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Retaining Rangatahi in the Red Meat Sector

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Executive Summary

The red meat sector is rooted deeply in New Zealand's culture and epitomises a true testament of resilience. Navigating annual environmental disasters, political tension, disruptive technologies, economic crises, disease outbreaks, changing land use and consumer demands - this durable industry has adapted with rigour over the past century. Generation Z (born 1995-2010) is an ambitious, empathetic, knowledge-hungry generation flooding the workplace with their creativity, curiosity and tech-savvy skills.

The aim of this report is to understand what motivates Generation Z in the workplace, identify their workplace expectations within an on-farm, processing/supply chain context and discover how to bridge the gap between their expectations, and the reality of a workplace within the red meat sector. The methodology includes a literature review on Generation Z, retention strategies, followed by semi structured interviews with twelve Gen Z employees and eleven industry leaders working in the red meat sector, to gain insights on their experiences and expectations.

Key findings:

Lifestyle, opportunities for learning, career progression, variety and open/transparent businesses are key drivers for Gen Z wanting to pursue a career in the red meat sector. Low pay, long hours, poor culture/management, and lack of career progression are the top reasons causing young people to leave jobs in the red meat sector. All Gen Z participants who had a goal of farm ownership planned to leave the red meat sector, change careers, or find other creative ways of building capital to achieve farm ownership.

Within a processing context, Gen Z want opportunities to work on their own project throughout the duration of their rotation around different departments. Employers' experience with Gen Z in the workplace found this generation requires a high level of feedback, they want to be involved in the business and progress quickly. Poor leadership, cost and lack of support were perceived as the greatest barriers for retaining young talent by employers.

Recommendations:

- Close the gap between employer and employee expectations: employers in the red meat industry need to be clear about what opportunities employees will have to learn, roles they can progress towards within their business and realistic about timeframes.
- Foster open and transparent businesses; Gen Z wants to know how their work contributes to the bigger picture.
- Invest in coaching and leadership development for red meat sector employers.
- Provide more resources and education for young people to learn about pathways into farm ownership. Pathways into farm ownership are not linear.
- Cultivate more structure for Gen Z employees in processors/rural support services. Rotating new employees around departments is valued by Gen Z however, giving them a tangible project to work on in the background will provide them with a greater sense of purpose that is needed to hook them in their first few months of employment.
- Implement an accreditation system for employers that have good workplaces to incentivise them to improve living conditions for on farm employees.

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1.0 Introduction

As New Zealand's second largest exporter, contributing 19% to total GDP (Meat Industry Association, 2021), providing over 92,000 jobs, \$4.6 billion in household income nationwide and employing 4.7% of the labour force (Beef + Lamb New Zealand & Meat Industry Association, 2020), the red meat sector is a fundamental contributor to our economy. Fast forward into 2022 and beyond, shifting volume to value, fostering transparency, traceability, and collaboration in supply chains, improving our environmental footprint, and connecting with consumers through storytelling (Beef + Lamb New Zealand & Kantar, n.d.) all play pivotal roles in growing and sustaining a prosperous industry, despite the many challenges faced now and well into the future. The driving force behind these initiatives are of course, our people.

Retaining young people on-farm, in meat processors and in wider rural support services is both a need and priority to continue producing high quality red meat exports. However, it is a long-term problem that remains yet to be solved. Generation Z, or youth born between 1995-2010 (Deloitte, 2019) are the latest generation to be entering the workforce. Highly educated, ambitious and values driven, this 'digital' generation considers on-going learning imperative to navigate an uncertain future (McCrindle, 2021; Jenkins, 2019; Coates & Subtil, 2019). With diverse needs and expectations for their future work environment, it's critical to understand what drives and motivates this generation and how to capture this within the context of the red meat sector.

This report investigates how to best retain Gen Z in the red meat sector. Findings from this report will allow red meat sector employers to make informed decisions when employing and managing young staff, and create an environment that incentivises youth to stay in the sector.

2.0 Aims and Objectives

The aim of this research project is to understand:

1. What drives and motivates Generation Z in the workplace.
2. What are the expectations of Generation Z in an on-farm and processing environment.
3. What can the red meat sector do to bridge the gap between Generation Z's expectations versus the reality of on-farm and processing environment.

3.0 Methodology

A literature review explores Generation Z's characteristics, workplace expectations and best practice retention strategies. Following this, qualitative semi structured interviews with young people working in the red meat sector, alongside red meat sector employers predominantly within the Canterbury region were carried out to get a picture of perceptions from employees versus employers and their perceived workplace expectations.

