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Generation Z and the Environment: How can we use their passion to attract them into Food and Fibre Sector careers?

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Madison Pannett**

Photo credit, Schools 4 Climate Protest: Kieran Meredith NZ Herald

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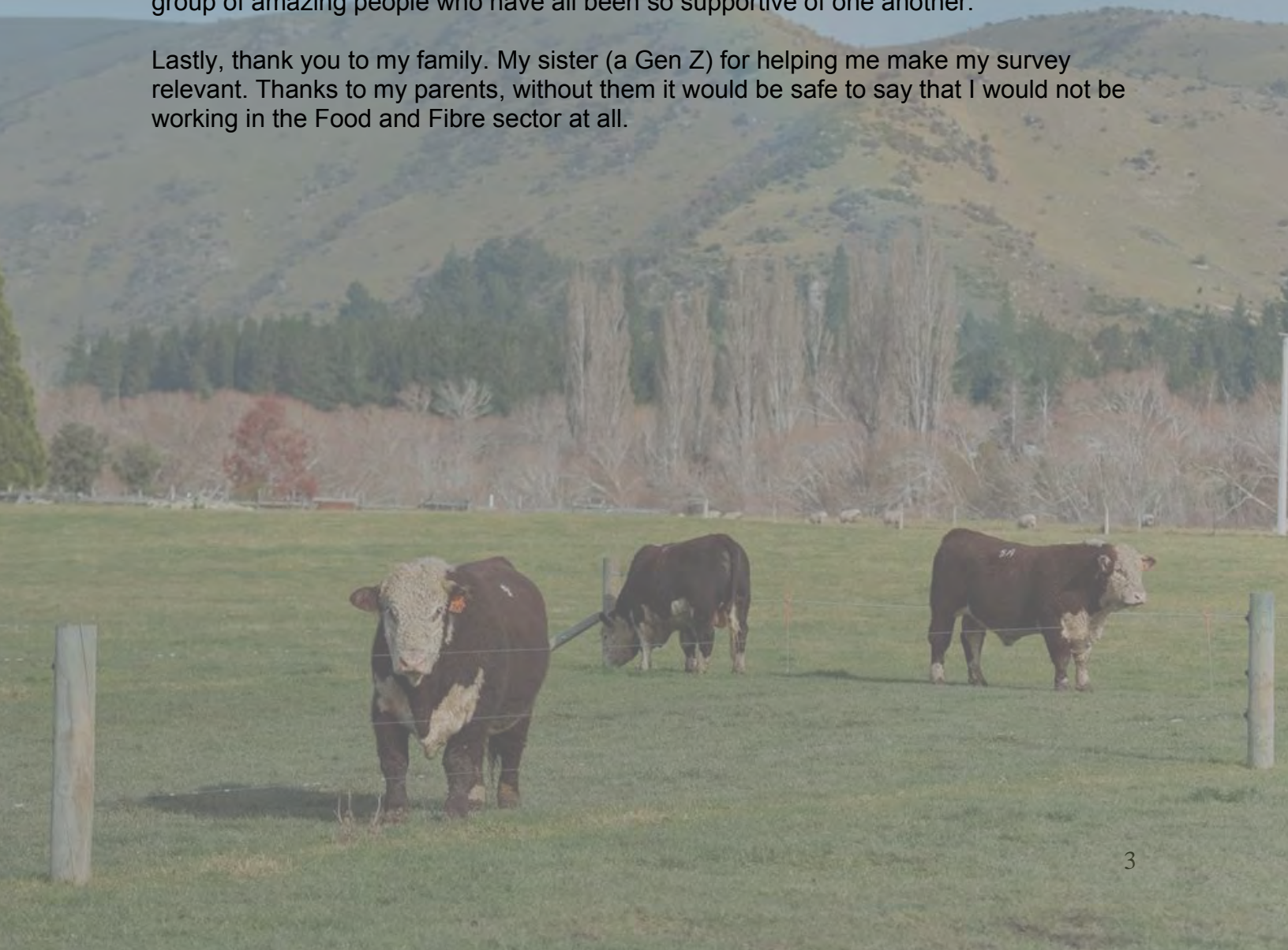
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1. Executive Summary

The Food and Fibre sector in New Zealand can be a great place to work. However, Gen Z (those born between 1995 and 2010) does not always see the opportunities available to them in this diverse and rewarding sector. At the same time, the sector needs more people, partly due to the pace of change it is facing as environmental concerns, consumer attitudes and needs of the sector evolve.

The influence of Gen Z on the workforce is only beginning and will continue to grow. This generation is very different to those before and define themselves by their values and identity. The defining issue of this generation will be climate change and the environment. In New Zealand, agriculture is the largest emitter of greenhouse gases. This could be viewed as a problem to attracting Gen Z into the sector. At the same time the sector is being asked and is actively looking to understand how it can improve its environmental impact.

This research has focused on how we can use Gen Z's passion about the environment to attract them into the sector. The sector needs skilled and passionate people to meet the challenges it faces.

My research and survey have highlighted some key areas in which the current system could be strengthened. This involves aligning Food and Fibre sector careers with the values of Gen Z through:

- Strengthened sector approach to career attraction in the Food and Fibre Sector in a Gen Z context
- Reframing the story around the Food and Fibre sector to appeal to Gen Z values
- Gen Z focused communication strategies

These recommendations recognise that appealing to Gen Z is not only important in terms of attracting the labour required but also the attitudes and values needed in the Food and Fibre sector going forward. Gen Z have more choices than ever before for their future careers. The Food and Fibre sector needs to come to Gen Z to build the capability the sector will need in the short and long term.

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3. Foreword

In 2013 I graduated high school with no idea about what I wanted to do with my life- but I was reasonably confident that I was not going to work in the primary sector. I had grown up on a farm and was sure that was not where I wanted to be. Looking back, despite being surrounded by multiple aspects of the farm business such as the accountant, lawyer, consultant, stock agent or stock manager I did see a future for myself in the Food and Fibre sector

Then after university my career in the Food and Fibre sector happened to me by accident. I applied for a data entry job at a sheep and beef genetics company. I soon found that a career in the primary sector support services can be extremely rewarding and then found myself in my current role. Upon reflection, I think this is because the subject matter and the work I do aligns to my values. Therefore, I chose this question because I want to understand how to inspire young people to consider a career in the Food and Fibre sector.



My roots (Limehills Herefords Stud)

4. Introduction

The Food and Fibre sector in New Zealand is at a crossroads. The changes being asked of the sector present challenges but at the same time an opportunity to be world leaders in sustainable agriculture. This is outlined in the *Fit for A Better World* Roadmap vision:

“We are committed to meeting the greatest challenge humanity faces: rapidly moving to a low carbon emissions society, restoring the health of our water, reversing the decline in biodiversity and at the same time, feeding our people” (Ministry for Primary Industries, 2021)

The primary industries are responsible for 52% of greenhouse gas emissions in New Zealand (Ministry for Primary Industries 2020), Water quality is a key concern for the sector, biodiversity and waste management are in the spotlight in a way that has not been seen before. The way the Food and Fibre sector operates is changing, there is already a lot of great work occurring both on and off farm to work towards a sustainable agricultural future.

