage, therefore migrant workers have been recruited for the positions.

With overseas staff being recruited into the workforce, employers need an understanding of how to help migrant staff settle, how to communicate effectively, how management styles can differ with culture and how to bring individuals together to be part of a productive and positive team.

We need to look at migrant employment as a nation, using the reports written, those who have technical expertise on migrant employment-seeking populations and the data collected to date to consider whether we have high enough expectations for those that are employing migrants and if there is enough support for those who relocate their lives to contribute to our workforce and economy.

## **1.2 Aim**

This research will look to answer the question: How do we successfully manage multicultural teams in the sector? In doing this, I will explore what culture is in different countries, including understanding what is culturally important to individuals. As part of the research question this report will consider how the management of cultural values, practices and language can motivate staff to be more productive. This information will contribute to workplaces that are respectful, aware and encourage culturally diverse workplaces, leading to healthy and happy staff and effective management who have the staff's best interest at the forefront of the business.

## **2.0 Methodology**

The methodology used for this research included a literature review, a survey, thematic analysis and semi-structured interviews.

The material for the literature review was sourced from a range of books, papers, articles, reports, websites, and opinion pieces. The review was focused around understanding the history of New Zealand agriculture and how migrants came to be employed in the industry, what culture and cultural diversity is, different cultural norms and how cultural diversity can come together in the workplace to create successful teams.

The literature review was a key component and included analysing the Temporary Migrant Worker Exploitation in New Zealand report (Collins & Stringer, 2019), Diverse Communities – Exploring the Migrant and Refugee Experience in New Zealand report (Ministry of Social Development, 2008), The Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme research employer surveys (2007-2019) and a project done by Multicultural New Zealand and Cultural Connections researching the challenges migrants face when coming to New Zealand.

A total of 48 surveys were completed by those working in the agriculture sector through agriculture social media platforms. Participants that completed these were from several different cultures and at different stages of their careers, from new to the industry through to being an employer. Questions collected both qualitative and quantitative data.

Thematic analysis was applied following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phase guide. These steps included becoming familiar with the data set by reading through it as a whole and then breaking it down to each question and re-reading the responses for each several times. Each question and the corresponding data collected was transferred into a spreadsheet where it was re-read, and a colour coding system was developed to capture important themes. Themes were collected for each individual question and then as a whole data set. These themes were reviewed and broken down to percentages that could be compared against each other and the literature review. Real life examples, shared by the survey participants, were recorded, and used to support key themes.

Ten semi-structured interviews, that followed the same questions as the survey, were done to gather further information and real-life examples of multicultural teams working together in the agriculture industry.

These four methodologies allowed for information to be collected around the history of agriculture in New Zealand, the employment of migrants and the impacts this has as well as how to manage multicultural teams.

### **3.0 Findings and Discussion**

#### **3.1 Literature Review**

#### **3.2 Agriculture in New Zealand**

New Zealand Maori had a staple diet of birds and fish along with tropical crops that were carried across the Pacific by their ancestors (Kingi, 2008). Maori used natural resources to make tools to cultivate crops (Puketapu, 2000). Due to the difference in climate, Maori adapted their gardening knowledge and skills to get the tropical crops to grow and thrive. When European settlers arrived, they introduced new vegetables which Maori welcomed into their gardens. Maori had a cultural gifting and exchanging system that vegetables were a large part of later vegetables formed the foundations of the Maori commercial economy (Furey, 2006). The plough was introduced in the 1820s and was a revolutionary tool that Maori excelled in using to move into commercial gardening. Between the 1830s and 1850s Maori agriculture experienced great growth and supplied food locally and to Australia (NZ History, 2019). Wheat was a popular crop grown in the North Island by Maori who harvested it and processed it in the water-operated flour mills they had built (Kingi, 2008). Settlers arriving without the knowledge of how to grow in the New Zealand climate and soil relied on Maori for food. The Treaty of Waitangi was signed in 1840 allowing Maori to have the status of British subjects and become part of the British Empire. "The Treaty is a broad statement of principles on which the British and Māori made a political compact to found a nation state and build a government in New Zealand (NZ History, 2017). "In 1856 the New Zealander described Maori as landlords, farmers, graziers, seamen, ship owners, labourers and artisans" (Kingi, 2008). Maori owned most of the North Island until the early 1860s when the settler government forced land titles that were once collectively operated to become individual. Relations were largely amicable but deteriorated over the settlers demand to acquire land and the Maori being reluctant to sell (Derby, 2021). "The Crown obtained Māori land by acquisition and, after the 1863 New Zealand Settlements Act, raupatu (confiscation). By 1862, the Crown had acquired roughly two thirds of New Zealand" (Te Tumu Paeroa, ND). The change in Maori land ownership had a great effect on Maori Agriculture and tikanga in the 19th and 20th centuries (Kingi,

2008). Large amounts of Maori land moved out of Maori ownership when the Native Land Court (now the Maori Land Court) was established in 1865 and many laws were enacted (Kingi, 2008). Maori looked for ways to retain their land and developed structures to do this. In 1929 Sir Apirana Ngata developed the Maori Land Development Scheme and introduced this to “New Zealand's legislature in 1929, giving the state direct legal and financial responsibility for assisting Maori people to develop and farm Maori land” (Harris, 1996). The affairs act in 1953 saw Maori Land Trusts (ahuwhehenua) and Corporations developed. Kingi (2008) explains that these structures have been developed to manage Maori interests in land and currently between the Maori incorporations and 5200 ahuwhehenua trusts administered about two-thirds of Maori land. The ahuwhehenua trusts allow landowners to retain their interests, incorporations see the owners become shareholders that receive dividends (Kingi, 2008). “Most Māori landowners will never occupy the land they collectively own, nor obtain a livelihood from it. But ownership of Māori land plays a major role in cultural identity. Land provides owners with their tūrangawaewae (their place to stand, or sense of belonging)” (Kingi, 2008). 20% (300,000 ha) of Maori land is not under ahuwhehenua or incorporations. If owners wish to occupy this land, they need to get permission through the Maori Land Court from the majority of the other owners to lease it. Leasing allows the land to be used to create revenue by current owners or whānau in the area, or by other parties (Ministry of Justice, 2021). The contribution Maori make to New Zealand farming is significant with Māori authority farming businesses profiting \$97 million in 2018 (Stats NZ, 2020).

The story of the Maori coincides with the Europeans, who began pastoral farming soon after they settled in New Zealand in the 1800s. The open country landscape of the South Island was suited to farming sheep for meat and wool while the North Island was harder to farm with bush needing to be cleared to farm sheep and cows for meat, wool and milk (Penden, 2008). Arable crops were also grown, but mainly for local supply.

In the 1840s New Zealand started trading non-perishable items with Australia that could be stored and shipped such as wool, grain and kauri gum and then began exporting to Britain in the 1870s (NZ Export, 2016). The invention of refrigeration on ships significantly changed the market for New Zealand as this meant that meat and dairy products could now be transported overseas with Britain being the main consumer and buying as much as could be produced (McLintock, 1966). These developments saw farming increase to meet the demand with the quantity of frozen lamb exporting tripling in size (NZ History, 2021). Super phosphate began to be imported and was a driver in pasture growth and agricultural development (Duncan, 2008).

Times changed between 1930 and 1950 with World War II causing economic depression and a downturn in lamb prices and sheep numbers to start declining. Dairying however, continued to grow with butter and cheese dominating the export market (Stringleman and Scrimgeour, 2008).

The 1950s, post-World War II, saw economic growth with land values increasing and further land developed for farming. Both sheep and dairy farmers were gaining good returns from products and the economy was prosperous (NZ Export 2016). International oil availability saw costs rise, with the New Zealand government combating this by encouraging farmers to produce more product and rewarding them with a range of subsidies (Ministry of Primary Industries, 2017). Sheep numbers peaked at this point, with over 70 million between 1975 and 1985. New Zealand was the third-largest wool producer, experiencing a wool boom that resulted from the Korean War, with the United States stockpiling wool (Penden, 2008).