3.1 Primary Research

Interviews with young people delve into what drives and motivates them in the context of an on-farm, processing, and wider supply chain/support services environment. Interviews with red meat sector employers varied with representatives from on farm, in processors, and wider industry representatives. This variety of backgrounds allows for a broad snapshot of Gen Z's experiences in the red meat sector, as well as red meat sector employer's experiences with Gen Z.

Findings from the qualitative research are presented in key 'themes', derived from a thematic analysis. Qualitative research was chosen as it allows rich data to be produced that would otherwise go unnoticed in quantitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I really wanted to unearth what's driving Gen Z in the workplace based on their current and past experiences. Simply getting them to check boxes on a survey about what they think they like in the workplace wouldn't be able to capture their emotions, personal experiences and ambitions to the same extent.

Twenty-three interviews were carried out; a total of twelve Gen Z participants were interviewed from a range of backgrounds/roles such as Shepherd, Stock Manager, Sales Executive, Stock and Logistics Coordinator, Distribution Centre Operations Manager, Agri Relationship Manager and Project Coordinator. Eleven red meat sector employers were interviewed which included on-farm employers and representatives from Federated Farmers, Primary ITO, red meat processors and an HR consultancy firm involved with red meat employers.

3.2 Limitations of this research

The majority (90%) of people interviewed for this project have come from rural backgrounds, which limits conclusions from the perspective of young people from urban backgrounds. The scope of this project is also wide, covering the entire red meat supply chain. This means that there were only 3-5 interviews per stage of the supply chain, limiting conclusions for each stage. Gen Z participants interviewed from red meat processors were not employed directly on the chain, limiting findings from roles in this area of processing.

3.0 Literature Review

3.1 Generation Z: An introduction

Every generation is shaped by the surrounding political, social, and economic environment. Significant events and experiences during early years also shape a generation's collective values, education, lifestyle, attitudes, and priorities. Generation Z, or those born between 1995 and 2010 (McCrindle, 2020) are the latest generation to be entering the workforce. In New Zealand alone, they account for approximately 15% of the New Zealand workforce (Green, 2020). The following literature review explores Generation Z's characteristics, values, motivations, and workplace expectations.

“Gen Z are the most materially endowed, formally educated, globally connected and technologically saturated” – McCrindle (2020).

3.2 Defining characteristics

3.2.1 The digital generation

The overwhelming influence that separates this generation apart from its predecessors is the rise of technology. The speed at which the digital age is moving, alongside the growth of Generation Z has had tremendous implications for how this generation learns, communicates, and what their future job prospects are. Technology is this generation's greatest strength and threat; where it has provided them with abundant access to information, allowed them to connect with peers on a global scale, in real time, and provided a competitive edge in the workplace, the rise of automation and AI acts as a double-edged sword. A study by the OECD estimates that nearly half of jobs in OECD countries are at risk of automation in the next 10-15 years (Mann et. al, 2020). Like an app that needs regular updates, this generation has been raised in an age where there is always room for constant learning and development to stay equipped with the right skills needed in today's rapidly evolving work environment.

3.2.2 Driven by meaning or money?

Growing up in a global and increasingly diverse environment, Gen Z are open minded, self-aware, and willing to stand for social and environmental issues. The flow on effects that technology has had on these early adopters is tenfold; they are globally connected with peers around the world and furthermore influenced by events occurring outside their own town or country. A great example of this is climate change and the increasing number of social movements led by youth around the world with Gen Z activists such as Greta Thunberg paving the way. This generation cares more than what's happening in their present environment, they want to know what's happening around the world and what implications this may have for the future.

In a study by Deloitte of 8,200 Gen Z's from 45 different countries, environmental issues were considered Generation Z's top concern (Deloitte, 2021). Faced with the repercussions from older generations, combined with access to information and the tools needed to develop their skills at the click of a button, Generation Z are geared toward making a difference. Whether it's social, environmental, or economic, Gen Z have increased desires to improve the world. They are conscious consumers and in turn, expect the organisations they work for to be giving back.