For this work to continue and improve the Food and Fibre sector is going to need more capacity, capability, and diversity in both on and off farm roles to meet the current and future needs. The Food and Fibre sector has long struggled with attracting and retaining talent for a variety of reasons (UMR 2021). One of these barriers is the perception around what a career in the Food and Fibre sector could look like (UMR 2021).

At the same time, Generation Z are quickly entering the workforce and are quite different from the generations before them. Generation Z (Gen Z) care more about climate change than any other generation and it is often cited the issue they believe is the most important facing humanity (Barbiroglio 2021). On the surface, this could be viewed as another barrier to bringing people into the Food and Fibre sector. Why would people want to work in the sector that is responsible for 52% of New Zealand's emissions if they care about climate change?

Gen Z are very different compared to other generations. Gen Z are the first truly digital generation having been exposed to the internet and social media throughout their lives. Compared to other generations such as Generation X (1960-79) and Baby Boomers (1940-59) who have had to adapt to digital technology (Understanding Generation Z, 2021). Global shared experiences also impact the development of generation characteristics. These include the second world war for Baby Boomers, the 1987 stock market crash for Generation X, Globalisation and September 11 terrorist attacks for Millennials (1980-1994) (Mcrindle 2019). For Gen Z, this is still ongoing as global events continue to impact Gen Z in their formative years. Climate change will have a large impact on Gen Z.

Transforming the Food and Fibre sector will form a big part of New Zealand reaching its climate change obligations. Being involved in certain roles in the Food and Fibre sector will play a vital role in New Zealand's transition to a low emissions economy.

The Climate Change Commission has outlined a path for the sector to reduce its carbon emissions, among other recommendations the sector is going to need to pioneer new technologies and techniques going forward (Climate Change Commission 2021). This work whilst challenging, will provide opportunities for careers that can make a real difference and support New Zealand to define sustainable agriculture in an international context.

This report investigates whether this idea can be used to influence Gen Z to consider a career in the sector. How can we use Gen Z's passion to attract them into Food and Fibre Sector careers?

5. Methodology

The methodology of this report involved research around Gen Z in a national and international context. The first part of this report is focused on understanding Gen Z's generational characteristics, environmental values and what they are looking for in terms of a future career. This was to build the context around Gen Z and how this relates to career decision making in general. The second part explores how Gen Z attitudes impact their perceptions on the Food and Fibre sector, careers within it and the sectors relationship with the environment.

To build on the concepts identified in these sections an online survey of 87 secondary school students. Key themes were identified for discussion through thematic analysis of the survey results. This was then related back to the information in the sections above and analysed as part of the discussion.

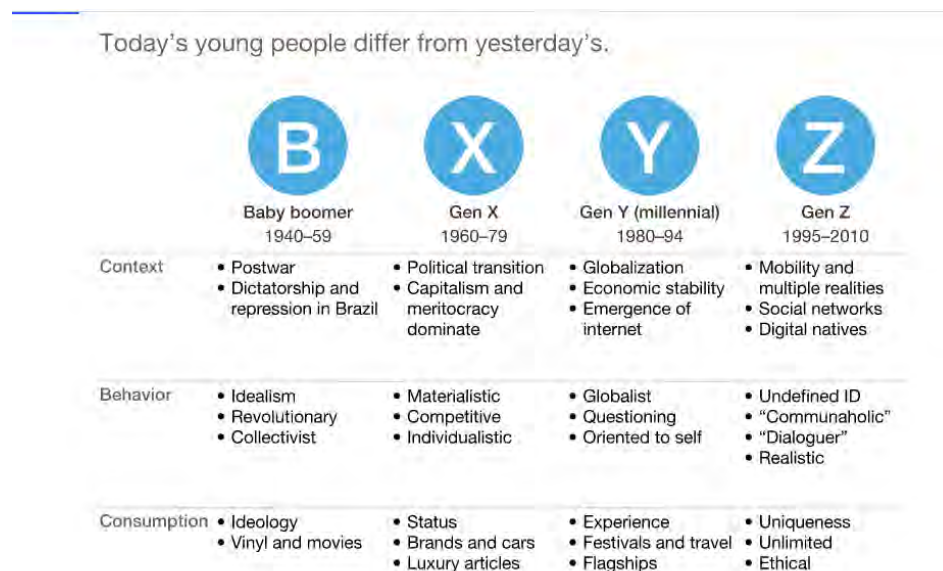
6. Gen Z- An overview

This first section focuses on Gen Z in a global context, how Gen Z interacts and views the environment in general and an overview of Gen Z and their career decision making. It is important understand the characteristics and behaviours of this generation and their career aspirations to understand how it can be influenced.

6.1 Gen Z in a global context

The definition of Gen Z is not an exact science. Gen Z defined loosely is those born between 1995 and 2010. I define myself as a 'Zillennial'- which is hybrid between a Gen Z and millennial. This allows me to empathise with Gen Z but not be fully defined by their characteristics.

Gen Z are very different from any generation before them. They grew up alongside the internet and technology is a much bigger part of their lives. They are more likely than other generations to join with others that have differing opinions to them for a common good. The search for truth is the foundation of a large proportion of Gen Z characteristics.



Gen Z compared to other generations (Mckinsey report 2019) Figure 1

The characteristics of this generation will greatly impact which careers they choose, so it is important that we understand them to know how best to appeal to them. In terms of identity, seven out of ten Gen Z say it is important to defend causes related to identity and are more interested than previous generations have been in human rights; in matters related to race and ethnicity; in lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender issues;

and in feminism. Therefore, we can assume that any career choices that Gen Z makes will be influenced by how they perceive their identity.

Gen Z are a very diverse generation, and it is important that research does not define them in a one size fits all approach. An EY consulting report about Gen Z in April 2020 highlighted some of their key drivers and values. About one fifth of those surveyed were described as '*Authentic Activists*'. This group are heavily driven by a motivation to save the world and fear of what will happen if they do not. This group is one of the most vocal of Gen Z and therefore, gets a lot of attention and shapes the perception of other members of this generation. Environmental sustainability was one of the biggest issues that this group was passionate about (EY, 2020).

In a global context, Gen Z is very diverse and have a number of drivers which define their behaviour and values. Some members of Gen Z define themselves through their efforts to save the world.

6.2 Gen Z and the Environment

"[Climate change] is my generation's nuclear free moment, and I am determined that we will tackle it head on." Rt Honorable Jacinda Ardern

Generations are defined by world events and how they interact with them. Environmental sustainability is one of those issues. It is clear from the above that Gen Z cannot be defined in just one label or issue, however their views on the environment are becoming increasingly prevalent.

The literature and information on this subject generally focuses on two key areas; Gen Z attitudes towards the environment in general and how this impacts their consumer behaviours.

6.3 Environmental attitudes of Gen Z

Gen Z will have to live with the effects of climate change for longer than previous generations. This as outlined above has translated into climate change being one of the biggest issues for younger generations compared to generations before. In a survey completed for the Ministry for the Environment in 2018, younger participants were more likely to be worried about climate change and believe that climate change is man-made.