A change in government in 1984 saw deregulation with supplementary prices and subsidies removed. Land and produce prices fell with sheep declining rapidly by 43% (Johnston and Frengley, 1991). Farmers began to diversify to increase their profits. In the 1970s capturing live deer from the wild and farming them started the deer industry, this developed, and venison was exported remaining in the market today (Deer Industry NZ, ND). Smaller niche markets were dabbled in but were not overly successful. Sheep production focused on having less ewes but greater lambing percentages and

heavier lamb weights increasing meat income returns (Brooking, 2006). Dairy was the most profitable enterprise with numbers increasing and the national herd going from 2.2 million in 1985 to 6.3 million in 2019 (Stats NZ, 2020). Milk powder and casein started being produced alongside cheese and butter and became important in the market (Stringleman and Scrimgeour, 2008). Land conversions, particularly in the South Island, from mixed farming systems such as cropping and sheep to dairying happened rapidly with the scale of farms becoming larger and moving from an owner operated model to one that needed staff (Penden, 2008).

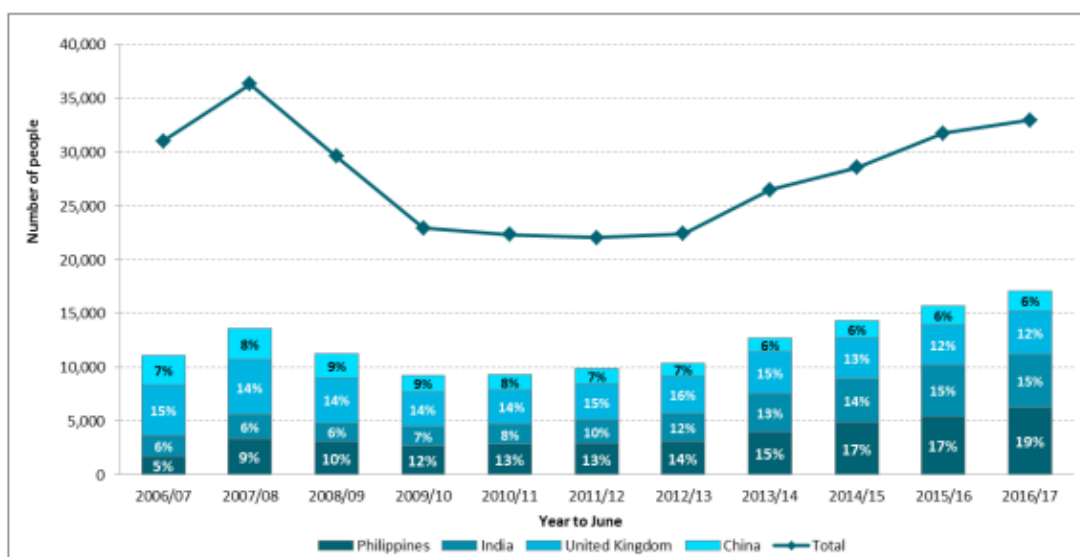
Alongside pastoral farming, the horticulture sector experienced increased product variety and volumes supplied for export. This started in the 1950s with vegetables being grown and sent overseas in canned or frozen form (Penden, 2008). Apples followed, becoming a significant export that remains important today. The kiwifruit industry expanded considerably from the 1970s and is now one of the largest exports in the horticulture industry (NZ History, 2020). New Zealand wine has also grown from very small-scale vineyards in the 19th century to larger operations surfacing from the late 1990s producing 72 million litres of export wine, to 2020 where 329 million litres was produced (NZ Wine, 2020).

### **3.3 Migrant Staff Employed in New Zealand**

New Zealand has a diverse population with migrant settlements spanning over centuries for various reasons, for example the Gold Rush. Migration to New Zealand has increased over time with travel and work opportunities becoming available. With areas of the agriculture sector expanding and the need for extra staff, migrants have been employed into roles in the industry that were not able to be filled by New Zealanders due to a skill shortage (NZ Immigration Law, 2018). These circumstances could be for a number of reasons including lack of skilled and experienced New Zealanders or possibly the urban, rural divide. Once everyone knew someone that lived on a farm and could experience what it meant to 'be a farmer' and produce food. This has decreased over time with studies showing many

children and adults do not know where their food is coming from. A research commissioned by Honest Kids (2019) revealed that one in five primary aged students did not know that apples grew on trees and 95% had no idea how strawberries were grown. This lack of real-life experience to motivate students into a career in agriculture may have contributed to the shortage of skills in the workforce.

The number of people applying for an essential skills work visa has steadily increased over time and these have been largely applied for by people from the Philippines followed by India and the United Kingdom (figure 1). Dairy cattle farm worker was one of the most common occupations migrants applied for – it made up 4.9% of people approved in this category.



Source: MBIE.

Figure 1 Migration Trends and Outlook 2016/17 (MBIE 2016/2017)

Migrants who come to New Zealand often describe it as a safe place for themselves and their families where they can pursue work opportunities and careers while exploring a beautiful country that has year-round activities to be enjoyed. The work-life balance is often better than in their own countries where they may have to undertake long hours of work for minimal pay. Migrants with children have

the option to enrol them at their local school and gain an education while being part of a local community.

Migrants contribute to our workforce and often bring skills that the country might be missing due to its size and the fact that those with the skills have immigrated to larger countries. The economy also benefits from migrants as documented in a report prepared by Hodder and Krupp (2017) showing migrants contributed \$2.9 billion to the country in 2013.

New Zealanders overall experience with migrants is positive with studies showing they are accepting of those from other countries and can see the benefits including workforce skills, and economic and cultural vibrancy. Hodder and Krupp (2017) shared government collected information on public perceptions of immigration and migrants, stating that “In the most recent research in 2015, when asked to rate their views on migrants from 0 to 10 (not at all positive to very positive), the average across 2,000 respondents was 6.6 (figure 2). This was broadly consistent with the surveys in 2011 (6.6) and 2013 (6.7) (Hodder & Krupp, 2017).

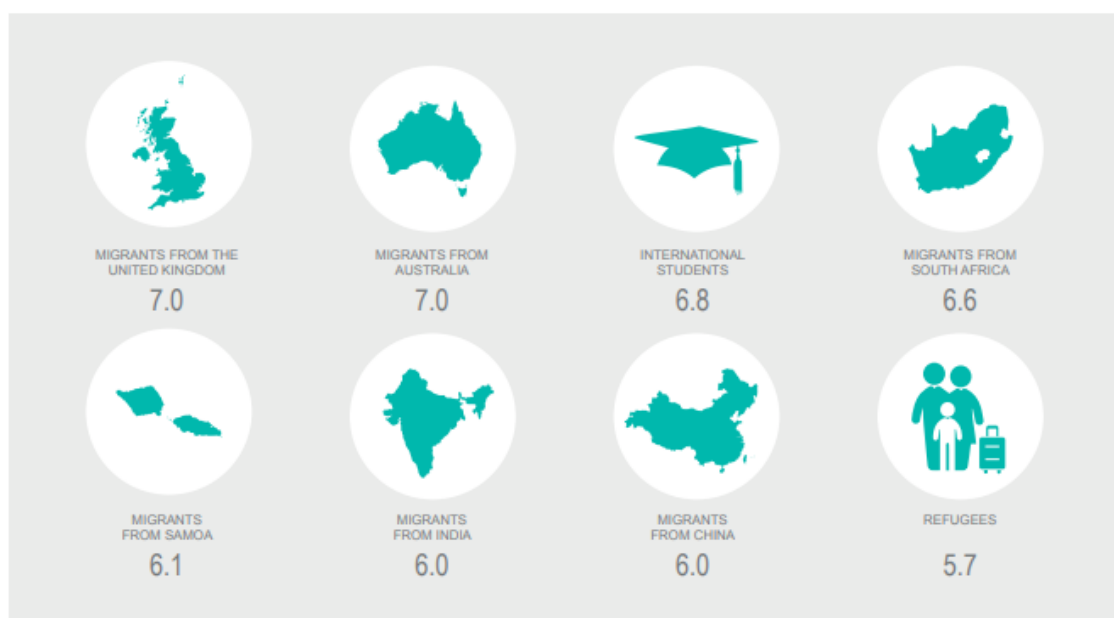


Figure 2 Overall views on different migrant groups (Hodder & Krupp, 2017)

People from other countries bring with them their background, including their culture, when they move to a new country. Depending on circumstances, they may not have experienced other cultures and may feel some degree of shock once the euphoria of a new country has gradually decreased. This transition is called the settlement curve (figure 3).