Seemiller (2017), a university professor in America and TedX Speaker suggests Gen Z are far more concerned about making a difference than making money. In a study by David and Jonah Stillman, 93% of Gen Z said that a company's impact on society affects their decision to work there, and 30 percent of Gen Z would take a 10–20 percent pay cut to work for a company with a mission they deeply care about (Stillman & Stillman, 2017). In contrast, a study by Kirchmayer (2018) and Maioli (2017) demonstrates that Gen Z are money driven, seeking careers that offer them financial security. (Chillakuri, 2020) also suggest job security is more important to Gen Z than finding a meaningful career.

3.2.3 Creative change agents

(Chillakuri, 2020) discussed the concept of Gen Z being early starters; with access to limitless information, they can earn while they learn through entrepreneurial pursuits. Several TEDx Speakers have also discussed the entrepreneurial spirit of Generation Z. Harry Beard, a TEDx speaker from the UK discussed how Gen Z are able to *“pursue passions at any location, at any time, to any uncapped level, as online platforms have allowed us (Gen Z) to create, learn, fail and publish”* (Beard, 2019).

TEDx speaker Corey Seemiller (2017), discussed the entrepreneurial spirit of her university students, claiming many in her class had already founded non-profit organisations. She believes their desire to own their own business doesn't stem from a need to be their own bosses but to channel their passions. Furthermore, she quoted that *“40% of Gen Z intend to change the world by developing a new invention”*.

In New Zealand alone we have seen Gen Z's beginning to filter into the food & fibre sectors with their very own inventions such a Craig Piggott's agritech invention of 'Halter' – smart collars for cows, Cameron Ravenwood, and his family's development of Fernglen Farm - flavoured sheep milk or more recently, Kate Macdonald's launch of Davaar & Co – cross-bred woollen jerseys.

To put it in simple words by TEDx speaker Kimber Lybbert (2019) Gen Z believe an *“idea should not be invalidated by the age of its creator”*. A study by Ryan Jenkins found sixty-one percent of high school students and forty-three per-cent of college students said they would rather be an entrepreneur than an employee when they graduate (Jenkins, 2019).



Figure 1. CEO Craig Piggott, Halter. (Callaghan Innovation, 2021).



Figure 2. Co-Founder Cameron Ravenwood, Fernglen Farm. (Fuller, 2021).



Figure 3. Founder, Kate Macdonald, Davaar & Co. (Radio New Zealand, 2022).

3.4 Retaining Generation Z in the workplace

Attracting Generation Z into the workplace has been well researched by past Kellogg participants (Bell, 2018; Crouch, 2021; Lough, 2019; O’Sullivan; Tait, 2019), as well as industry bodies and government organisations such as Beef + Lamb New Zealand, DairyNZ, the Primary Industry Capability Alliance and the Ministry for Primary Industries. However, there has been little research around their transition into, and retention within the workplace.

3.4.1 Onboarding

Onboarding introduces new employees to the job, familiarises them with the organization's culture, goals, values, rules, and responsibilities. The first three months of employment are most critical to retaining staff in the workplace. Ensuring workplaces have effective onboarding strategies in place are imperative to improving long term retention of employees (Chillikuri, 2020).

Lauren Rikleen, a leadership, diversity, and inclusion expert believes effective onboarding is critical now more than ever. With the Covid pandemic disrupting the world at such a critical life stage and early on in Gen Z’s careers, ensuring employers have the right tools to take on young employees is

crucial. Lauren believes assisting with skill development, stress management and helping young employees build emotional intelligence will better equip them for a successful career (Rikleen, 2020).

Several studies have found mentorship to be a successful way to transfer knowledge between generations (Sanner-Stiehr & Vandermause, 2017; Iorgulescu, 2016). Iorgulescu (2016) found mentoring allows Gen Z to better integrate into the work environment and develop working relationships with colleagues. On the contrary, McCrindle (2020) discusses the concept of reverse mentoring where not only do older generations share their expertise with Gen Z, but roles are flipped and Gen Z have an opportunity to share their own knowledge with older generations, usually in technology, given their digital backgrounds.

3.4.2 Communication and feedback

Generation Z have grown up in a world with diverse communication channels and instant gratification. They expect to communicate in real time, in a transparent and collaborative manner. Whether it's in person, via text, phone call, facetime, WhatsApp, Snapchat, or Instagram - Gen Z expects to connect in more ways than one (Beard, 2019). While Beard (2019) discusses the merits of communicating via technology, a study by Lowell (2019) found 75% of Gen Z preferred face to face feedback, rather than online.