The literature and media on the subject suggest that as the effects of climate change become clearer, their views on this issue only become stronger. A survey performed in 2019 by Amnesty International discovered that Gen Z ranked climate change as the most vital issue of our time. This is also seen during the COVID-19 pandemic where the environment remained the top biggest issue for Gen Z when surveyed for the Deloitte global millennial survey in 2020. While during the pandemic concerns over health care increased, the environment still dominated. This confirms that the environment is a large

concern to Gen Z and will trump other issues that are impacting their lives in a more visible way.

This point was illustrated further during the ‘*School Strike 4 Climate*’ nationwide. The first set of strikes which took place in September 2019 attracted over 170,000 attendees across New Zealand, the majority of which were high school students. These strikes also occurred overseas. This was one of the biggest strikes in New Zealand history and occurred again in April 2021 with a large turnout also (Stuff.co.nz, 2021). It is interesting to note the demands of these protestors in relation to agriculture. Their demands around this focus on investment into cleaner agricultural resources and processes and providing support to transition to more sustainable farming practices (Schools 4 Climate Demands 2021).

These climate strikes also point to a growing mental health issue for young people globally which has been termed ‘*eco-anxiety*’. Recognised by the American Psychological association as a diagnosis, this refers to anxiety that is characterised by anxiety related to both ‘*environmental doom*’ and the impacts of adverse events on mental health. (Eco-Anxiety at University, 2021). This phenomena will only grow as climate change becomes more visible.

6.4 Gen Z Consumer Attitudes

A large amount of the literature on Gen Z is also focused on their consumer attitudes. This is often the most up to date data around Gen Z is well documented and researched. Behaviours of Gen Z are shaped by their values and ethics. Their consumption habits shape their identity and they make decisions that align with this.

For example, 33% of Gen Z consumers said they were willing to pay more for ethically and sustainably produced groceries (PwC 2021). It is expected that as Gen Z acquires more resource, they will be more willing to pay more for this type of product. In Australia, research on this subject has also found that Gen Z are more willing compared to other generational cohorts to pay a premium for sustainably produced products.

Being environmentally conscious is only part of Gen Z consumer attitudes. Authenticity, quality, and transparency are valued by Gen Z. This is summarised below:

“Brands need to be both agile and stable, regionally aware and locally focused, environmentally sound and acutely price conscious, social-media savvy and respectful of privacy, and authentic and able to tell a compelling story. So yes, it’s complicated, but as Generation Z’s affluence and influence rises, it’s well worth the effort” (Aimee Kim, McKinsey & Company 2020)

As Gen Z consumer attitudes are linked to their identities and values, this must be considered when trying to appeal to them.

6.5 COVID-19- How has this impacted Gen Z?

COVID-19 has massively impacted Gen Z. The literature around this is still new, however there are clear themes emerging. Gen Z does not want society, the environment and the economy to return to normal.

In a survey across 27 international markets of young people in 2020, 60% wanted the post-COVID recovery to prioritize restructuring our economy to deal with inequality and climate change rather than just return to the same way of life as before. Interestingly, 85% of respondents were also keen on sharing ideas with companies to help them develop better solutions to social and environmental problems. 59% strongly agreed with the statement *“that the more socially and environmentally responsible my company becomes, the more motivated and loyal they become (as an employee)”*. (Deloitte, 2020)

Gen Z is ready to get involved with the change required to support environmental prosperity at a global, national and local level. As Gen Z grows older, this will support the transformational change required to meet the challenge of climate change. It is important to understand if this willingness to be involved impacts career aspirations for this generation.

6.6 Career influences and aspirations of Gen Z

Gen Z and more specifically teenagers have a broad scope of career aspirations. In 2018, the *Dream Jobs? Teenagers' Career Aspirations and the Future of Work* report surveyed teenagers in the OECD around what they wanted to be when they grew up.

Table 1.1 - Concentration of occupational expectations, by gender, 2000 and 2018
Percentage of students expecting to work in one of the ten most commonly cited jobs at age 20

Source: IEA 2000 and 2018 databases, Countries reporting career expectations in IEA 2000 and 2018.

Top 10 occupations cited by girls			
2000		2018	
Occupation	%	Occupation	%
1 Teachers	11.1	Doctors	15.6
2 Doctors	11.0	Teachers	9.4
3 Lawyers	6.2	Business managers	5.0
4 Psychologists	3.9	Lawyers	4.6
5 Nursing and midwives	3.2	Nursing and midwives	4.5
6 Business managers	3.0	Psychologists	3.7
7 Veterinarians	2.9	Designers	3.0
8 Writers/journalists	2.6	Veterinarians	2.8
9 Secretaries	2.6	Police officers	2.3
10 Hairdressers	2.5	Architects	2.1
Total	49.0		52.9

Concentration of occupational expectations by gender (OECD) Figure 2

Top 10 occupations cited by boys			
2000		2018	
Occupation	%	Occupation	%
1 Business managers	6.8	Engineers	7.7
2 ICT professionals	6.1	Business managers	6.7
3 Engineers	4.9	Doctors	6.0
4 Doctors	4.5	ICT professionals	5.5
5 Sportspeople	4.0	Sportspeople	4.9
6 Teachers	3.9	Teachers	4.6
7 Lawyers	2.7	Police officers	4.0
8 Motor vehicle mechanics	1.9	Motor vehicle mechanics	2.8
9 Architects	1.9	Lawyers	2.4
10 Police officers	1.9	Architects	2.2
Total	38.4		46.8

The table above shows how career aspirations have evolved for teenagers over the past couple of decades. Aspirations of men and women have become more aligned. Labour market signals do not seem to be impacting career aspirations of high school students in New Zealand and internationally. Approximately a third of New Zealand teenagers aspired to careers that were at high risk to automation (e.g. aircraft mechanic, banking and sales) (OECD, 2018). Therefore, highlighting the gaps and vast vacancies in sectors does not necessarily mean that students will start looking at these sectors as a career option. This is especially relevant for Food and Fibre sector related roles.

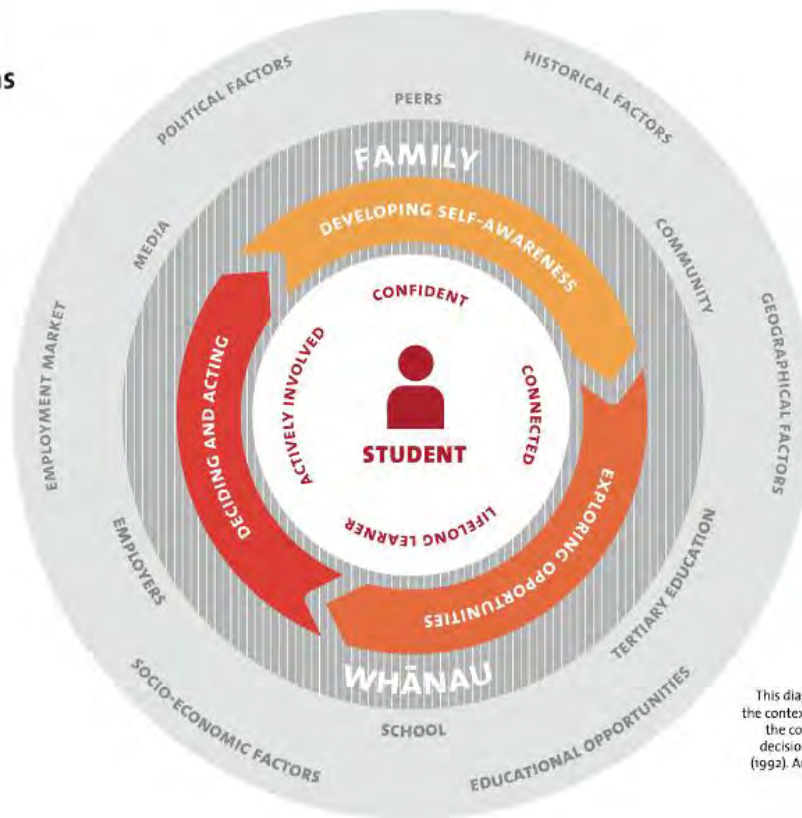
12- TO 13-YEAR-OLDS		
RANK	JOB	PROPORTION THAT WANT THIS JOB
1	Sportsperson*	18.3%
2	Police officer	4.8%
3	Vet	4.4%
4	Teacher/Lecturer	3.8%
5	Architect	3.5%
6	Artist/Illustrator	3.4%
7	Lawyer (barrister/solicitor)/Judge	3.3%
8	Social media/YouTuber/Influencer	3.3%
9	Actor/Actress	3.2%
10	Farmer	2.9%