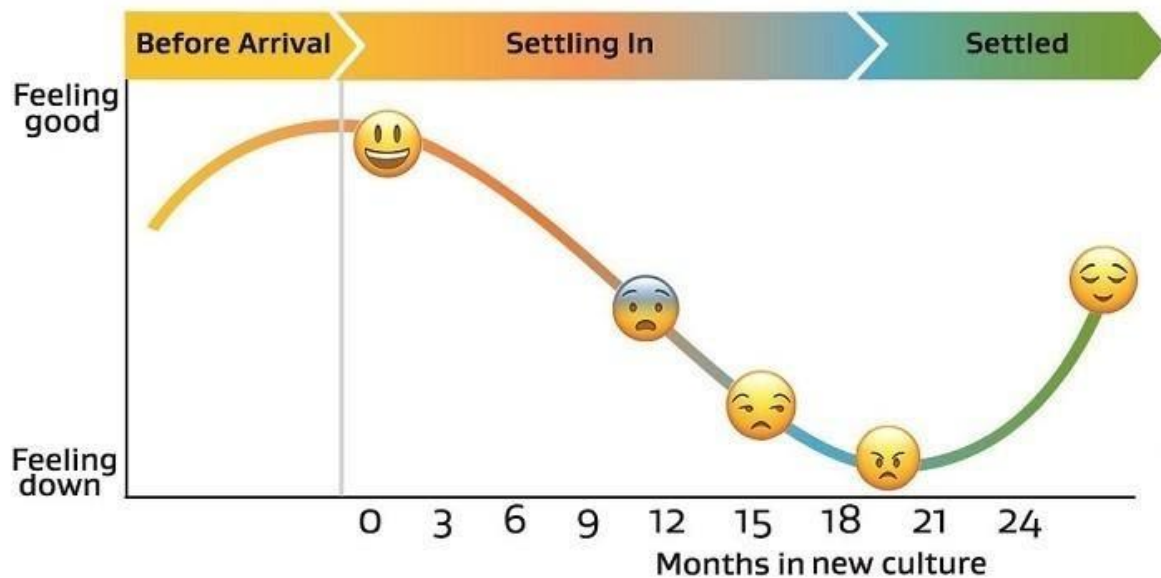


Figure 3 Workplace settlement curve (New Zealand Immigration, 2021)

This transition can be a crucial time for migrant employees, and employers with extra support needed to help the settling process. An employer that takes the time to put supportive structures in place for migrant workers encourages settlement. This can lead to productivity and the employee becoming a valued member of the team and remaining in the business. The Workplace settlement model (figure 4) shows that building a sense of belonging in the workplace and outside the workplace is important to maximise potential and in turn be a high performer in the workplace that is well settled.

## The Workplace Settlement Model

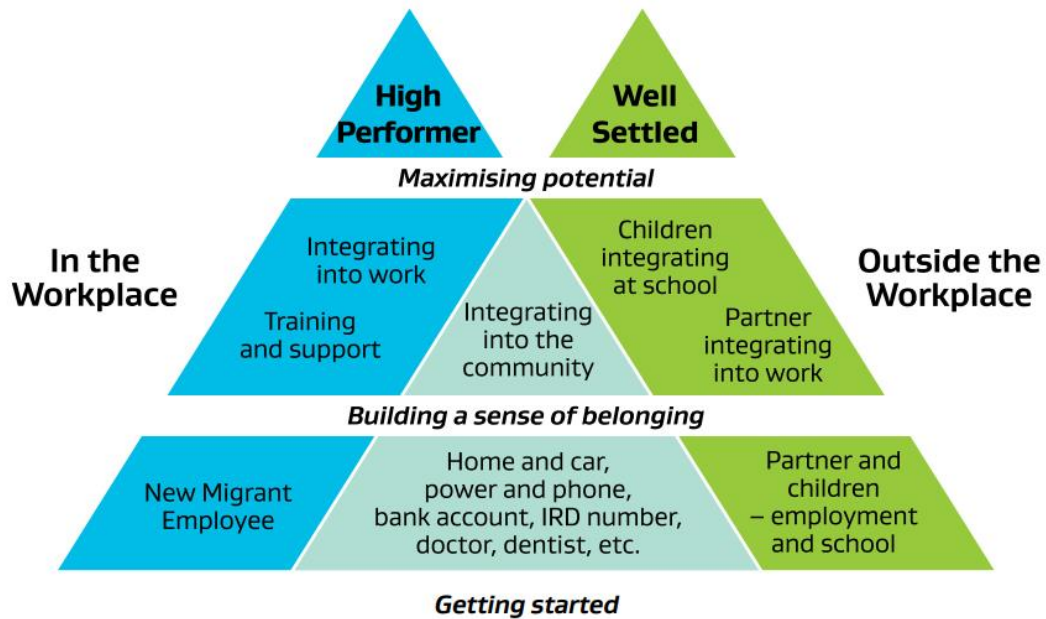


Figure 4 Workplace settlement model (New Zealand Immigration, 2021)

A research report published by the Ministry of Social Development in 2008 explored migrant and refugee experience in New Zealand, focusing on the relationship between social cohesion and increased diversity. Many migrants in the research stated that they “wanted to maintain their original culture and ethnic identity and also feel a sense of belonging to New Zealand”. This sense of belonging was sometimes hindered with the negative attitudes New Zealanders had towards them. It was also reported that making friends for migrants was difficult, particularly due to language barriers. Discrimination in the workplace was described in several studies but the details and level of extent were unknown. It was found that New Zealanders had better attitudes towards some cultures than others and they were more likely to have a negative attitude towards those who were more culturally different from themselves.

A more recent project by Cultural Connections and Multicultural New Zealand (2015) showed a different perspective and described the challenges migrants face when they first arrive in New Zealand. From most challenging to least, these include employment, cost of living, language and communication, racism and discrimination, housing and accommodation, community support, and government support. Migrants also ranked the challenges they faced after one-two years in New Zealand, again from most challenging to least these included cost of living, housing and accommodation, racism and discrimination, employment, community support, government support and language and communication. Changes over the time period for migrants included language and communication and employment becoming less of a challenge. Challenges that increased included cost of living, housing, and accommodation as well as racism and discrimination (Le Gower, 2017).

Further information, focusing on the agriculture sector, commissioned by the Union Network of Migrants in 2017 highlighted a theme of exploitation among Filipino workers in the dairy industry. The issues ranged from accommodation, hours worked and a lack of training and appropriate gear, through to employer attitudes and their management practices.

#### *Example*

*The chairperson of a Filipino Society in New Zealand shared that part of their role is to help Filipino workers that migrate to New Zealand. Most of the work they do is around employment relationships, conflict over culture and beliefs and staff being made to work extra hours or holidays without pay.*

The report “Temporary Migrant Exploitation in New Zealand” (Collins & Stringer, 2019) echoed these findings with further examples shared by migrants who worked in a range of occupations and industries including farming, horticulture, and forestry. Over half of those who participated in the research reported working excessive hours. Those interviewed that worked in the dairy sector, all

stated they had been asked to do extra hours and were not paid for this. The findings also showed the majority of the participants felt trapped and had to accept their conditions and the exploitation because they had no other option. They felt they needed the employer to retain a working visa and worried that the employer would give them a bad reference which would impact their reputation and working opportunities for the future. Employers threatening to call immigration caused fear, anxiety, and depression with the most severely affected admitting they had contemplated suicide. Former Immigration Minister Iain Lees-Galloway released a Cabinet paper expressing that “Exploitation was negatively impacting the wider workforce and businesses, as well as the country's international reputation” He continued on to say “Far too many migrant workers do not feel empowered to speak up or seek help when they are being subjected to unfair conditions” (Lees-Galloway, 2018). This prompted action from the government with changes to protect migrant workers that includes \$50 million over four years to create a new visa that will support migrants to leave exploitative situations, setting up a free phone number, by mid-2021, that are answered by trained response staff that can assist with reporting exploitation, disqualifying those that have been convicted of exploitation from hiring migrants and having immigration and employment infringement offences that target those employers that are being non-compliant employers.