In another case, a manager from a large media firm (over 600 employees) with 80% of them being millennials or Gen Z found keeping the finger on the 'pulse' of the company was incredibly important. Regularly checking in with employees via surveys and following up with those that are unhappy allowed managers to foster a high level of employee engagement and therefore enhance their experience at the firm (Jenkins, 2020). Research by Dr Maioli (2017) in Argentina found that the biggest issue in retaining young talent was the misalignment of expectations Gen Z had in the workplace and what a business is offering.

These three theories, although different, demonstrate that Gen Z desire an increased level of communication and feedback - they want to know they're not just a '*cog in a machine*' (Beard, 2019), that their managers care about them and want to help them excel. Showing them that their role is important to the overall workings of the business will go a long way (Dorsey & Villa, 2020). A study by Jenkins (2019) found increasing the level of feedback played a large role in retention, with over 60% of Gen Z wanting feedback multiple times a week from their manager.

3.4.3 Limitless learning/Personal development

Learning is highly prioritised by this generation (Dorsey & Villa, 2020). At the speed at which change occurs in the digital age, Generation Z is faced with the challenge of constantly upskilling to remain relevant with labour force demands. They are used to learning with incredible speed, in their own time across multiple platforms, whether it be YouTube or Tik Tok videos, Instagram reels, other apps and websites. Having access to so many tools has been a catalyst for an increasingly creative, entrepreneurial generation. With numerous social media platforms at their fingertips, building a personal brand, starting a business or 'side hustle' has never been so easy.

Opportunities to upskill and develop within the workplace is very attractive to this generation. A study by Ryan Jenkins (2019) found seventy-five percent of Gen Z would be interested in a situation in which they could have multiple roles within one place of employment. The concept of

'intrapreneurship' was coined as an innovative strategy to better engage and retain young people in the workplace wherein the young employee is tasked with developing a new idea or project within the company (Jayathilake, Daud, Eaw & Annuar, 2021).

3.4.4 Leadership

Ryan Jenkins (2019) discusses the coaching style of leadership as a preferred style of leading Gen Z. He provided an example of a manager at a large agricultural firm who reduced Gen Z turnover by 50% in six months by shifting his leadership style to coaching opposed to managing. Furthermore, the manager encouraged curiosity instead of giving advice, asked more questions and refrained from micromanaging, allowing more room for Gen Z employees to fail.

The concept of coaching instead of managing is a major theme discussed in Hamish Murray's Nuffield report which delves into future farm workplaces. He highlights the impacts leadership styles can have on employees' performance and the confidence of younger employees, where he believes it's common for farmers to have a directive style of leadership. He stresses the importance of putting egos aside and shifting from a controlled form of leadership to a coaching style to improve employee engagement (Murray, 2020). Dorsey & Villa (2020) suggest Gen Z want managers that care about them, and greater communication from their boss.

3.4.5 A summary of Gen Z

Gen Z are a creative, entrepreneurial cohort who are heavily influenced and shaped by technology. There are conflicting views as to whether they are driven by meaning or money in the workplace though it's likely both are of importance to some extent. One thing to be certain about is their desire for a high level of communication and feedback. Mentoring has been discussed as a favourable method to provide more support for new, young employees, while reverse mentoring is a powerful tool to allow younger generations to pass on their knowledge to older colleagues. Adopting a coaching style of leadership is suitable to lead the latest generation in the workplace, as well as providing learning and development opportunities to keep them engaged in their role.

4.0 Discussion

4.1 Gen Z's desired workplace

4.1.1 Variety, transparency, learning & development

Variety is a factor in the workplace that Gen Z values highly, and something that in absence of, would cause them to leave a job. From on-farm right through to the end consumer, the red meat sector offers highly variable roles which appeals strongly to this generation.

"One day I could be on a farm weighing cattle and another day I could be in the office doing meetings or travelling up to the North Island. No day is ever the same. Variability is really important" - Gen Z.

Learning and development was an important topic that came through in the interviews, with several participants who claimed they had or would leave a job if there weren't any opportunities for growth. These findings correspond with research by Dorsey & Villa (2020).

Research by Ryan Jenkins (2019) who discussed the concept of Gen Z being interested in having multiple roles within one place of employment was also a key theme that came through. There were

three cases where interviewees had started in a role which then snowballed into multiple roles to complement their strengths and/or interests in the business. In all cases, the employees felt more valued, a greater sense of responsibility and more engaged in their role(s) with the additional variety.

“Career progression is really important - lots of opportunity for growth in the industry. If I didn’t end up farming, I could go anywhere, could become a production manager. Start my own farming business” - Gen Z.