(Tertiary Education Commission 2019) Figure 3

A 2019 New Zealand study identified the top 10 sought after careers by students (Tertiary Education Commission, 2020). There are some linkages with the OECD study above but also differences. This is evident through the additions of sportsperson and social media influencer as career aspirations. Farmer being mentioned is also surprising and demonstrated awareness of the Food and Fibre sector.

Student career aspirations are heavily impacted by a number of influences, that are not just personal preference. For example, parents have a huge influence on career choices over their children and thus, it is important to assess what they value for their children's careers also. The careers highlighted are easily recognisable and visible so feature strongly in this studies. For example, Sportspeople and Social media influencer feature frequently in Gen Z lives.

Influences on career decisions



(Ministry of Education, 2009) Figure 4

Gen Z are a very diverse generation who are maturing in a very unique world. It is important to understand their values, drivers and context to know how to appeal to them. Gen Z care about the truth and are becoming increasingly interested in the story behind what they consume. This is becoming more prevalent as Gen Z begins to influence the direction of the global recovery from COVID-19. Moreover, the more a member of Gen Z is exposed to a career the more likely they are to consider it as a possibility. Farmer was one of the top 10 most popular career aspirations for the New Zealand children surveyed above. Therefore, Food and Fibre sector careers are visible to Gen Z. It is important to understand how Gen Z views the sector and careers within it to understand what will attract them long term.

7. Gen Z and the Food and Fibre sector

This section focuses on how Gen Z view Food and Fibre sector, careers within the sector and how this aligns to Gen Z values.



7.1 General Perceptions of the Food and Fibre sector

As outlined above, generally the more aware students are of a career, the more willing they are to consider it. Therefore, it is important to understand how The Food and Fibre sector is viewed at a high level and then how they view careers into the sector as these are linked.

Across Australasia where the Food and Fibre sector makes a substantial contribution to the economy, this is clearly recognised by Gen Z. In a survey of New Zealand secondary school students, 75% of students associated the primary industries with a contribution to New Zealand's economy (Colmar Brunton 2016). Moreover, a key theme that emerged was students' heavy association with Food and Fibre sector roles being directly on farm.

The main issues surrounding the Food and Fibre sector were perceived differently in New Zealand and Australia which is not surprising due to the different systems and climates. Interestingly, the biggest issues in the sector drive some of the more negative views of the sector. For example, drought and its impact on animal welfare was of large concern for students in Australia (Youth Insight, 2017). Water quality/pollution has driven negative perception of the sector in New Zealand (UMR, 2018). Perceptions of the Food and Fibre sector are shaped by its impacts on the environment and animals. This needs to be considered when trying to attract Gen Z into the sector due to the importance they place on these issues.

In 2016, The Primary Industry Capability Alliance (PICA) commissioned Colmar Brunton to research decision making that leads to careers in the Primary Industries (This was the term used in their survey as opposed to Food and Fibre sector). This survey aimed to establish a baseline of secondary school students' current level of awareness

towards careers in the primary industries, and to understand the things that would lead them into tertiary study in primary industries. This survey had an urban focus which is an important lense to apply to the results.

This survey has a number of key findings and was the foundation for parts of my survey content. I will compare relevant results later in this report, but this section is focused on how Gen Z (more specifically secondary school students) views the primary sector and associated careers in general and the values that motivate them during career decision making.

7.2 Factors that impact career choices for Gen Z- a New Zealand perspective

This survey gathered data on what career characteristics influenced Gen Z's career choices, and which of these were associated with a career in the primary sector. These results were very enlightening and give the Food and Fibre sector a path to where to target its effort in this area.

The most motivating factors for students in their career decision making were:

- Good employment opportunities,
- International connections
- Variety
- Opportunities for problem solving, challenges and adding value

Approximately 30-40% of respondents associated most of these factors with careers in the Food and Fibre sector. However, there were multiple characteristics that were highly motivating but less associated with the sector. These were focused on access; to tertiary opportunities, intellectually challenging work and having freedom. Interestingly, there are a number of roles in the Food and Fibre sector which meet these parameters.

For example, there are a number of roles that are intellectually stimulating and provide tertiary opportunities from soil scientists to rural consultants. This can be explained by the survey results that the career in the primary industries was mainly associated with farming and roles directly on the land. There were also a number of factors which were highly associated with the primary industries but were not classified as highly motivating for career choices. These include:

- Working in an industry that is important/essential for New Zealand's economic growth
- Connecting, working with and supporting the natural environment
- Connecting, working with and supporting animals
- Getting to use physical skills

Secondary school students associated both environmental and economic aspects with the Food and Fibre sector. The wording of this survey around the environmental sector is quite broad. Students were surveyed by asking the importance of the statement '*Connecting, working with and supporting the natural environment (sustainability, managing the environment, conservation, reducing climate change)*'. Although in 2016 this was not classified as a highly motivating career aspect it can be argued that due to the value that Gen Z places on environmental concerns this will only become more important.

This is supported by Gen Z's desire for a COVID-19 economic recovery to be focused on environmental solutions as discussed above. The implications of upcoming freshwater regulations, He Waka Eke Noa (the sectors partnership of climate change emissions) (He Waka Eke Noa, 2021) and the recently released climate change commission advice will result in opportunities for Gen Z to contribute to transitioning to a low emissions society.

There is evidence that students will value environmentally focussed careers in a New Zealand context. Masters students at Lincoln university in November 2019 created a survey to gain insights into Gen Z. This survey of Christchurch secondary school students highlighted four key values that were important when thinking about a business or company, these included; Quality, Efficient, Profitable and Improving Environment in that order. Students are more likely to be interested in a business in general if they exhibit these qualities.

This report also discussed methods of attracting and retaining Gen Z which included:

- Offer a high level of pastoral care
- Provide workplace mentors or 'buddies'
- Clearly outline workplace expectations and standards
- Provide on-going learning opportunities
- Communicate in real-time, face-to-face
- Offer variety in the workplace

This demonstrates that Gen Z is looking for a broad range of characteristics when considering a career and this must be considered when trying to engage with this generation.