*Example: A young, English woman who had come to New Zealand on a working holiday visa was employed by a sheep and beef farmer on a multigenerational owned and operated property. At the end of her 24-month working visa the employers asked that she stay on as they were close to lambing. This meant she needed to apply and be granted a new visa which she did with the assistance of the employers. After the visa was granted, the woman noticed that one of the employers began to treat her unkindly, often being short and sharp. The woman tried to discuss this with both her employers and did not make any progress. Months went on and the woman continued her role but became so unhappy with the treatment from one employer in particular, it started to show and when a rural services representative asked her one day what was going on, she broke down. This resulted in*

*the representative ringing the employer she was on good terms with to ask about the situation. A meeting was then called with the woman and both her employers. The employer that was off hand with her said it was due to her being ungrateful and not thanking them enough for the help with her work visa.*

Temporary work visas that were approved in 2017 were for horticulture and viticulture seasonal work made up 4% of visas granted. About one third of the horticulture seasonal workforce are from the Pacific through the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme which has been in place since 2007, starting with 5000 places, and has steadily increased to 14,400 in the 2020/21 year). Employer surveys have been conducted on the RSE to gather information around a variety of topics including welfare of people. The employer survey asked if there were any “special obligations or responsibilities with hiring RSE scheme workers” (Immigration NZ, 2014) in which 67% employers in 2014 said yes, an increase from 42% in 2012. The main issues employers faced were around pastoral care including accommodation, language translation, banking, and opportunities for recreation (Research New Zealand, 2014). Reports of antisocial behaviour outside work, mainly due to alcohol related issues, were highlighted in 2008 with 45% of employers experiencing this. However, this has decreased as the programme has continued with 29% of employers reporting this issue in 2019. The latest report also shows 96% of employers said that benefits of the scheme outweigh the cost with their workforce being more stable and productive allowing 80% of them to reinvest in their businesses and employ more local people alongside the migrants in the RSE scheme. Most of the seasonal workers on the RSE scheme are here to gain an income that can be sent home to improve health care, education and business for their families. Those who have returned to work in New Zealand numerous times for the same employer on the scheme have also begun to look at the bigger picture in terms of production.

*“I have two workers from Vanuatu who are about to come back for their 12th year. They helped me plant the vines here that first year and they have grown to understand that it took a full six years before they saw or harvested an economic or mature crop” (Axby, 2020).*

A key contributor to the RSE programme success, was the Immigration New Zealand's regional RSE Relationship Managers communicated directly with employers around the scheme. There were 88% of total RSE scheme employers that participated in the survey were satisfied with the service received, with 53% giving their relationship manager the highest possible rating.

The increasing cultural diversity in New Zealand has prompted the need to “develop a harmonious and cohesive society whose members can communicate and interact positively with one another” (Walters, 2021). Culture is a strong part of a person's life that influences many aspects including their values and views. Migrants are often from countries and cultures where value is placed on a strong work ethic, even though this might not be reflected in monetary rewards. Migrant staff that work in New Zealand have the same rights as all other employees with employers expected to follow the minimum employment standards. Not only should employers of migrant staff be covering these basic standards but also supporting employees by understanding aspects of their culture and helping them assimilate into their new country.

*“If you are a migrant worker, you have the same rights as New Zealand workers, and it is a crime for employers to exploit you. We can help migrants who are being exploited (New Zealand Immigration, 2021)*

Employers can find information about hiring and managing migrants on the Immigration New Zealand website. The key considerations before hiring a migrant are highlighted alongside the process that an employer will need to undertake before going ahead with the employment. SkillFinder is a tool that can connect possible employers with candidates who would like to find a role that fits their skill set in New Zealand. When a candidate has been found, they will need to complete the visa application to work in New Zealand which includes a job offer. The employer will need to do some research and find out their obligations. Immigration New Zealand has a range of guides to help employers; these state the obligations an employer must meet such as workplace inductions including roles and responsibilities, health and safety and community information. There are learning modules that can

be completed by both the employer and the employee to further knowledge around the requirements above. Some areas of agriculture, such as dairy farming, have no union for staff with migrants that take roles in these areas having to contact the Union Network of Migrants (UNEMIG) or the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE).

### **3.4 What is culture? What is cultural diversity?**

The word culture is derived from the Latin word, cultura or cultirare, to cultivate or tend to the soil (Collins, 2021). In the early 16th century, this was transposed into the human world, as being what was needed to 'cultivate' a healthy human being. In this context, anthropologists refer to culture as a collective way of thinking, acting, and feeling. Culture is "*the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others*" (Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov 2010). Culture encompasses the characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people, including language, knowledge, religion, cuisine, social habits, music, and arts (figure 5). These traits are generally accepted and widely passed along through the learning processes of enculturation and socialisation from one generation to the next. Social characteristics can also be classified as norms or acceptable conduct in a society, serving as a guideline of expectations. There are said to be, using language as an indicator, between five and six thousand cultures in the world (Reference, 2020).



Figure 5 The cultural wheel (Related Culture, 2019)

Cultural diversity recognises and appreciates that society is made up of many different groups that have different characteristics. A community is culturally diverse when a wide variety of groups are represented with different races, ethnicities, nationalities, socioeconomic statuses, genders, religions and sexual orientations are embraced and co-exist. Migration has contributed too many different cultures within a country, resulting in diverse workplaces which can be both challenging and rewarding. Understanding diversity is becoming increasingly important with a focus on workplaces becoming totally inclusive (Green, Lopez, Wysocki & Kepner 2002).

The 2018 NZ census reported that there are six major ethnic groups in New Zealand – they are European, Māori, Pacific, Asian, Middle Eastern / Latin American / African, and other ethnicities.

### 3.5 What are the challenges of a culturally diverse workplace?

Language barriers are one of the biggest challenges within multicultural workplaces. With verbal communication being a common tool used to share an exchange of information, multiple languages

or dialects can affect cross-cultural communication and lead to misunderstandings if the meaning of a conversation is not understood.

Cross-cultural communication and interaction can be more than just words spoken, with eye contact, mannerisms, gestures such as a handshake and spatial awareness differing vastly across cultures (figure 6). Different practices can lead to offence or misinterpretation between cultures through a breakdown of communication. A prime example of this is the different perceptions of eye contact between the West and East. Maintaining eye contact during a social interaction is more important in Western European cultures than in East Asian culture. It can be considered disrespectful in the Japanese culture to maintain eye contact, with staring someone directly in the eyes considered rude and intrusive. Japanese children are taught to look at one's neck while conversing, having the other person in their peripheral vision to not stare. Western cultures on the other hand, such as the United States, Spain, France, and Germany, consider it proper and polite to maintain almost constant eye contact when in conversation (Uono, 2015).