“I want to keep working and gaining as much experience as I can and broaden my knowledge and take that back to my future farm” - Gen Z.

Fostering an open and transparent business is valued highly by this generation. As Beard (2019) mentioned, they don’t just want to be a ‘cog in the machine’, they want to know how and what they’re doing contributes to the overall business. How Gen Z are managed, and the wider culture of the business plays a huge part in this.

“If there wasn’t a positive work culture or I didn’t fit into the work culture I’d leave” - Gen Z.

“Create a comfortable environment so they don’t feel afraid to ask questions” – Gen Z.

“Management was very open and willing to share business details, plans and teach us why they’re doing what they are and where that links to their farm plans and where they’re heading. It made me feel accepted and seen as part of the framework/plan to get the farm to where it needs to go. I wasn’t just a worker on the farm. I was able to know how the jobs I was doing and how it related to the bigger picture” – Gen Z.

“If the employer is open before you get the job, they’ll be open when you’re in the job. If they’re open about the business, they value their employees because they realise that employees play a big role in driving the company forward and if the employee feels valued, they put their all in” - Gen Z.

4.1.2 Rangatahi want fair remuneration

Fair remuneration is also very important to this generation, where several participants claimed that they had or would leave a job if they felt they weren’t getting paid for the time and value they put into their job. Many Gen Z participants are aware of profitability issues in the red meat sector, with some suggesting industry and employers need to change remuneration packages.

The concept of remuneration was contrasting in the literature review, with some research suggesting Gen Z are more driven by meaningful work than money (Seemiller, 2017; Stillman & Stillman, 2017). In the case of Gen Z interviewees within the context of this report, money was of far greater importance which aligns with the research of Kirchmayer (2018) and Maioli (2017). The fact that many Gen Z participants had a goal of farm ownership and have put the pressure on themselves to raise enough capital to make this goal a reality is possibly a contributor to their desire for higher salary packages. This finding is possibly a nuance within the values of Generation Z.

“Need to put time and energy into career progression and rewarding their growth with pay. It’s really hard to get a job in sheep and beef that pays really well. Unless you own the farm, or are a farm

manager, you're not going to get paid very well. Sheep and beef farms aren't very profitable"
– Gen Z.

"If you're not costing them money and they're actually valuable, start paying them for that value" -
Gen Z.

"Employers should be open to discuss remuneration and give the employee a chance to discuss what they think they're worth. Employers should be willing to discuss why they can afford the certain amount they're offering or why they think that person is worth so much" - Gen Z.

"Less salaries, more hourly rates would be hugely beneficial for young people going into the industry. Pretty tough doing big hours for salary" - Gen Z.

"I feel like I'm not getting paid for the experience I have behind me; I also think this is an industry wide problem" - Gen Z.

"I honestly don't think that employees get paid enough on farms in the red meat sector. Some people can and some people can't afford to pay more. Everyone wants more money at the end of the day" -
Gen Z.

4.1.3 People and culture

Workplace culture and management was a huge contributor to factors that had or would cause young people to leave a job. Ensuring that the business and culture aligned with their own values, effective communication and good leadership are all important to Gen Z. The concept of coaching rather than managing came through in the interviews where participants wanted to be able to feel comfortable asking questions, failing and not like they were being micromanaged. This shows the importance placed on ensuring employers and managers can develop their leadership skills to a coaching style of leadership as discussed by Murray (2020) and Jenkins (2019).

"Really important that people have direction but don't micromanage" - Gen Z.

"We need to offer people experience, to give them experience. Just because they enter a business and they're not in that business for a whole career doesn't mean they're a failure" – Gen Z.

"Issues with management. Poor management in the form of not recognising when employees are overwhelmed with workload and if they are and do recognise it and are still not doing anything to try and help" - Gen Z.

"The culture - if I didn't feel valued or part of something bigger and didn't like the people. Didn't have any intellectual challenges" - Gen Z.

"People. The system - farming systems, if the system doesn't gel with my morals on a farm system base. Like if you don't agree with some of their practices" – Gen Z.

"People. 100% people. Doesn't matter what job you have. Your whole expectations will change because of the way people treat you, work with and make you feel. I've worked on farms where I've loved every single minute because you're a respected part of the culture and team and workplaces where you aren't respected. It can be the most beautiful place in the world but it can be bad because

of the people. You could be doing the worst job in the world but if you're surrounded by good people it's fine" – Gen Z.