7.3 Further International Research

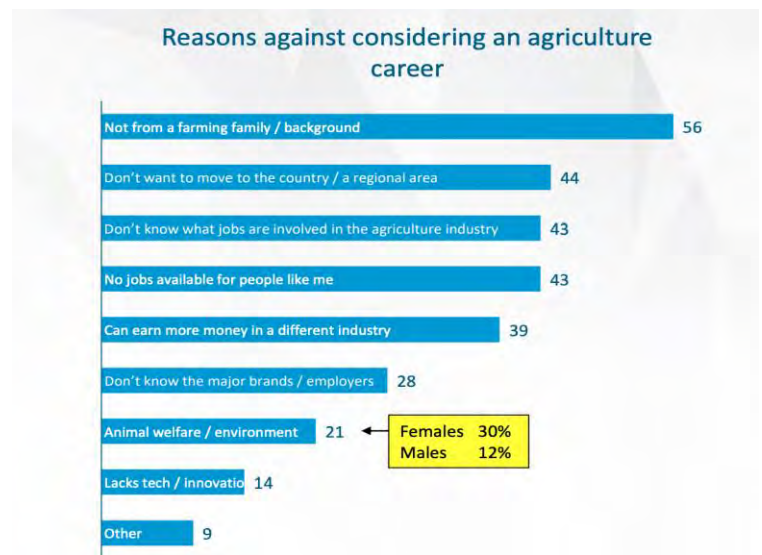
There have also been a number of studies on this subject in Australia which have found similar results. A study of school leavers in New South Wales explored how those who had little understanding of the agricultural sector perceived working in the sector (Youth Insight, 2017). This highlighted that their understandings of the reality of careers are heavily influenced by media portrayals of the Food and Fibre sector.

Those surveyed viewed the Food and Fibre sector through the following themes:

- Farming, tractors and paddocks
- Dirty, smelly, sunny, outdoors
- Practical and hands-on
- Hard, manual labour
- Time intensive
- Far away, remote
- Unprofitable
- Risky and unstable due to weather
- Boring / not interesting

These are decidedly negative, and whether or not this is the reality will impact how students are viewing possible careers in the Food and Fibre sector. There are also noticeable issues around the perceptions of regional living and how that will impact students' lives. For example, students associated careers in the Food and Fibre sector with difficulty accessing necessities and being far from friends and family.

This study of students highlighted the key reasons against considering a career in the Food and Fibre sector. Although lower on the scale, it is interesting to note that animal welfare and the environment do feature in the considerations.



(Developing student interest in the agriculture sector report (Youth Insight, 2017) Figure 5

Reasons that students were willing to consider a career in the sector included working with animals, improving lives/the world and environmental sustainability. It is important to highlight the sector's positive contribution to society- not just the economy. Students that self-identify as knowing little to nothing about the Food and Fibre sector still form strong opinions about the sector that are influenced by inconsistent sources.

In summary, it is clear that students in general have strong misconceptions around careers in the Food and Fibre sector. These views focus on the well-publicised aspects

of the sector such as farming, and roles directly on farm. Students who are not exposed to the Food and Fibre sector are less likely to consider it as a career option. This, as opposed to concerns about the industry, appear to be a strong barrier to the sector. Although not necessarily presented as a strong barrier, perceptions of the sector seem to influence students' perception. Students associate the Food and Fibre sector strongly with its economic impact which Gen Z does not place as much value on as previous generations.

Therefore, understanding what they do place value on is key to knowing how to influence Gen Z. Understanding the influence environmental considerations have on Gen Z career choices and how they view the Food and Fibre sector in relation to this is also important. The next section of this report dives deeper into this concept.

8. Survey of Secondary School Students

The survey questions were based partly on the Colmar Brunton survey of this report with a particular focus on trying to build on the environmental aspects. The overall aim was to ascertain if students interest in the environment affected their career choices, and if they viewed the Food and Fibre sector as a way to support this. I also wanted to understand how factors such a gender, location and studying agriculture impacted the results.

The survey had three sections including:

- General demographics questions: including gender, where they lived and whether or not they studied agriculture related subjects.
- General career aspirations: and what career characteristics influenced these:
- Perceptions of both careers and the environment in relation to the Food and Fibre sector.

The survey was run over a week in May at two Otago schools. As part of ensuring privacy of respondents I have chosen not to name the schools. It is important to note as part of data interpretation that:

- These schools are high decile and single sex
- One school offered agribusiness focused courses and one did not
- The schools had a mixture of urban and rural students
- Focused on surveying Year 12 and 13

The survey received 87 responses. I have chosen to thematic analysis and not focus too heavily on the numbers due to the size, nature and characteristics of responses. Comparing the results to the trends identified above will ensure the relevancy of the data mentioned in this report.

The confusion around the term Food and Fibre sector quickly became evident when my survey began, students from both urban and rural backgrounds were not familiar with the term. Once I explained that this was the primary sector/agriculture it was easily understood. This was a view that was held by both students and some of the teachers I engaged with. The communications around careers in the Food and Fibre sector often use this term to encompass the broad range of career opportunities. If there is no clear correlation between the term Food and Fibre sector and primary sector careers this could result in confusion around knowledge of related careers. The more familiar a Gen Z individual is with a career the more likely they are to consider it. It is important that communications on this subject are clear, especially since the breadth of career options in the sector is not well known.

8.1 Thematic summary and analysis of survey results

As discussed above, the results have been analysed by pulling themes as opposed to the quantity of respondents. I have separated the results into groups by respondents' characteristics and then focused on the environmental aspects as a whole and compared these results to earlier sections of the report. The survey questions are attached in appendix one.

Gender

The literature above highlighted that there are differences between gender and career aspirations. However, as mentioned above these gaps are becoming less prevalent as traditional gender roles become less prevalent. The Food and Fibre sector broadly follows this trend.

Females

The results from my survey highlighted that females were less likely to consider a career in the food and fibre sector. Females who did were most likely to have studied agribusiness related subjects and/or came from a rural community. This group had a broader range of what they considered to be important in terms of their careers compared to the males surveyed.

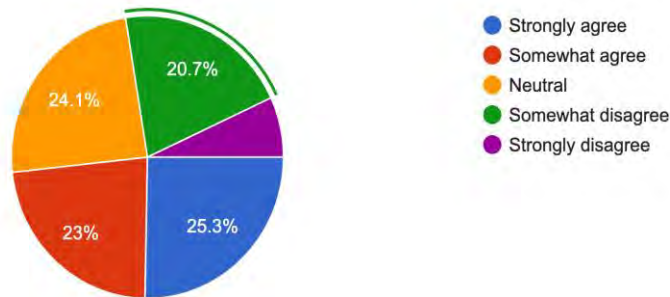
Males

Food and Fibre careers were more likely to be considered than the female respondents group, especially if they studied agribusiness or came from a rural community. Males were more likely to value physical career attributes (e.g. working outside) and variety. Both males and females valued salary/wages but this came through stronger with males. When asked what they wanted to do for a job the most popular responses revolved around agriculture more specifically on farm careers.

Respondents who studied agriculture but did not find the sector appealing

A career in the food & fibre sectors is highly appealing

87 responses



Survey responses from students (all participants) Figure 6

Through my research around awareness of the Food and Fibre sector, I had assumed that a strong driver for students studying agriculture would be to work in the sector. This was further backed up by the fact that at the school where I conducted my research that offered agribusiness as a subject was oversubscribed.