## How I like to work

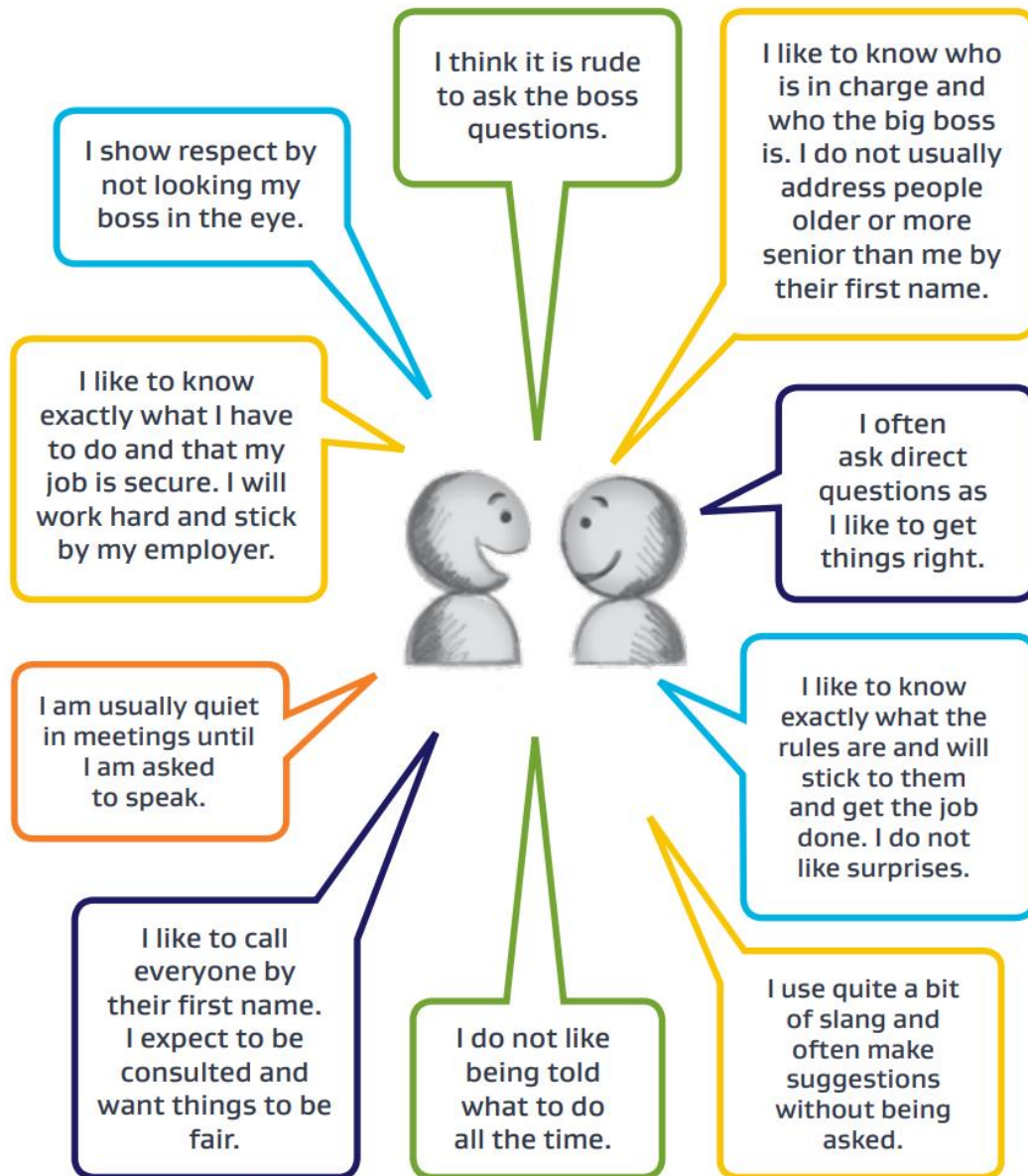


Figure 6 How I like to work (New Zealand Immigration, 2021)

Professional etiquette can also differ between cultures with differing views on hierarchy, hours, punctuality, formal expectations and dealing with conflict. For example, a Japanese team member might not think it is appropriate to leave work before their manager, but a Swedish professional may be used to working a six hour day (Reynolds, 2019).

Individualism versus collectivism is another possible challenge for a multicultural workplace. An example of a country with high individualism is Australia with “high value being placed on people's time and their need for privacy, the enjoyment of challenges and expectation for individual rewards for hard work” (UK Essays, 2018). In contrast, Chilean culture focuses on having strong families and friendships and working towards the greater good of the groups they are in.

### *Example*

*A Chilean dairy farmer recently mentioned he was taking a break from sole charge farm management and moving to a role where he is going to be second in charge as he wanted to work in a team. Financially, this was a step backwards but being part of a team outweighed this factor.*

Learning styles are the “unique ways in which individual people perceive, interact with and respond to a learning experience” (Mariani, 2007). These “Individuals are most likely not born with a genetic predisposition to learn analytically or relationally, visually or kinaesthetically. They learn how to learn through the socialization processes that occur in families and friendship groups.” (Nelson 1995). For example, Chinese people can be described as introverted, quiet learners that are well-disciplined and committed to memorising information to succeed. However, to someone that is unaware of this cultural norm this behaviour could be seen as being unengaged or willing to participate. Cultures do have distinctive learning styles and patterns; these different learning styles mean those that are teaching must be diverse in their approach. The ability to give people a chance to succeed when learning new skills relies on the teacher's understanding of culture and learning styles. It is important however, not to assume people's learning styles, as many other factors contribute to the way a person learns new information. Within a group, the variations among individuals are as great as their commonalities (Griggs and Dunn, 1989).

Fixed hierarchical relationships are also a factor in culturally diverse workplaces. In many cultures, elder members of their society are held in high regard and considered leaders, figures of authority and the ones that uphold tradition and make important decisions. When interacting with an elder there are rules and accepted practices to follow. In some cases, it would be considered rude to approach an elder without following the correct practices. For those from countries where hierarchies are followed, migrating to a place where this is not the norm can be uncomfortable and sometimes degrading.

#### *Example*

*The staff organisation on a New Zealand dairy farm usually follows the format of a manager, second in charge and a farm assistant. When talking with a farm manager recently, he explained he had a few issues with his farm assistant. When the manager was off farm and the 2IC was in charge, the farm assistant refused to follow his instructions because he was a lot younger than him (in his culture, the older person is the authority figure, and the younger person should listen and follow their directions). This is an example of a misunderstanding due to New Zealand employers not following the age hierarchical system but one of job title status.*

Unconscious bias can be a large contributor to the lack of workplace diversity. McCormicks (2015) stated that biases are prejudices we have but are unaware of. They are “mental shortcuts based on social norms and stereotypes.” (Guynn, 2015). With over 150 identified unconscious biases, McCormick (2015) identified those that directly affect the workplace, including affinity bias, perception bias, confirmation bias, the halo effect and group think. Negative effects from these biases can lead to poor decisions around recruitment, lack of development for employees and can cause barriers to

achieving diversity. Employees can also feel bullied, discriminated against, and excluded which can lead to a less productive workplace with low staff retention rates.

### **3.6 What are the positive effects of a culturally diverse workplace?**

Teams that are culturally diverse offer many positive effects, not only for the workplace but for the people who are part of the team. Culturally diverse teams often have strong skill sets with a range of experiences, perspectives, and problem-solving skills available to them. This can improve productivity, creativity and reputation while allowing insights into other cultures.

Collaboration of skill sets can increase productivity for a business allowing for a healthy financial return on investment, often rewarding for those who contributed to the successes. A productive workplace can also motivate team members and contribute to satisfaction levels producing a positive culture and company environment. In an Entrepreneur Asia Pacific interview (Rampton, 2019), Duke Energy Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer Joni Davis said “The main reasons you'll gain productivity and a boost in creativity is that you're bringing together individuals from different walks of life. These people come from varied backgrounds and experiences, and will each have unique ways to improve your products and services you're offering”. Having a large skill base can also lead to teams being highly adaptable and able to cope with change when it occurs due to the broad set of problem-solving skills available.

Culturally diverse teams can also drive innovation and creativity. Research has demonstrated that the diversity of team participants' knowledge, behaviour, and values can promote creativity (Craig & Kelly, 1999; Kurtzberg, 2005; Milliken & Martins, 1996). These skills can benefit businesses through saving time, resources and money while being competitive in the marketplace. Forbes Insights completed a Global Diversity and Inclusion Report stating “a diverse and inclusive workforce is necessary to drive

innovation, foster creativity, and guide business strategies. Multiple voices lead to new ideas, new services, and new products, and encourage out-of-the-box thinking” (Forbes 2011).

Workplaces that employ staff from a wide range of cultural backgrounds are often seen as favourable employers. Potential team members often seek out diverse employers as they are seen as being inclusive. This is a favourable workplace trait with employees feeling welcome, respected and comfortable to contribute and are valued for the efforts by the employer, in turn giving them a positive reputation.

Having a range of cultures in a workplace also allows for employers and employees to gain insights into other cultures by learning first-hand from others. Spending time with others that have different backgrounds can lead to sharing information that can broaden others’ views and often reduces negative emotions such as unconscious bias or racism.

#### **4.0 Managing multicultural teams**

“Team management is the ability of an individual to administer and coordinate a group of individuals to perform a task” (Wikipedia, 2021). Effective teams derive from effective management, meaning multicultural teams rely heavily on those in leadership positions to set them up for success. Cross cultural leaders require a specialised intercultural competency skill set that are “best learned through cross-cultural training and personal work experience” (Trainingmag.com). Leaders bring teams together by setting the precedence and being inclusive of all individual members, their cultures, and other diversities they bring. Individuals should be confident enough to bring themselves, as a whole, to their workplace. When this is achieved, through nurturing environments and connectedness, energy can be used for creativity and productivity. Leaders of multicultural teams should be open to

the cultural differences people bring and embrace these in the workplace through connecting and valuing the members and the contribution they bring while empowering them to share knowledge.