4.2 On-farm findings

All Gen Z participants who had a goal of farm ownership plan to leave the red meat sector, change careers or find other creative ways of building capital to achieve farm ownership. As discussed above, remuneration is of huge importance to the individuals wanting to buy a farm. In the literature, there was emphasis on this generation being driven by meaning however, in the context of Gen Z wanting to get into farm ownership, they are very money-oriented given their future ambitions requiring large amounts of financial capital.

"Realistically, one day I want to be in a position where I can own my own property. That's why I left to diversify my skill set. I think I will go back, it's just a matter of when and how" – Gen Z.

"The path to buying a farm is not shepherding. This frustrates me as there isn't a way through farm management to earn this goal. I will have to leave the red meat sector, start up a company of my own contracting - still want to stay rural. Then when I've made enough money, I will buy a farm. It's a shame that there's no clear pathway to farm ownership" – Gen Z.

"Lack of pathways to farm ownership through shepherding" – Gen Z.

"Finding ways to get young people land or own their own farms in the industry is difficult whereas it was very achievable previously. Unless you've got family backing it's near impossible. Turns a lot of people away from just being a shepherd, meat working. It turns people away in the industry to other jobs like what I'm doing (rural banking)...Just how the cookie crumbles" – Gen Z.

"If I must change to another sector to get my own farm, then I will without a doubt. I'm never going to own a farm if I worked like a shepherd" – Gen Z.

4.3 Processor/Supply chain findings

All participants interviewed that were or had previously been employed by processors appreciated the opportunity to rotate around different departments to have a greater understanding of the business and the different roles out there. One interviewee suggested the idea of having a project that they could focus on for a greater amount of time, opposed to working on little bits and pieces for each department without seeing an end goal.

The concept of 'intrapreneurship' as discussed by Jayathilake, Daud, Eaw & Anuar (2021) could be adopted by red meat processors to give new employees who are rotating around departments a greater sense of purpose. As Chillakuri (2020), Seemiller (2017) and Beard (2019) discussed, Gen Z have an entrepreneurial spirit so allowing them to take ownership and have the autonomy to put their own spin on something and see it through will make them feel less like a 'cog in the machine'.

"Good to work on a project for a longer amount of time rather than little bits of projects here and there and then not really get anything out of them or seeing the end result" - Gen Z.

"Best thing my organisation did was spread my time across different departments and link in with different people in the business. Develop those relationships and learn. Exposure to the business. Make sure the culture is cool, inspiring, and inviting" - Gen Z.

Participants that had the opportunity to rotate around different departments were amazed by the breadth and depth of roles that keep a processor functioning. Again, emphasis on learning and development was sought after.

“There's a lot more that goes on behind the scenes in the industry than you think. There's just so many jobs and expertise behind the scenes that you wouldn't know of” – Gen Z.

“Businesses that aren't farms should try to give more opportunities for young people to develop e.g., more training programmes, more roles” – Gen Z.

Got to work around all the teams. Got a good broad mix of stuff. That really captured my interest. I was like wow there's so much in the industry, so many people involved. Everyone was really nice. Culture is a huge part of why I enjoy my role” - Gen Z.

4.4 Employer's perspective

Employers experience with Gen Z in the workplace found this generation requires a high level of feedback, they want to be involved in and understand the business, and progress quickly. Research by Beard (2019) and Lowell (2019) iterate that Generation Z require a high level of feedback and communication, something that agribusiness employers in this case, were aware of.

“Young shepherds aren't throwing themselves at us like they were 50 years ago. We need to nurture and grow the young people willing to take on jobs with us. If we can promote it like that then hopefully they will want to work for us” – Agribusiness employer.

“Gen Z are not really different to any other generation. More prepared to move around and find what they want. Difference is other generations would put up with it and carry on. New generations will spend more time searching for it. They want autonomy and control over work. Flexible days and time to have a life. Opportunities for development and support. Younger ones are used to getting frequent, ongoing feedback” – Agribusiness employer.

4.4.1 Barriers to employing Gen Z in red meat

Red meat sector employers are time and resource poor; many employers interviewed touch on this as a huge barrier for young people wanting to pursue a career in the industry. Especially within the first years when young people are completely green. Furthermore, working in geographically isolated places on small farms can be very challenging for young employees that require extra support.