However, of the survey respondents who studied agriculture about a third either disagreed or were neutral on the statement '*a career in the Food and Fibre sector is appealing to me*'. The characteristics of this group was interesting, it was largely made up of people who did not live in rural communities and were considering a broad range of careers. When asked what they valued in terms of a career they generally selected the options '*salary*' and '*being able to work outdoors*'. Working outdoors is obviously associated with the Food and Fibre sector, high salaries generally not. Salaries across the food and fibre vary, however perceptions of the sector are that it is low paid among Gen Z. This group also valued variety (no two days the same) and connecting with people. Variety and connectedness are roles that have low association with agriculture also (Colmar Brunton, 2018).

Lastly, unlike the group who saw careers in the Food and Fibre sector as appealing, this group was more likely to not prioritize environmental considerations for their career aspirations.

Respondents that studied agriculture and saw the career as appealing

The careers which this group aspired to were mainly direct on farm careers (e.g. farmer, shepherd, fencer) and very little mention of other types of careers available in the sector. This group also highly valued physical elements of careers which are highly

associated with the Food and Fibre sector.

A large number of this group agreed with the statement '*The Food and Fibre sector cares about its impact on the environment*' with not one respondent in this group disagreeing with these concepts.

Respondents' Communities

Urban students

Students were asked to classify themselves as whether they lived in a rural or urban community. Unsurprisingly, this group was less likely to consider the Food and Fibre sector as a career choice. Compared to the rural group, getting to work outdoors was not valued as highly by urban students.

This group also strongly associated the Food and Fibre sector with feeding their communities. A large proportion of this group viewed the sector as trying to improve its environmental performance and working in the sector is a place where you can achieve that.

Rural Students

The majority of students that classified themselves as living in a rural community agreed somewhat with the statement that careers in the food and fibre sector were appealing, in stark contrast to the urban students. The majority of this group also believed that the Food and Fibre sector cares about environmental impacts and that working in the sector is a way to achieve this.

This group also had a variety of career aspirations, but strong farming and agricultural themes came through and once again these were focused mainly on direct on farm roles and not necessarily with the support industries.

Overall, there are some differences between urban and rural students and their views of the Food and Fibre sector. Across both the urban and rural groups there was not strong evidence of negative sentiment of the sector.

Student perceptions of the environment and the Food and Fibre Sector

Even when analysed separately most groups from this survey were largely aligned on their environmental perspectives of the Food and Fibre sector.

The results around the environmental aspects were very interesting. I had assumed from my research around the values of Gen Z that there would be more negative views of Food and Fibre sector due to its status as New Zealand's largest Greenhouse gas emitter. However, as mentioned above even when you examine the responses of those

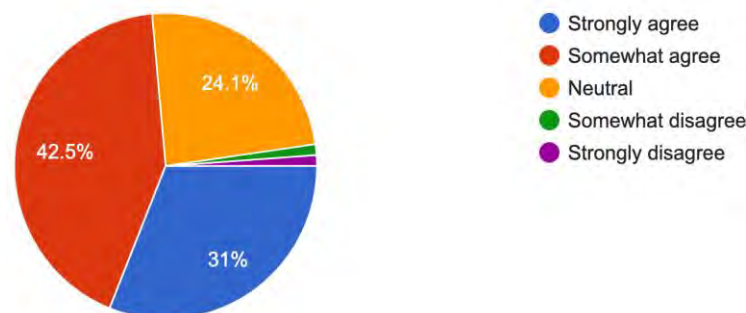
traditionally not exposed the Food and Fibre sector, there was no evidence of strong negative views toward the sector in general. This trend continues through survey results focused on the environment.

Overall, over 70% of respondents from the entire survey agreed to some extent with the statement that *'The Food and Fibre Sector cares about its environmental impact'*. Interestingly, this drops off slightly with the statement *'Working on the Food and Fibre Sector means I can support environmental change'*. This drop off was not necessarily related to whether they live in a rural community or not, but those who disagreed were less likely to have studied agribusinesses. The survey showed that students generally think the sector cares about its environmental impact but do not always relate this to the idea that the working in the sector can support environmental change.

When students were asked what they valued in general for their careers, around 25% of respondents identified that working in an industry that can improve its environmental impact is important. This aligns with some of the categorisations of Gen Z highlighted in earlier sections of this report. The *'authentic activists'*, a smaller but more vocal group of Gen Z whose values and behaviours are driven strongly by the environment. (Mckinsey and Company, 2018).

The Food and Fibre sector cares about its Environmental Impact

87 responses



Survey responses from all participants Figure 7

8.2 Discussion of survey results

Overall, these survey results mostly aligned clearly with the findings about Gen Z outlined earlier in this report. Students in general are more likely to consider a career they are exposed to and know about. This is clearly seen in the results from surveys around career aspirations as the careers mentioned are classic, well defined careers such as doctor, teacher and vet. The exposure element of career aspirations is also clearly seen with the careers such as social media influencer and sports person.

This idea was found in these survey results, as those who either lived in a rural community or studied agribusiness were more likely to view a career in the sector appealing. However, as discussed above around a third of those who studied agribusiness did not say they found the sector appealing as a career choice. Those who lived in rural communities were more likely to say they found a career in the sector appealing. This suggests that exposure needs to be combined with other strategies to support the notion of an appealing food and fibre sector career.

Secondly, the environmental results did not come through as strongly as I had assumed. Although a proportion of students valued the environment when thinking about future careers, other factors such as variety, salary and wages, and getting to use physical skills were valued more highly.

However, the small proportion of this group aligns with research mentioned earlier about ‘*authentic activists*’, who are a small but vocal sub section of Gen Z. This does not mean that the majority of Gen Z does not care about the environment as it is clear from their consumer attitudes that they do. Rather, it demonstrated the weight of which affects decision making in different areas. This is not surprising as there is more commitment required in a future career than a consumer decision. The environment features as part of the decision making for careers/pathways for students. This also suggests that using the environment could form part of an effective strategy to attract future environmental expertise into the sector.

This could be hugely beneficial for the sector as a large amount of the expertise the sector will need going forward will be focused on environmental areas. This will also provide a broad spectrum of possible careers from being involved breeding low methane sheep to working with farmers to know their greenhouse gas emissions and have mitigations in place.

The idea that working in the sector can support environmental change was the least likely to be agreed with out of all the environmental statements in this survey. Brining awareness towards the activities in the sector focused on better environmental outcomes will support this.

Question: If someone asked you what you wanted to do for a career today, what would you say?

Answer: Creating new products for farmer(s) that reduce carbon emissions without changing the way they farm drastically

(Survey respondent Y13, Male)

9. Findings and Discussion

There are a number of factors that impact Gen Z career aspirations. Through the research above three key areas emerge as a way to support the Food and Fibre sector to attract Gen Z.

9.1 Supporting a Pan-Sector Approach

A united Food and Fibre sector approach to attracting people into the sector is key in appealing to Gen Z. If opportunities for environmental improvement are going to be effectively used to attract people to the sector, a united voice is going to be required. There is already a substantial amount of work going on in this space.