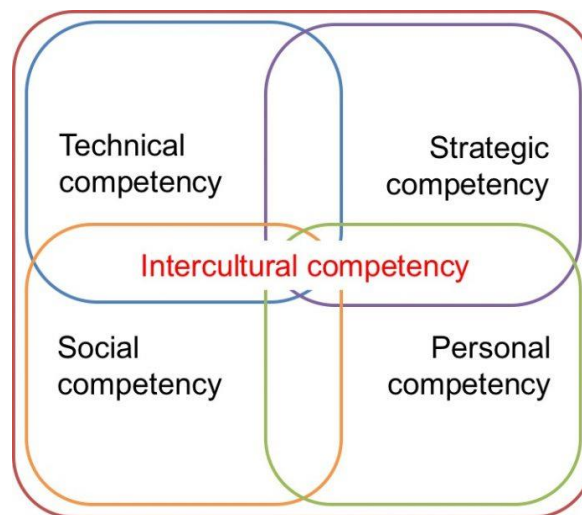


Figure 11 Intercultural competency (Koehl, 2016)

#### Example

*“The motto in our team is treat everyone how you would like to be treated. We make it clear from the start that all cultures and customs are to be respected. We learn about how each member of the team works and how this fits as a whole so we can play to everyone’s strengths” (Managing Multicultural Teams in Agriculture Survey 2021).*

Organising staff induction alongside cross-cultural training can be an effective way to introduce new team members to the role and overcome cultural challenges in the workplace by developing people's awareness of others. Being productive about cultural training can help people to understand, connect and share aspects of their culture while learning about their team and feeling committed to the workplace from the start. This can also provide an opportunity for individuals' strengths to be acknowledged, to look at how people work to their potential and how these aspects contribute to the

overall goal of the workplace. Farmer's Weekly reported statistics from the Harvard Business Review that stated "giving a good induction can increase the odds of your employee staying from 54% to 66%. Adding ongoing support increases the likelihood of them staying to 75%" (Dickins, 2019). Empathy towards new staff can help to develop trusting relationships between employees and managers. "Good leaders are empathetic towards employees' thoughts and feelings on the job" (Fond, 2020) which is beneficial to create open communication and solve any conflicts that might arise in a timely fashion so productivity can continue in the workplace.

*Example: Great South and the Southern Primary Sector Workforce Action Group have created a detailed programme where managers are supported by HR specialists over five workshops to gain knowledge and skills around people management, with communication a key topic to improving better workplaces and staff retention. This programme was created as gaining and retaining staff in the sector has become a common challenge. Statistics show that retention rates for those in their first year of the dairy sector are 40%.*

Language can be a common barrier in a multicultural workplace. Breaking this barrier is vital for communication in the team. This could be done through meeting with the team and deciding on a common language that everyone can use. This should be the language that is used at meetings and formal events. It is very important for leaders to emphasise that asking someone to repeat themselves is a normal and ok behaviour in the team. This can help those that are not using their native language to gain a better understanding of what is being said. To be inclusive the team could learn a few sentences or phrases from each of the cultures represented that could be used at the workplace.

*An example of this is a workplace using the Maori words for a "cup of tea". Each morning tea and afternoon tea break are referred to as "kapu ti". This has become common practice and is inclusive of*

*the staff that are represented in the team. It is a small gesture but one that incorporates culture into daily practices in the workplace.*

Communication styles are another area to address as a team. Every culture has a unique communication style that includes speaking patterns and non-verbal cues such as body language, facial expressions, spatial cues, appearance, and gestures. Teams must understand each other's different styles and set the direction of the team accordingly to ensure everyone is comfortable and can work together effectively.

Allowing preparation time before team meetings can be valuable to those that are from another culture. Speaking up at meetings may make some of the team feel nervous or uncomfortable as it is not a cultural norm for them. Allowing for preparation time can give people the opportunity to think about the topic that is going to be discussed and how they could contribute. When sharing ideas at meetings it can be important to manage the room, making sure everyone has a chance to share their thoughts and ideas to an audience that is patient, supportive and acknowledging of what has been said, growing the confidence of those in the team.

Constructive feedback is important to support the growth and development of an employee which can contribute to the overall success of a team and workplace. Through planned feedback sessions, managers can offer honest thoughts around work programmes and encourage two-way conversations where employees also feedback promoting engagement and furthering relationships.

#### *Example*

*"I have a weekly face to face sit down with each team member to see how they are going. We use whiteboards, written notes and pictures to communicate and explain jobs. If the employee is doing a*

*new job for the first time, I will do a physical demonstration on how to do it" (Managing Multicultural Teams in Agriculture Survey 2021).*

People can often mix being aware of cultural differences with stereotyping by thinking all people from a certain place act a certain way. It is important not to make assumptions based on culture as this can shape a person's behaviour, but it is not the sole driver with individuals having their own unique characteristics based around a range of factors. Stereotyping is often subconscious; however it can lead to people feeling discriminated against. By actively promoting diversity in the workplace and providing the opportunity for employees to evaluate their thinking and actions while learning about diversity through a range of people and experiences, builds a workforce that functions as one team and appreciates individuals.

## **5.0 Survey Results & Semi-structured Interviews**

A survey developed for this report, to collect information around multicultural teams was completed and analysed against the information collected during the literature review. The survey went out through social media channels to various NZ based agricultural pages that included farming, dairy, horticulture, sheep and beef, farming mums, young farmers, and catchment groups. The survey had 48 responses with the majority being in the 35-50 years age bracket and working on dairy farms (figure 7). Due to the survey being shared through an online platform, data around regions represented was not collected. A future recommendation is to collect this data through adding a question regarding the region lived in by the survey participant.

Semi-structured interviews were completed with ten farmers. The questions were the same as the survey, focusing on detailed examples.

The results from the survey and semi-structured interviews are discussed below in themes that include characteristics of migrants, evaluating multicultural teams in the agricultural workplace, and strong multicultural teams. Examples from the survey and interviews support the themes.

What sector are you working in?

48 responses

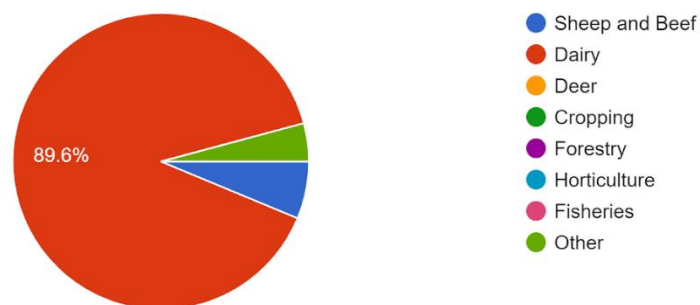


Figure 7 Agriculture sector worked in (Bates, 2021)

The survey showed that 85.4% of teams are multicultural (figure 8) with 27 different cultures represented (figure 9 in the 48 responses. From this, 71% of workplaces included people from two or more cultures, with the median amount being three (figure 10). The most dominant culture was NZ European followed by Filipino, Maori, Indian and English, aligning with the information published by the Ministry of Business and Innovation which found the largest number of migrant applications for essential skills visas have come from the Philippines, India, and the United Kingdom.

48 responses

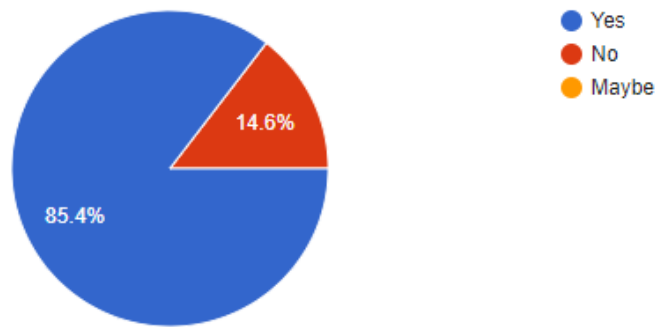


Figure 8 Are different cultures represented in your team? ((Managing Multicultural Teams Survey, 2021).