“Not putting themselves forward in the industry because they don't know the depth and breadth of job options available. Having the patience/time to take on inexperienced and completely green workers. Turning up completely green with no skills. Everyone needs to start somewhere. Access to training. Realising that there's much wider scope that is not necessarily on farm” – Agribusiness employer.

“Cost. Employing someone at minimum wage (which is bloody expensive) for someone that basically for the first 6 months is going to be a shadow. Really hard for smaller two man operations to justify. Really important for the bigger stations to take initiative. They have economies of scale to balance it out. Farmers are time poor. Having the time to take on someone green is hard. Unless you've got the

setup or system, it's hard. Growing Future farmers is a really good concept. Their principles work well to take the chance on someone small. Where they can afford to take on someone" – Agribusiness Employer.

"Probably the biggest barrier is lack of support; geographically isolated. Young people say it can be really hard to move to a location of their work. Life in a cottage on a farm on their own and not see anyone for the working week. Things like young farmers are great but employers could be better" – Agribusiness Employer.

4.4.2 How to retain Gen Z in the red meat sector

Two key areas that employers believe need to improve to better retain young people include investing in rural community-based initiatives, and upskilling employers to be better equipped with the soft skills needed for managing a team. Ensuring employers have the right tools was a topic discussed by both Gen Z and employers emphasising the importance of having a good workplace culture.

"Rural connectivity. Access to good housing. Good schooling options. Have things e.g., dog trials. Strong sense of community - Young Farmers. Keeping rural communities strong and vibrant. Access to medical care. Treat young people how they want to be treated. Good communication skills both ways. Open and transparent - will help with mental health. Having a work ethic - you can teach people things, but they've got to come with a good attitude" – Agribusiness Employer.

"I think they could give employers lessons on how to be good employers. Have strong conversations and empathetic conversations with young people. Rural communities if they could help build culture e.g. surfing for farmers. Keep driving things for young people e.g. once a week let's do touch rugby for everyone under 25 in this area. When a young person moves to a new rural area it's so hard. 50 years ago culture was so much stronger. If B+LNZ could run and promote community based activities that would be so cool. Workshops for learning to help build their confidence" – Agribusiness employer.

"Really need to upskill farmers in non-technical skills. How to lead a team. It's not because they don't care. Good workplaces are identified through experience and training. Lack of exposure to models and approach" – Agribusiness employer.

"Biggest opportunity to provide better support for development and training. Older farmers forget all the experience that helped them get to where they are. Smaller pool of farmers. More realistic expectations of farmers. Isn't just telling and showing them, provide ongoing support" – Agribusiness Employer.

4.5 A collective view from Gen Z and agribusiness employers

Overall, employers who participated in this project were aware of what Gen Z desire in a workplace. They understand that this generation enjoys variety, being involved in the business, training opportunities and a high level of communication. Both parties had aligned beliefs around the need for businesses to be open and transparent, as well as upskilling employers in soft skills to improve

their people management. Gen Z interviewees placed emphasis on the lack of career progression in on farm careers, and lack of resources around pathways into farm ownership.

In contrast, agribusiness employers highlighted the fact that young people want to progress far too quickly for what a business can offer. This misalignment of expectations around progression suggests the need for clear communication around this topic during on boarding to ensure Gen Z knows the extent of progression in the business with realistic timeframes. Agribusiness employers also placed emphasis on the need to strengthen rural community networks to ensure Gen Z had a strong support network off farm. The overlap of these themes from both parties has been captured in Figure 4 below.