For example, the work from the Primary Industry Capability Alliance/Growing NZ is important in providing a pan sector approach to the challenge of attracting Gen Z. However, Gen Z is constantly changing and COVID-19 as mentioned above has caused some shift in their behaviour. Any strengthening of a pan sector approach should be in tandem with further research around Gen Z and how to appeal to their values. Sectors within the primary industries should continue to develop their own attraction strategies in line with a broader strategic direction for the sector as a whole.

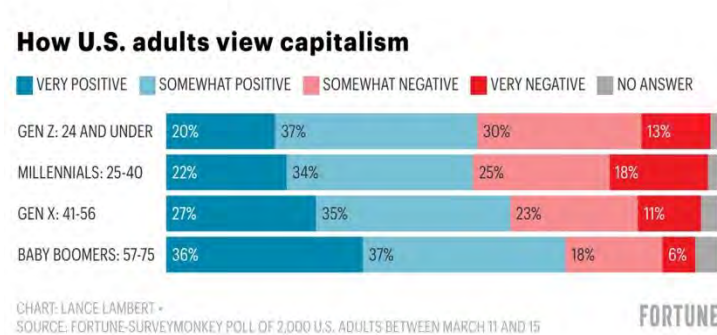
A pan sector approach should also be supported by government. The work around the Fit for a Better World road map, Opportunity Grows campaign and the Food and Fibre skills action plan provides a valuable opportunity to provide clear information about the opportunities available in the Food and Fibre sector. These pan sector approaches however, need to be presented in a way that appeals to the values and drivers of Gen Z as they will form an ever increasing part of the employees and leaders of the food and fibre sector.

It is important that the Food and Fibre sector works together on this. To be truly appealing to Gen Z, the sector should be seen as a broad career path in which Gen Z can move from one part of the sector to another to ensure their variety, connectedness and opportunities for advancement. All of these characteristics are valued highly by Gen Z.

9.2 The importance of the Food and Fibre Industry Story

The Food and Fibre sector has lots of good stories to tell. Increasingly, there seems to be an over reliance on the economic benefits of the sector to the New Zealand economy as the cornerstone of the positive image of the Food and Fibre sector. There is no doubt that this is important, it must be recognised going forward the value that is placed on this by Gen Z is not as high as previous generations. This is in contrast to what Gen Z does care about which is generally focused around social and environmental outcomes.

For example, an increasing number of people are unsatisfied with our current economic system. The graph below shows that Gen Z is the least likely to view capitalism in a positive sense.



(Forbes. 2021) Figure 8

Relying on the Food and Fibre sectors economic performance to attract people into the sector and generate social licence and general will not be sustainable in the long term. It is important to highlight the aspects of Food and Fibre sector careers that appeal to Gen Z. Part of this involves appealing to the day to day realities of the careers and also how these careers can contribute to society in general. Demonstrating in a tangible way the positive impact the sector has will encourage Gen Z to consider the Food and Fibre sector as a viable career.

Nevertheless, It is not enough to focus solely on the positive impact the sector is having. It is my view that the sector needs to start talking about the challenges it faces and reframing them in a way that provides opportunities for Gen Z to contribute and have rewarding careers. For Gen Z adding value and contributing the bigger picture is highly motivating when considering careers as highlighted above.

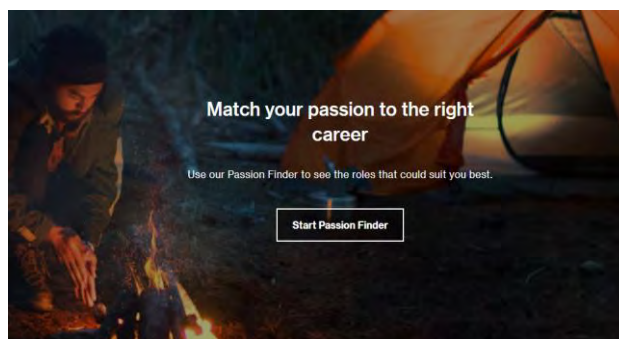
There are successful examples of appealing to values of Gen Z in recruitment in other industries. This can clearly be seen in both the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) and NZ Police recruiting. Both of these organisations have a massive focus on recruitment and have a very visible presence. NZ Police and the NZDF have a high number of applicants for their respective organisations. From 2014 to 2018, 22,993 people applied to join the police force and 1500 were eventually recruited. Both the NZDF and NZ Police received record applications in 2020. (Stuff.co.nz, 2018)

Along with highlighting the various careers on offer organisations, the other focus these recruitment strategies have in common is their focus on how their organisation and

relevant careers contribute to society and how individuals skills, background and values can contribute. Both the NZDF and NZ Police have messaging around matching individuals' skills, values and backgrounds to the opportunities available .



NZ Police Recruitment Website image (2021)



NZDF Recruitment Website (2021)

These organisations also bring focus towards the wider implications of their work in recruitment materials. For example, campaigns around NZ Police recruitment focus on the tangible impact you can make on communities and the NZDF recruitment communications is focused around the statement below.

“A career in the Defence Force gives you real purpose. You'll work as part of a tight-knit team, protecting your whānau, your country and our environment from harm. And you'll have the honour of representing New Zealand wherever you go.” (NZDF website 2021)

There are some examples of this in the Food and Fibre sector already. GoDairy, a campaign run by DairyNZ has a 'Discover your fit' Quiz which aims to match individuals' skills and interests into a career. Encompassing the Food and Fibre sector's relationship with the environment (and other social factors such as community support) into tools such as this could provide a valuable opportunity to attract more passionate, skilled people into the sector.

The Food and Fibre sector plays and will continue to play a big part in New Zealand society in future. Framing the narrative around to include environmental considerations

and the journey of change the sector is on will be an important part of attracting the next generation.

9.3 Appealing to Gen Z from a communications perspective

Developing these reframed narratives around Food and Fibre sector careers also requires thought into how best to get these messages to Gen Z. As mentioned earlier in this report, there are a number of avenues which can influence career aspirations and decision making. It is important that campaigns and initiatives are focused on how Gen Z consumes information as well as appealing to them in general. There are a number of great resources produced across the sector that could be adapted to meet the needs of Gen Z.

Unsurprisingly, the internet is a large source of information for students around their prospective careers along with questionnaires around their interest and abilities. In 2018, The most popular source of information about careers for students was the internet (OECD, 2018). The role of social media is becoming more prevalent in this space. An effective way to reach Gen Z is to incorporate consumer thinking and attitudes into communications strategies.

For example, social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and Tik Tok have a strong impact on Gen Z and their consumer decision making and by extension their values. There is a large amount of content available on the internet around primary sector careers with valuable information attracting Gen Z to this information is a task in itself.

A way to support Gen Z to find this information could be through a focus on short, concise and image focused content to spark interest. The average attention span of Gen Z is eight seconds compared to 12 seconds for millennials. This has meant Instagram stories, Tik Tok videos and other short term/ instant content have become increasingly influential. An effective example of this I have seen is on the '*sheepissophie*' Instagram account where a young person employed in the sheep industry in New Zealand made a 30 second video describing hogget weighing and the technology behind it. Content such as this can spark Gen Z interest in to finding out more about Food and Fibre sector careers.