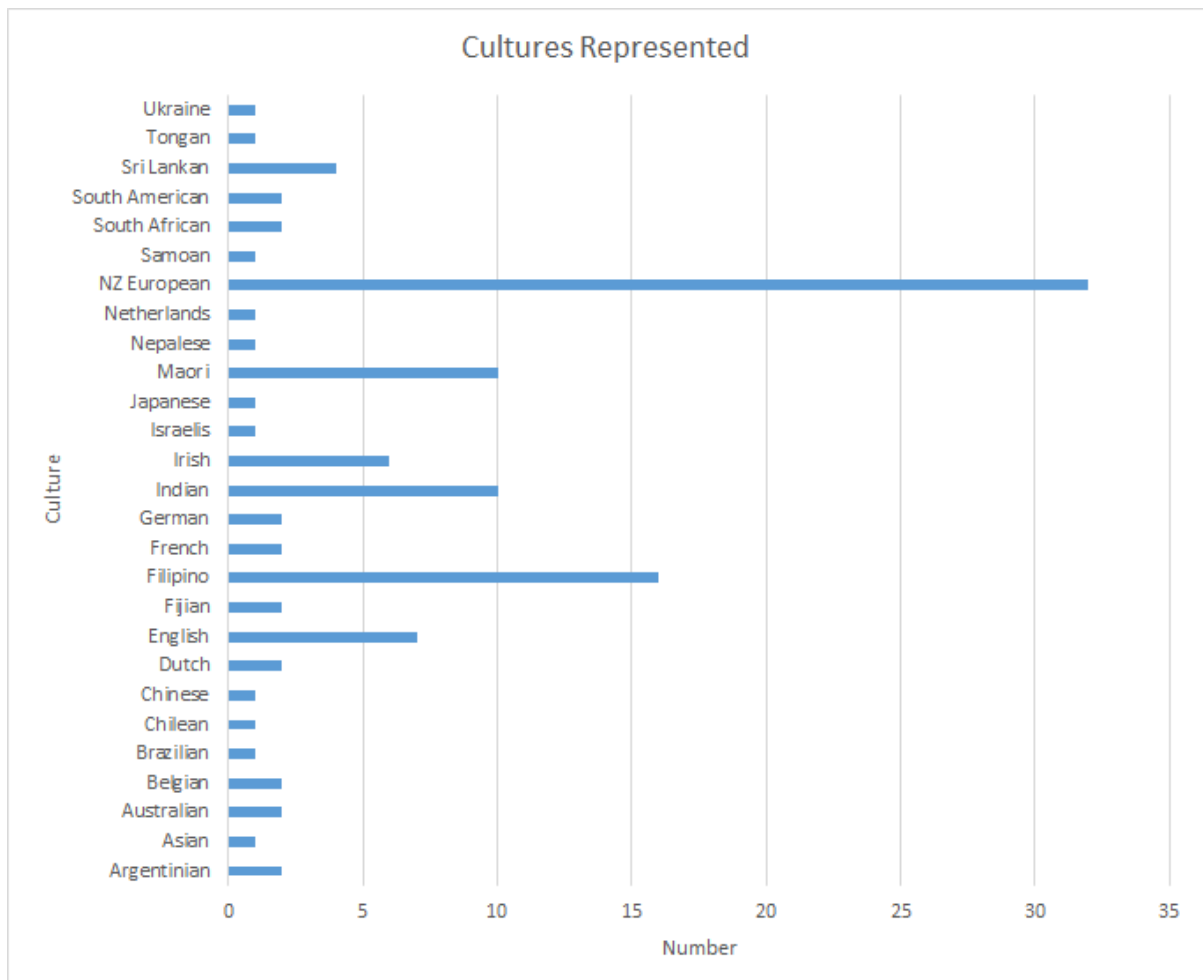


Figure 9 Cultures represented in the teams surveyed (Managing Multicultural Teams Survey, 2021).

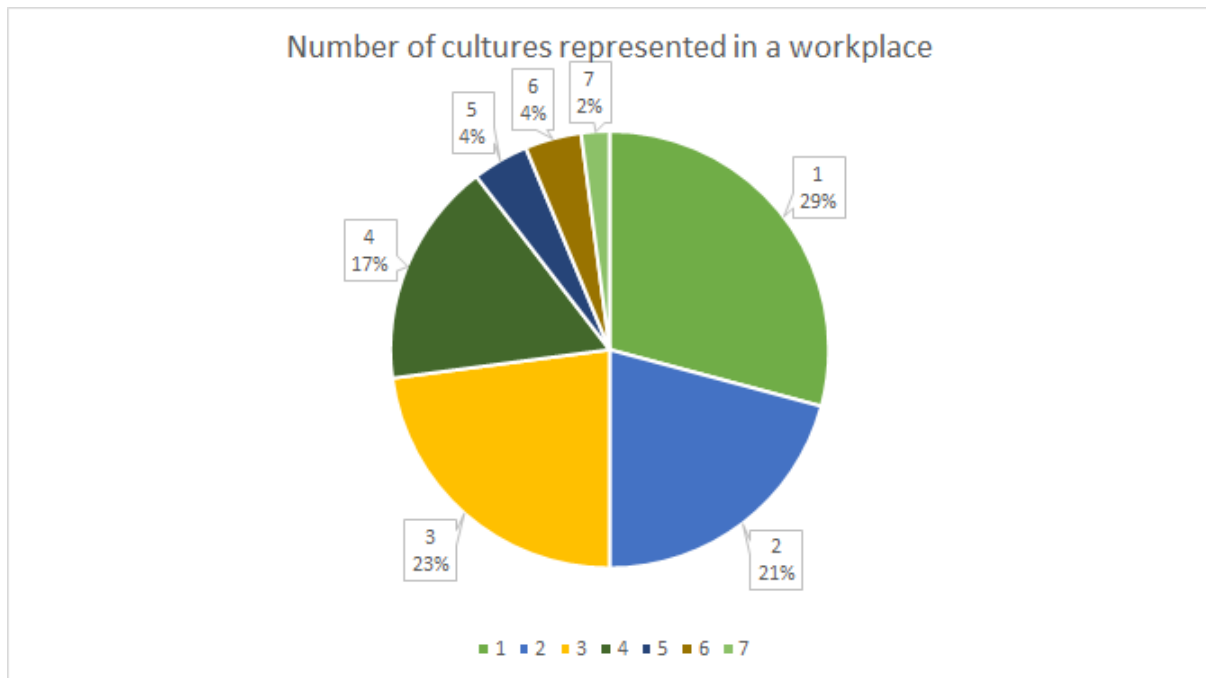


Figure 10: Number of cultures represented in each workplace from the team's survey (Managing Multicultural Teams Survey, 2021).

### 5.1 Characteristics of migrant staff

Survey participants were asked if people and their cultures were acknowledged in the team, and 75% of people stated that they were. Common themes for acknowledging culture included treating everyone with respect and being patient, understanding each other's cultures and how they operate, marking successes as they happened and celebrating special occasions such as birthdays. Some offered bilingual training and added other cultures' languages into day-to-day work programmes when possible. Some employers offered time off for employees to attend church services or for culturally significant holidays. The most common cultural acknowledgement was through the sharing of food during a team get together both in and outside work with some including families. On the other hand, 18.75% said culture was not acknowledged at all with lack of communication highlighted as a main contributor. The remaining participants were not sure if culture was acknowledged.

## 5.2 Evaluating multicultural teams in the agricultural workplace

Survey participants were asked if having culturally diverse teams created challenges in the workplace, 56% of people said yes. Cultural challenges that were presented included language barriers with 48% of those that had answered “yes” to the question stating this was their number one challenge in a multicultural workplace. This reflects the findings in the literature review with language barriers identified as one of the biggest challenges identified when working in a multicultural team.

*“We have had one team member who has had difficulties with understanding verbal requests” (Managing Multicultural Teams Survey, 2021).*

*“A lack of understanding/English is a barrier” (Managing Multicultural Teams Survey, 2021).*

Other challenges mentioned by survey participants included cultural misunderstandings, where what might be normal in one culture was not in another and caused some confusion. An example of this was a woman in the workplace not being acknowledged as expectations were for her to be at home with a family, instead of on a farm.