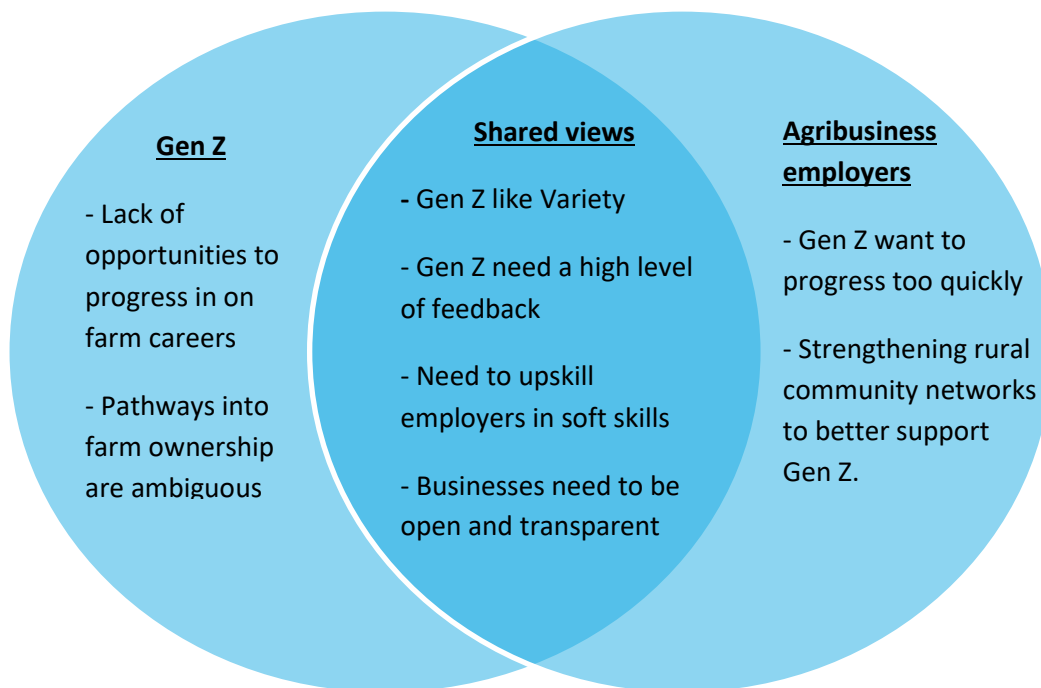


Figure 4. Summary of views from Gen Z and Agribusiness Employers.

5.0 Conclusion

Generation Z are ambitious, creative, passionate individuals with a positive outlook towards careers in the red meat sector, whether that be on farm, processing, or support services. Like many generations before, Gen Z are drawn to the lifestyle of the red meat sector and the ability to work outside, with people, animals and enjoy the variety of work the sector offers. They expect to be paid fairly for their time and experience, have opportunities for ongoing learning and development and want to work in an open, transparent business, with a positive culture.

Within an on-farm environment, pay was a huge focus. Many interviewees have the goal of farm ownership, and many believe shepherding is not the pathway to be able to financially achieve this goal. Further down the supply chain in a processing context, rotating employees through different departments was greatly valued for the variety, networking, and opportunity to have a deeper

understanding of the business. Offering projects that Gen Z could take ownership for while in their rotation was suggested to provide better stability and job satisfaction.

Generation Z and agribusiness employers that participated in this project had collective views when it came to the need to upskill employers in soft skills, foster an open and transparent business, provide on-going feedback and training/development opportunities. The only gap between expectations was Gen Z's desire to fast track their career and the speed at which employers can offer training and development initiatives.

6.0 Recommendations

- Close the gap between employer and employee expectations: employers in the red meat industry need to be clear about what opportunities employees will have to learn, roles they can progress towards within their business and realistic about timeframes.
- Foster open and transparent businesses; Gen Z wants to know how their work contributes to the bigger picture.
- Invest in coaching and leadership development for red meat sector employers.
- Provide more resources and education for young people to learn about pathways into farm ownership. Pathways into farm ownership are not linear.
- Cultivate more structure for Gen Z employees in processors/rural support services. Rotating new employees around departments is valued by Gen Z however, giving them a tangible project to work on in the background will provide them with a greater sense of purpose that is needed to hook them in their first few months of employment.
- Roll out an accreditation system for employers that have good workplaces to incentivise them to improve living conditions for on farm employees.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Generation Z interview questionnaire

1. What is your background in the red meat sector?
1. Why did you choose a career in the red meat sector?
2. How did your expectations of your current/previous role compare to the reality of the job?
 - a. If the role was better than expected what factors in the work environment made it better?
 - b. If it was worse than expected, what factors made the work environment worse?
3. If you were to stay working long term in the red meat sector, what motivates you to stay?
4. What would make you leave a job?
5. Based on your current and past experience in the red meat sector, what advice would you give to employers to improve the work environment for young people coming into the industry?
6. What advice would you give to employees coming into the industry?
7. What are your future goals within the red meat sector?

Appendix B: Red Meat sectors Leader Interview

1. What is your background in the red meat sector?
2. What experience do you have with Gen Z in the workplace (young people under the age of 25)?
3. What do you think are the greatest barriers to employing Gen Z in the red meat sector, including on farm, in processors and wider supply chain?
4. What changes do you think the industry need to make to better retain young people in the red meat sector/on farm/ in processors
5. How do you think red meat sector employers could better retain young people in their workplace?