In addition, the sector has a lot of strong profiles already available people working in the Food and Fibre sector. For example, the Go Horticulture website has a number of profiles of people working a large variety of jobs across the supply chain. These profiles could be made a more valuable resource with short video clips encouraging people to find out more. These could be made more valuable if the Food and Fibre sector utilises environmental information as part of career focused communications.

These types of strategies only form part of an overall approach to attracting Gen Z into the sector. There are a large number of influences on the career decisions for Gen Z- reaching the students themselves is only part of the solution.

The Food and Fibre sector is not seen as a traditional career path for secondary school students in New Zealand. Considerable focus should be put on how the sector can provide a steer toward the Food and Fibre sector through a Gen Z centred approach.

10. Conclusions and Recommendations

The influence of Gen Z in New Zealand and overseas is only just beginning. The Food and Fibre sector is going to have to make a concerted effort to attract people into the sector if it is going to make the change that is being required. Gen Z is a very different generation that are driven by truth, social and the environmental. It is important that the Food and Fibre sector does not ignore this.

The majority of Gen Z does not hold strongly negative views of the sector in general/ Gen Z recognises the Food and Fibre sectors impact on the environment but for the most part, understand that the sector is looking to make change. However, messaging around the change already happening and the anticipated change needs to be authentic for it to have any impact with this generation.

There is no one size fits all approach to appealing to Gen Z, but a large part of this generation is ready to take on exciting opportunities that will align to their values and benefit wider society. This presents an opportunity for the Food and Fibre sector to attract the people it will need going forward.

A broad range a strategies will be required to capture the attention of this generation. It is my recommendation that the sector focus in the three key areas to achieve this.

1) Strengthened united sector approach to career attraction in the Food and Fibre Sector for Gen Z

Attracting Gen Z into the Food and Fibre sector as a whole will allow this generation to see the wide variety of careers available in the sector. Gen Z in general will stay in jobs for less time than other generations. Organisations such as Growing NZ are well placed to show the opportunities available in the Food and Fibre sector as a whole.

2) Reframing the story around the Food and Fibre sector to appeal to Gen Z values

Gen Z values at the moment largely do not align with the public perception of the Food and Fibre sector. The narrative around the sector is often anchored it is economic performance globally and contribution the New Zealand economy. Gen Z does not place as much value on this concept.

The Food and Fibre sector has good stories to tell about its environmental performance. Going forward, the sector has an opportunity to strengthen this narrative by being open, transparent and authentic around the changes in environmental practice in the sector. It is my view that the sector can use this idea as a powerful narrative to attract Gen Z.

3) Gen Z focused communication strategies

This narrative needs to be presented in a way that appeals to Gen Z. The sector already has a lot of useful resources and these should be adapted to focus on attracting Gen Z as a first step. This could be taken further in terms of incorporating an 'influencer' model. For example, Supporting those with careers in the sector to advocate and explain careers in the Food and Fibre sector on social media platforms.

This will require reconsidering the platforms and resources developed to attract Gen Z. The sector will need to adapt as new platforms such as Tik Tok and Instagram develop and eventually replaced.

Overall, the Food and Fibre sector will be successful in attracting Gen Z only if Gen Z is put at the centre going forward.

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Appendix One- Survey Questions

13/06/2021

Kellogg Survey

Kellogg Survey

As part of my Kellogg Rural Leadership Programme I want to understand secondary school students' perceptions of the food and fibre sectors. I am particularly interested in how your values might shape your career decision-making.

This survey will ask you some questions to see how you view food and fibre sector careers. By food and fibre sectors, I mean everything from growing food, wood and wool, through to processing them into products, and taking them to market – in New Zealand and throughout the world.

This survey should take you 5 minutes to complete. There are no right or wrong responses just say what you think. All answers will remain anonymous.

Thanks for completing the survey!

*** Required**

1. What year at school are you? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Year 12
☐ Year 13
☐ Year 11
☐ Other: _____

2. What gender do you identify as?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Female
☐ Male
☐ Prefer not to say
☐ Other: _____

3. 3) Would you classify yourself as living in a rural community? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Other: _____

4. Do you currently study subjects relating to food & fibre (e.g. agribusiness, agriculture, horticulture, Primary Industries Trade Academy) *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Other: _____

Part 2: You and your career

This section is going to focus on what you are looking for in your future job or career.

5. If someone asked you what you wanted to do for a career today , what would you say? *

6. Select all of the statements below which are important to you for your future career. *

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Working in an important/essential industry for New Zealand's economy and growth
- ☐ Has international connections (which could allow you to travel and work overseas)
- ☐ Salary/Wages
- ☐ Connecting, working with and supporting people
- ☐ Working in a growth industry with lots of new and exciting developments
- ☐ Getting to use physical skills (work that is physically challenging, uses hands-on skills, machinery)
- ☐ Working in an industry that can improve the environment (e.g. reduce greenhouse gases, improving water quality)
- ☐ Variety (no two days at work being the same, learning new things, never being bored)
- ☐ Good employment opportunities (skills shortage, high demand for employees in this area, growth opportunities, study leads to a job, lots of options)
- ☐ Using technological skills (developing and Connecting, working with and supporting people applying new technologies and specialist skills)
- ☐ Working in an industry that can feed my community/ my country

Other: ☐ _____

7. What is the most important for your career? (select one) *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Salary/Wages
- ☐ Connecting, working with and supporting people
- ☐ Working in a growth industry with lots of new and exciting developments
- ☐ Getting to use physical skills (work that is physically challenging, uses hands-on skills, machinery)
- ☐ Working in an industry that can improve the environment (e.g. reduce greenhouse gases, improving water quality)
- ☐ Working in an important/essential industry for New Zealand's economy and growth
- ☐ Has international connections (which could allow you to travel and work overseas)
- ☐ Variety (no two days at work being the same, learning new things, never being bored)
- ☐ Good employment opportunities (skills shortage, high demand for employees in this area, growth opportunities, study leads to a job, lots of options)
- ☐ Using technological skills (developing and Connecting, working with and supporting people applying new technologies and specialist skills)
- ☐ Working in an industry that can feed my community/ my country
- ☐ Other: _____

**Food
and
Fibre
Section**

This next section is going to focus on the food & fibre sectors, and how this might relate to your future career.

The food and fibre sectors is everything from growing food, wood and wool, through to processing them into products, and taking them to market – in New Zealand and throughout the world. They are also known as the primary industries or primary sectors.

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the statements about the food & fibre sectors below:

Example of food and fibre in New Zealand



8. A career in the food & fibre sectors is highly appealing *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

9. The Food and Fibre sector is working to improve its environmental impact (e.g. reduce greenhouse gases, improve water quality) *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Strongly agree
☐ Somewhat agree
☐ Neutral
☐ Somewhat disagree
☐ Strongly disagree

10. The Food and Fibre sector helps to feed my community *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Strongly agree
☐ Somewhat agree
☐ Neutral
☐ Somewhat disagree
☐ Strongly disagree

11. The Food and Fibre sector cares about its Environmental Impact

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Strongly agree
☐ Somewhat agree
☐ Neutral
☐ Somewhat disagree
☐ Strongly disagree

12. Working in the Food and Fibre sector means I can work to support environmental change in New Zealand. (e.g. climate change, water quality) *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

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