*“In South America women don’t do hard physical work so that was a challenge for the South American men while working with women from New Zealand” (Managing Multicultural Teams Survey, 2021).*

Examples of more serious challenges included racism with a report of some staff members being negative towards Filipino workers that were speaking Tagalog to each other. One participant also stated that they had racism challenges with Indian workers towards the Asians in the team. To combat this, they changed team dynamics and no longer employ these two cultures at the same time.

*“My employee left his last job because of racism. He was a farm manager and had junior staff outright ignoring him because of racism. We still have a very long way to go” (Managing Multicultural Teams Survey, 2021).*

43% said that cultural diversity had not presented any challenges. Some of the reasoning behind this included staff knowing what they had to personally do and getting the job done. Others had teams that were functioning well with systems and tools in place to mitigate challenges.

*“No (challenges), we just do our jobs” (Managing Multicultural Teams Survey, 2021).*

The ten people that participated in the semi-structured interview around multicultural teams could all name a time where cultural challenges had occurred in their workplace. These ranged from minor incidents through to larger ones where actions had to be taken.

When asked if culturally diverse teams had a positive effect in the workplace 62% said that it did. People stated that learning about another culture was interesting and that it was an opportunity to experience different ideas and customs.

It was mentioned that different cultures brought with them new thoughts and ideas that enhanced the team and operation. *“We have a wealth of experience from all over the world and the team is more productive” (Managing Multicultural Teams in Agriculture Survey 2021).* Greater understanding of others, breaking down assumptions and learning to work together were also positives. Clear mention was also made around outside work activities, with people enjoying spending time with each other and their families. *“Our children have enjoyed neat friendships and appreciate differences without any awareness” (Managing Multicultural Teams in Agriculture Survey 2021).* Food was a highlight with different cultures sharing how they cooked traditional meals such as an Argentinian BBQ and a Maori hangi.

The survey respondents who thought culturally diverse teams positively impacted the workplace touched on all the examples mentioned in the literature review. These examples, including specialised skill sets, experience, productivity, creativity and getting an insight into other cultures were all mentioned in the survey responses. These thoughts were also reflected in the semi-structured

interviews with all participants highlighting the skills migrants had brought to the workplace. Participants had also enjoyed learning about other cultures.

38% of respondents said that culturally diverse teams did not have a positive effect. Some said they did not see a difference, some did not want multicultural teams, others did not comment on the reasoning behind their answer.

*“Thankfully, we make a point of sticking to one culture” (Managing Multicultural Teams in Agriculture Survey 2021).*

### **5.3 Strong multicultural teams**

The literature review highlighted that the management of teams was crucial to their success. Key themes included having people with specific leadership skills in roles to share expectations, to communicate work programmes effectively, and build team relationships.

Survey participants were asked what was needed to be a productive employee and team. 88% of responses touched on effective management that included expectations, organisation, communication, support, and education as well as relationship building by creating social activities. 12% were unsure of how to best manage a team.

27% of survey answers specifically mentioned setting the expectation that everyone is treated equally and with respect.

*“Treat different cultures equally and with respect. Understand how culture influences people and how they communicate, understand the hierarchies that can exist within Asian culture, and any language barriers, and work around these. Ensure all cultures are represented in senior staff and treated as equals by all team members” (Managing Multicultural Teams Survey, 2021).*

*“We are all treated equally. A person is looked at as a person, not their skin colour.” (Managing Multicultural Teams Survey, 2021).*

56% of the answers specifically mentioned communication with managers organising meetings that used a range of tools to communicate tasks. Nearly all participants mentioned team meetings and one to one catch ups as a preferred tool with apps such as Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp and SnapChat also used regularly to communicate with team members. Team meetings operated in a range of different ways with many using a whiteboard to draw, write notes, and create maps and record information. Others used toolbox meetings, on farm demonstrations, picture cards and video explanations. Some highlighted that it was important to let everyone have their say at meetings and encouraged this through creating a comfortable environment. Ensuring good communication and an environment that escalates staff, allows for individual growth and retention of staff in the industry.

*“We make sure we use multiple methods of communication” (Managing Multicultural Teams Survey, 2021).*

*“Fair rosters and workload, good communication, flexibility, clear rules, calling out casual racism quickly (even if it’s friendly), casual and frequent meetings so everyone is comfortable asking questions and discussing problems” (Managing Multicultural Teams Survey, 2021).*

Making time for out of work interactions was also important with 27% mentioning this was something their workplace did regularly. Most of the out of work activities involved cooking and sharing food from the different cultures represented in the workplace.

*“Social gatherings for the whole team where different cultures are represented (eg. Potluck meals) are important” (Managing Multicultural Teams Survey, 2021).*

## 6.0 Conclusions

The agriculture sector has come a long way in New Zealand and experienced a great deal of growth. With this growth has come more jobs and the need to fill them. With a skill shortage in New Zealand, migrants have applied for working visas and been recruited into roles in the agricultural sector. These migrants are essential for businesses to run.

Several reports, mentioned in this research, have revealed levels of discrimination and exploitation in the workplace towards migrants in New Zealand. Most migrant employees are tied to an individual employer through their work visa. The feeling of being trapped and having to accept the unfair conditions, due to only being able to work for the employer stated on their visa, was highlighted. These findings prompted the government to release a paper stating that the announcement around stronger enforcement and protection for migrant workers should help them understand their rights and provide a clear path to follow if they find themselves in an exploitative situation.

The online survey showed that a large number (85%) of agriculture teams are multicultural, with 71% of teams having two or more cultures in their workplace. From those numbers, 70% thought that culture was acknowledged in some way in their team, nearly 20% said that it was not and 10% did not know. The challenge most commonly mentioned by those surveyed and interviewed was communication with participants coming up with a variety of ways to mitigate this barrier. 60% of participants thought that teams were richer in experience and knowledge when they were diverse.

Through the literature review, surveys and interviews it was clear that managing multicultural teams in the sector is a unique skill that contributes to the success of the team. Those who manage workplaces with a number of cultures need a clear understanding of how to be inclusive of all team members, taking into account their cultural background and how they prefer to work. Cultural diversity within a team can bring a number of strengths along with some challenges that need empathy, problem solving and patience to resolve them. If multicultural teams are managed correctly

with cultural values, practices and language acknowledged and embraced staff will feel a sense of belonging which will increase productivity (New Zealand Immigration, 2021). Those who are managed effectively are likely to remain in the industry and progress themselves further.

New Zealand has cemented itself on the world stage as a leader in food production that has a trusted reputation for its products. Some would argue that the “products are only as good as the people and place they come from” (NZTE, 2021). A statement of truth, with more data around multicultural teams needing to be collected and analysed to give us more information to draw conclusions from.

## **7.0 Recommendations**

Agriculture has employed people, from many different countries, into various roles that contribute to the industry. Migrants bring with them their unique skill sets and experiences that contribute positively to the workplace and wider industry. To ensure workplaces are appealing for migrant workers the agricultural sector needs to:

1. Share the story of the New Zealand agriculture sector to date, including why migrants are so important to the workforce.
2. Be aware of the findings in the various reports around migrant employee exploitation in New Zealand and acknowledge that there are some changes that need to be made at all levels, from government to on the ground practices.
3. Continue to raise the awareness of cultural diversity in the workplace by recognising the different cultures present, having good communication skills, and celebrating traditional holidays and food to create a sense of belonging.

4. Provide education and advice based on the Immigration NZ resources to those that are managing multicultural teams in the agriculture sector so they are able to have culturally revealing conversations with employees and understand the migration process of settlement.
5. Set the expectations for those that employ migrant staff high and follow through with infringements for those that are non-compliant.
6. Continue to gather information around migrant employees in the agricultural sector. With survey numbers and sub sectors somewhat limited for this report, repeating the exercise with a larger reach would provide greater breadth of information.
7. Consider research into other types of diversity and how they all interact eg age, gender and ethnicity.

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## Appendices

Survey – Managing Multicultural Teams in the Agriculture Industry

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1a1ZGqHzEz7pAFOO3D3hxx2jyDPKL7S8JnwX46\\_YVc2g/edit](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1a1ZGqHzEz7pAFOO3D3hxx2jyDPKL7S8JnwX46_YVc2g/edit)